

Sermon

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, NM

Rev. David Martin, Deacon

20 March 2022

Exodus 3:1-15, Luke 13:1-9

God Within the Dumpster Fire

God is calling each one of us to change the world. In the midst of our confusion, loss, pain, anger, and fear.... God calls each one of us to make things better. God calls each one of us to change the world.

Doesn't it seem like the world is just one enormous dumpster fire these days? Think about a trash dumpster – big, smelly, full of garbage no one wants to deal with – and think about it being set ablaze. Fits, doesn't it?

The phrase "dumpster fire", as defined in Urban Dictionary means: "a complete disaster", "something very difficult that no one wants to deal with", and "a colossal mess, often created by incompetence."

Recently, I imagine the world – our society – as one enormous dumpster fire.

Then I think about another fire we read about in today's first scripture lesson. Moses is out tending sheep and sees a bush on fire. But the bush is not being consumed by the flames. He is perplexed and then hears the voice of God calling him from within that burning bush.

God says (and I paraphrase) "This burning bush is to get your attention....so listen up. I have seen and heard the plight of the people of Israel being held captive in Egypt. Moses, I am sending you to tell Pharaoh to let those people go free."

Moses is sympathetic, of course, but explains he's a nobody important. Why would Pharaoh listen to him? God tells Moses (again, I paraphrase), "I will be with you. Tell Pharaoh that God is with you and demand freedom. Pharaoh will listen to God."

I want each of us to imagine a dumpster fire in your own mind. What is burning? What is blazing out of control? What smells so bad coming from that dumpster fire? And then – listen carefully and you'll hear the voice of God coming from the middle of the dumpster fire. God is telling you to go out and change the world – work on extinguishing that dumpster fire.

This week a person with mental health problems opened fire in an Albuquerque neighborhood. He randomly killed 1 person and injured 5 more. God is calling us find ways to better care for people with mental health problems and to keep guns away from dangerous people.

In Texas and Florida, laws are being passed to prohibit open and honest discussion about sexuality with our youth and to keep health care away from transgender youth. God is calling us stand up and fight for the rights and welfare of the LGBTQ+ Community.

Our government is not interested in helping anyone in this country. Our government has become so divided the only thing they care about is making the other side lose. God is calling us to change who's in charge so we can get something done to benefit the people who need it

People experiencing homelessness, immigrants leaving their countries of origin looking for a better life, and people with big problems that are not easy to solve need assistance every day. God is calling us to help those people.

The war in Ukraine rages on. We are horrified by the constant barrage of inhumane stories and images. God is calling us to work for peace.

It's a dumpster fire out there, my friends.

But listen up! God's voice is calling us from the flames and telling us to make things better. God is calling us to change the world.

But how can I -- how can you -- how can we do that? We're small. We're nobody. First, who's going to listen to us? And second, what can a ragtag bunch of worshippers of Christ with as little power as we have, do that will actually change the world?

That's exactly what Moses asked God. Remember?

But God said, "I'm going with you. You, Moses, are the messenger and the worker, but God is with you. Now go make it happen."

And that is the message to us this morning, my friends. Right now. Right here. God is calling from that burning dumpster of life and calling us to go out in their name and change the world. Make it happen!

Think of our baptismal vows. We are asked to resist evil and repent when we sin. We are asked to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. We are asked to seek and serve Christ in all persons....to love our neighbors as ourselves... to strive to justice and peace among all people....to respect the dignity of every human being.

And we enthusiastically agree to do all of those things...with God's help.

I will with God's help.

Just as Moses listened to God's voice coming from the burning bush in the wilderness, we hear God's voice calling out from the dumpster fire right in our own backyard.

And just as Moses said, I'll do it, we are called to say, "I'll do it. I will with God's help."

In God's name. **With** God's Name. We will do what we are called to do.

It can be discouraging. It can be overwhelming. That dumpster fire is enormous, it reeks to high heaven, and it is blazing hot.

But we are not alone. We have God and we have each other. You see, that is beauty of this community of St. Mark's. That's what is wonderful about our community of the Episcopal Church. That's what amazing about the entire network of Christian communities around the country and the world. That is what's so fantastic about people of all faiths who truly follow the word of their Deity. Together, we can change the world.

In addition to that burning bush, we heard about another plant in today's scriptures. Jesus tells a parable of a fig tree which doesn't have any figs. The owner wants to cut it down. But the gardener requests more time to nurture the tree. They are certain that with time and care there will be figs.

Like that gardener, we can't give up when things don't go as we want them to. Be patient. Be proactive.

No one can extinguish an entire dumpster fire. But what if each one of us here today concentrated on the one ember that happens to float out of the inferno and lands at our feet. What if we work on putting out that ember and making the world a better place? It may not happen today – or this week – or this year – or in our lifetime. But God's voice is telling us to get the ball rolling. Get the party started. Make a difference and change the world.

Start locally. I'm certain you know someone who is down.... depressed.... grieving.... lost. Pick up the phone and call them. Set a date and time to take them out for coffee. Visit them. Listen to them. Everyone is starved for human connection.

Work your way up. Find out about local laws protecting people from gun violence. Do they make sense? What might need to be changed?

Do some legwork and find out about those laws in Texas and Florida which could harm LGBTQ+ youth. And even if you personally can't change what's happening somewhere else, you can certainly support and get involved with young people experiencing prejudice and oppression in your own city.

There are many organizations where you live that assist immigrants and those who are unhoused. Call them. Donate to them. Volunteer.

Take heart my friends, there have been dumpster fires as long as humans have inhabited the earth. People of faith - with God's help - have dealt with these problems before. We have been victorious and we will do it again.

Don't complain about the dumpster fire! Don't rant about the dumpster fires in person or on social media. That accomplishes nothing! DO something constructive

Don't wait for someone else to tell you what to do. Figure out some action and ask others to join you.

Remember that God is with us. Like Moses, do all of this with the name of God in mind. When you reach out in love and compassion people will know that you are there with God by your side.

This is what it looks like to do something in the Name of God. Be humble. Be polite. Be compassionate. Be quiet when you work. Be loud when supporting others. Show love to every human you meet. Pray. Mean it.

You don't have to announce it. With those actions everyone knows for whom you do these acts. God is with you.

Yes. Be horrified by that dumpster fire we see every single day in the world around. Then listen to what God is calling you to do. Make a difference and change the world.