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"Shake It Off" The Rev. Kara Leslie (07/07/2024, The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost)

They could go on forever.

I promise I won't go on forever, but I do want to share a little bit of a story with you.

I remember not very long ago when I was driving from Lubbock to Herford.

It's about a two and a half hour drive northwest.

And the dust storm was so bad that you couldn't see the back of the wall.

The tumbleweeds were going so fast across the highway.

I felt like I was dodging things right and left.

And I remember that if you're from West Texas, you remember that you rate dust storms based on the orange level in the sky.

Is it a mild storm, which means just the horizon is orange?

Is it a little bit more maybe half the sky is orange?

Or it is a full burnt orange day where the sky is completely covered and filled with dirt.

Here's the good news about dust storms.

They stop.

They stop and you get too clean and clean and clean.

And then they might start again, but dust storms do stop.

So when I was reading our gospel reading today from Mark,

I thought, what is the purpose of having dust in this story?

What kind of dust is it?

How is it going to be used?

Why does it even need to be there?

Dust, the word dust is only mentioned about a hundred times in the Bible.

It starts in Genesis chapter 2 and goes to Revelation.

So the word dust is just dispersed throughout the good news in the Bible.

The amount of dust in our story today, it's more than that.

But it's about that much.

Or maybe it would be like if you were a little kid and you're playing in the dirt,

when you got some dirt in your pocket.

Or if you've ever had a child or you were the child that put rocks in your pocket,

and you know after a while they start to wear down
and you've just got this residue that stuck in your pockets.
Or it could be the amount that is on your window seal after an orange
sky day.
The dust in our gospel reading this morning is less sky-consuming.
Rather it is much more soul-consuming.
Soul-consuming.
Why and how can this little bit of dirt consume our souls?
Because in the story it comes with judgment and shame, disbelief and
sting.
Jesus tells the disciples to go out two by two.
To take only the tunic you are wearing, the shoes, the sandals on your
feet,
no bread, no bag, no money.
Exactly the things that we would grab first, right?
Grab your bag, grab your money, and then you're out.
Maybe put a little snack in there.
Those are the things that we would grab first.
But Jesus says no.
And He says go out and tell the people they are forgiven.
Heal them, give them hope.
But if they don't welcome you, you know just shake the dust off your
feet and move on.
Jesus is sharing something that He Himself has experienced.
Earlier in our reading Jesus says He goes to His hometown.
Now this can be so hard for many of us.
Oh for a few days it might be okay to go home.
But then it become uncomfortable for the mind, the body, and the
spirit.
Your body does not fit into your old bed or you don't even fit in your
old room.
Maybe it's a different house.
Maybe your parents have divorced and remarried and so now you're
managing two different places.
Maybe three different places when you go home.
The roads are changed.
The people are different.
The city and town is much crazier and it's just not easy.
Summer vacations back home can bring up lots of emotions.
Recently my best friend had a gathering.
I went back home to Lubbock and there was a bunch of us that got
together.
And she has living her best life.
She has reconnected with all these people from high school and we knew
each other in seventh grade.
So she had a little gathering.
And we're at the gathering in this party and one of the baseball
players,
which I never want to see a baseball game.
I don't think I even want to see a football game.

But he comes up to me and he says, so who did you hang out with your senior year?

And his words were, who were your people?

I was like, okay, well, you know really, I didn't have any people. Because I can tell you the two big decisions I made in high school, my senior year were one, they offered Latin.

I know, I know bear with me.

So they offered Latin and they offered it at 7 a.m. in the morning.

And I got up, my senior year, and took Latin at 7 a.m. in the morning because I wanted to take Latin.

And I love languages, was I great at it? No, but I added one more thing

to my already full schedule of varsity soccer and debate.

I was very full of my schedule, but I wanted to do it.

The other decision I made was harder.

You were from the 80s or you know the 80s.

There were dogs that went to school.

And I chose to stay home instead of being around those things that I didn't want to be around.

And so those were the two decisions that I remember making my senior year.

It was a culture that I didn't want to be a part of.

So I stayed home and I cleaned house and I studied Latin.

I was quite boring my senior year.

So when he asked, you know, who were your people?

I really didn't have people.

But Jesus goes back to his hometown and he is accosted by the folks who watched him grow up, who helped his parents search for him when he was in the temple, who knew every secret.

And they ask, now wait, isn't this the carpenter's son?

Mary's child along with the brother James and Joseph and Judas and Simon and all the other sisters?

We know your people.

And how can you come from them?

How can you be able, how are you able to do these things?

How can you be this smart?

You come from those people.

Now these doubters, you know who I'm talking about, the ones that doubted that you would ever grow up and become a complete, whole, loving, kind, smart human being.

Okay, well maybe they didn't doubt you'd be that, but maybe the journey, the path that you chose, the path that called you into discovering who you are.

These doubters take offense, the scripture says.

Another way of saying that is they stumble, they stumble.

They stumble at the amazing Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Mary, doing, speaking, healing and teaching what is the way, the truth and the life.

They stumble.

Jesus responds, prophets are not without honor in their own town,

hometown, among their own kin and in their own house.
Jesus covers every part, the wider community, his kin and his home.
He doesn't leave anything out.
So if you go home and it's hard because the kin or the family
or the community doesn't see you for who you are,
Jesus has been there.
The rejection of him has become soul-consuming.
I'm thankful for these two stories in our gospel.
Why? Because they tell us that Jesus was rejected.
And they help us to feel okay when we are rejected.
And it does happen more often than we're willing to meet.
And Jesus tells us to shake it off.
And of course, we all know.
I could sit down and say, wow,
we've got a good feeling to shake it off. But I'm going to tell you
there's
something else in this story that caught my attention and I want to
share it
with you. To me it's the most meaningful part of this gospel reading.
Have you
ever wondered about these sick people who are gathered at the gates of
the
synagogue quietly sitting watching all this talking and commotion
going on in
the synagogue and wondering if Jesus will even notice them in the
midst of this
argument? Will their sores smell enough? Will their soft wimpers be
heard? Will
the contrast of their sin sick souls in the fancy temple catch the
attention of
Jesus? Maybe they heard how Jesus had healed the woman and how he
raised from
the dead this little girl. So why couldn't he heal them too? Will they
be
notice there clinging in the corners of the columns this synagogue? Or
will
Jesus just walk away? David Brooks in his book The Road to Character
has this
mind. The noise of the fast and shallow communication makes it harder
to hear
the sounds of imminent and from the depths. Let me say that again. The
noise of
the fast and shallow communication makes it harder to hear the quieter
sounds
that emanate from the depths. The quieter sounds that emanate from the
depths. The
noise in our lives makes it harder to hear. The voice of calm. The
voice of our
calling. The voice of Christ. Isn't this so true in our lives? We can
let the

louder, more shaming voices, the voices of the past scream our identity and when the trauma bonds are in full activation, Jesus trust God's presence and his soul to lead him. Here Jesus with all this noise, he might have just said, I'm done, I'm walking away. He might not have the power that he wanted but he still had power to heal and to touch and offer hope to the quiet and sick and hurting people. And then he tells the disciples to do the same. So how does this work in our lives? How do we trust God's presence is leading us? Maybe it's to look and to see who needs to be lifted up. Maybe it's to walk away from the trauma bonds and to look somewhere else for affirmation. Maybe it's to clear the voices in our head of what God is saying and what others are saying. Maybe it's a time to let your soul be consumed with the grace and mercy. So much so that it spills over to the ones around you and in our world. When your schedule says no more time, when your wallet says nothing extra, when the voices in your head say you're not enough to quote Lauren Dagle, you can still offer the love of Christ and you might ask how? Because your soul is consumed with the love of Christ. Sometimes the ones that we expect to love us don't and the one that we think has every reason not to does. Let me say that again. The reasons that we have for not being loved or numerous, but our Lord and Savior does not have reasons to not love us. He has one reason to love us because we are his children. Even when people, systems and kids doubt you, God doesn't. God will enable you to do things beyond your doubt to offer hope and healing, kindness and grace. What if Jesus had said, okay, I'm done. That's it. I'm tired of listening to the kin, the community, my house. Tell me all this stuff about what I am not. What if he done that? I'm just leaving. But he doesn't. He notices the sick, the broken, the wounded, the hurting, the hurting and restores them. And he notices

you. Jesus touched them and looked into their eyes with so much love.
It
consumed their soul. Amen.