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"He Kobayashi Maru'd the Whole Thing" The Rev. Dr. Andrew Armond
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Let us pray. Almighty God made the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight of the Lord, our strength and our Redeemer, in the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. I want to know this morning, simple question. Do you know the difference between a geek and a nerd? Anybody? Difference between a geek and a nerd? A Geek has been defined as an enthusiast of a particular type right? Geeks are collection oriented. So you can think of you know the walls are full of various figures and facts and mementos. You can be a geek about action figures or baseball cards or things like that. Nerd, on the other hand, has like a particular field they might be interested in, maybe more achievement oriented, and they might focus on acquiring knowledge and skill over trivia, and memorabilia. And so the real question is Star Trek. Are they geeks or nerds? What do y'all think? Both Okay. Whether you're a nerd or a geek, or neither, I think it is an indisputable fact that Star Trek has given us a lot of good conversation starters over the years about philosophy and religion and about the spiritual life. For example, does anyone here know what the Kobayashi Maru test is? Oh, yeah, we got a couple of geeks right back here. Okay, thank you. First depicted in the 1982 film star trek to the Wrath of Khan. The test was intended for cadets in Starfleet Academy. In a simulated environment, the crew receives a distress call from a ship called the Kobayashi Maru, they have to violate a peace treaty and enter the clean on neutral zone to rescue but losing contact with the civilian ship. As three cling on vessels attack, the bridge crew dies in the simulation, their ship is badly damaged, and the rest of the crew was forced to abandon ship. And that's the test it was designed actually as a no win scenario, to alert future Starfleet officers to the fact that they too, in entering this profession, will probably be entering into some no win scenarios in their lives in their careers. It helps them understand that success is not guaranteed, and sometimes their work will force them into choices, not between doing the right thing and the wrong thing, or the good thing and the bad thing, but the bad thing. And the worst thing. I'm sure that you could ask former chief Alberto Meles about such professions right, in which people have to choose between bad and worse, not between good and bad. So later, in that same film, Captain James T. Kirk, played by William Shatner

reveals that he reprogrammed the simulation in order to make it possible to rescue the ship, saying I don't believe in the no win scenario. So he cheated, right? But he reprogrammed the whole test in order to quote unquote, win. So now 40 years later, the term Kobayashi Maru is still used to refer to what we might call outside the box thinking or strategic ways in which in order to solve a problem, the fundamentals of the whole conflict have to be redefined, seemingly unsolvable problems like climate change or armed conflict or even something more mundane like a tangled knot at work or in a marriage, they may have to do and forgive me for this, we're in church and you have to forgive me, but I'm going to use Kobayashi Maru as a verb, okay, these conflicts might have to be Kobayashi Maru, getting down to the root of the conflict, redefining the terms rather than just accepting that this is the way things have to be. And Jesus does something like this today in our gospel reading, rather than accept the terms on which the religious authorities question him he if you will, Kobayashi Maru has them. He redefines the conceptual framework by which they are approaching him he explodes their worldview in order to help them in order to help us to understand something about God, and about humans. I don't know about you, but if we're looking at Jesus through a purely human way of thinking, often we are confused, and Flomax perplexed and even disappointed by the things that Jesus says, just as the chief priests and elders were in this story just as Jesus's own family and friends often were, as they encountered him. And so often he needs to redefine the terms of engagement in order to reorient our way of thinking to blow up our own way of placing God into our very human boxes. And he does this in this passage as he does in so many times in his ministry by telling a story. So I'll tell you a story as well. Last week, I had the good fortune to travel with some other folks from around our diocese to Alabama on an equal White's pilgrimage. We saw the Church in Birmingham, Alabama, 16th Street Baptist, where four little African American girls lost their lives in 1963 at the hands of a white supremacist bomber. On a Sunday morning, we saw the church where Dr. King called for the Montgomery Bus Boycott a peaceful means are protesting injustice that confused and frustrated the powers that be, we saw places where protesters for peace and justice were beaten. We saw places where dogs had been set upon children marching for their parents in their communities freedom. In many ways, what Dr. King did in the civil rights movement was to Kobayashi Maru X, he had to redefine the nature of the conflicts. Following in the steps of Jesus, he had realized that neither passive resistance on the one hand, nor active and retaliatory violence, on the other hand, would accomplish the goals of the movement. So he hacked the system, he reprogrammed the simulation as it were, by the use of non violent yet direct resistance. As he wrote in the letter from Birmingham jail, the reason he did this was to create a situation so crisis packed that it would inevitably open the door to negotiation, he realized that this drama would play out in the national media. And then once people saw what was happening, it would eventually turn the hearts of those who are watching these terrible

events unfold. And he gave his own life ultimately, in service of that crisis pack situation that he was trying to create, following the pathway of Jesus to the end. And so what Jesus is really doing in this story today, and what he wants to continue to do in our world and in our lives today is to redefine the nature of power. Jesus right before this story, and Matthew's Gospel has just staged his own protest in the temple. He turned over the tables he called those who exploited the poor in the name of God, thieves. He received praise from those who were powerless in society, the lame, the blind children. He's turning the world upside down. He's redefining the nature of power and authority, giving hope to those who have no power and giving warning to those who do. And in the process of this redefinition of power and authority, He's showing us who God is, and showing us how God loves God loves by way of Kobayashi Maru doing the whole thing. God loves by a path that none of us intuitively understand. God loves in a way that leaves us reeling God loves the urn, lovable. One of my priest friends pointed out this week and an online conversation about this passage. There's another form of Geekdom by the way, priests getting together online to talk about the Bible. But she pointed out this Jesus eats with sinners and fellowships with them not after they have repented and been made clean, and therefore are safe and nice and tidy. And now they're good people and now he can sit down and eat with them. He is with them as they are he spends time with them as they are He loves them as they are, where they are who they are. Paul says in the book of Romans, God's kindness leads to repentance, not God's bait and switch, not God's conditional acceptance. If you clean up your act first, I'll sit down and eat with you. God's kindness is God's power. God's kindness is God's authority. God loves us in this way, it leaves us discombobulated and dazed Punchdrunk with the realization that we are fully embraced by Jesus, exactly where we are. And we like to think I know I do this and you probably do too. And we read the gospels and Jesus asks the sort of mystical and Kung Fu a question We think, oh, yeah, like we know the answers to these questions. Now we're well informed and we're well educated. We have all the answers to these questions. They're so easy. Like the chief priests and the elders, they just didn't have all the information that we have the disciples, they get so confused, like they don't see the big picture the way that we do. Where did Jesus's authority come from? Where does Jesus's power come from? In a few minutes, we'll get up and we'll say the Nicene Creed, and we'll know the answer comes from God. Easy done. Next question. Got it. 100% a plus? And yes, the Creed is the answer. It's a statement with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It's theologically rich, it's accurate. It tells us what we believe as Christians. But I want to remind you, it's also poetry and mystery. God from God, Light from Light. Do you know what that means? Can you explain it? I can't. And the fact that I can't explain it gives me joy and peace and comforts in believing it. And in saying it God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. What the authority and power of God look like is a reckless love a heedless love, a love that Jesus has been showing

us for these last few weeks in the Gospel of Matthew, this love looks like someone sowing seeds indiscriminately with no regard for the cost of the seeds or where they land. This love looks like ridiculous generosity from the landowner who doesn't consider how long we've been laboring. But who graciously gives from his incredible wealth, to all. This love looks like the one who forgives us our immeasurable debt. This love looks like the rock upon which we stand the foundation under our feet. This love had no beginning and will have no end. And this love, inexplicably and graciously leads to the cross, something no one saw coming. And it's the source and the substance of Jesus's power, and authority. The offering we have from Paul in our reading from Philippians today is called the canonic him from this word kenosis. It's that part that talks about Jesus emptying himself. This is the key to this, this confusion we often have about where Jesus is power and authority comes from. This can Gnosis this self emptying this paradoxical love is where Jesus gets his authority from it's the answer to the question. It's the solution to the equation. It's the impossible made possible. It's the redefinition of the terms of engagement. This is where Jesus Kobayashi Maru is the whole thing. Though he was in the form of God, he did not exploit or take advantage of his status as God. He did not, in other words, use one ounce of divine power for anything other than the restoration and healing of the worlds. And if you and me the invitation of Jesus is an invitation into this love into this mind of Christ into this mystery. why any of this matters to us is that because Jesus comes to us, humbly and lowly, because Jesus comes to us not as a master, but as a servant. That is where we will find him. We will find him not in the places of worldly power and influence but where no one else is paying attention, where no one else is looking. And we will find him and all the lowly and humble and difficult and broken places in our own lives. The places where we so desperately need a word of hope, love and encouragement. We will find him ready to serve us. We will find the creator of the universe in our hospital rooms, in our difficult workplaces in our failing schools. We will find the sustainer of life and our moments of anger and apathy and anxiety and our times of confusion and frustration and need we will find the great I am in the middle of every rundown and ramshackle corner of the human heart. We will find the exalted and mighty one with us the meek and the lowly. We will find the powerful one in the places of no power. We will find him here. Eating and drinking with us. loving us I want to close with this prayer that we pray. Every week we have this prayer called the conflict of the day. If you want to turn there, it's on page six. The conflict of the day changes from week to week. And I want sometimes it all it doesn't always sort of gel with the scriptures, but it certainly does this week. It's a perfect way for us to think about where the power and the authority of God comes from, and where it is shown. Oh god, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity. Grant us the fullness of your grace that we running to attain your promises may become partakers of your heavenly treasure. through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the

Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.