

**Let Me Kiss It and Make It Better**  
**Sunday, October 24, 2021, 9:00 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena**  
**The Rev. Mike Kinman**

“Let me kiss it ... and make it better.”

For many of us, not all of us, I’m afraid, but for many of us that was one of our earliest experiences of health care.

Before HMOs and co-pays.  
Before vitamin supplements and vaccines.

We fell down and skinned our knee.

Banged our elbow against the table.

Stubbed our toe or got a goose egg bump on our head

All those things that now we look at as just a part of life, as mere annoyances ... but when we were two, three, four years old it felt like the world was ending, didn’t it? Pain was still new, and we didn’t have the resilience to bear it. We didn’t have the history to know that as intense as the pain felt, it would pass.

We hadn’t learned that Rilke was right, “let everything happen to you, beauty and terror, just keep going. No feeling is final.”

We hadn’t learned that yet. And we needed people to teach us. People to teach us that what seemed like the end of the world wasn’t. That we could endure. That it was going to be OK.

And we weren’t there yet.

And ... in those moments ... we were only aware of two things.

This hurts ... and Make. It. Stop.

And so, we would run to a parent, a grandparent, a favorite auntie, a neighbor or a big sister, looking for comfort. Looking for someone to take the pain away. To unshatter our world. To bring back the peace we knew before the scrape, the bump or the smack.

Looking for someone to Make. It. Stop.

And if we were blessed by that person, a hand would wipe our tears away. Stroke our hair. And a gentle voice would say:

“Let me kiss it ... and make it better.”

Lips would touch the wound.

Eyes would meet our eyes.

Arms would encircle us.

And the pain wouldn't go away, but it would fade. It would still be there ... and, it was better.

It was better because we weren't alone.

It was better because the pain had been met with love.

We're older now. And skinned knees and banged elbows don't bring the tears they used to.

And ... other things do.

We have built up resilience to a million small things, and they have been replaced by new terrors and anxieties.

We know so much more about how the world works, what huge forces are at play and how small we can feel in their shadows.

And when trauma and tragedy comes. When the biopsy comes back or the marriage falls apart. When the child falls into depression or the bills exceed our ability to pay. When for the eight millionth time, “justice for all” and “to protect and to serve” prove to be far less universal than they claim. When just getting up in the morning seems too much to ask, there is still a part of ourselves that knows only two things.

This hurts.

And Make. It. Stop.

That need is powerful. It is urgent. It can be desperate.

The pain, the Make. It. Stop. can be so intense, and our fatigue can be so all-encompassing that we can grasp at anything or anyone who will claim to be able to give us the quick fix that we need.

We feel powerless ... and something in us instinctively knows that we are made in the image of God and we are not meant to be powerless ... so we try to take control any way we can. And maybe if we can't fix it ourselves, we will follow someone who promises they can. Someone who makes us feel powerful by association.

We hear this in this morning's Gospel reading. The people are living under oppression and occupation. They are threatened, powerless and scared.

And Jesus is there. And an argument breaks out about whether he is the one they have been waiting for. Is he the Messiah? Is he the one who will save them from their fate? The one on whom they can pin their hopes and desires, who will make them feel powerful again. Who will magically fix everything that ails them?

Only what is lost on the people is that Jesus doesn't fit the bill. While they are arguing about whether he has the right pedigree to be the king, they are missing the fact that while Jesus does say "follow me" Jesus has no desire to be their king. That while Jesus may heal people's wounds, he is not here to be a miracle worker. Jesus is bringing something different. Something more ancient. Something far more powerful. A hope rooted in our earliest longings from our first skinned knees.

A hope rooted in our first fear that this was the end of the world and our first assurance that no, this is bad, but it is not.

Our Gospel reading this morning begins: "On the last, the great day, of the festival of Booths, Jesus stood and cried out saying, 'If anyone thirsts, come to me and drink.'"

Contrary to much of what the church has taught for 2,000 years, Jesus isn't a savior who has all the answers, he's a savior that merely asks the right questions:

Are you thirsty?

Are you hungry?

Are you hurting?

Are you tired?

I don't know about you, but for me just hearing those questions is balm.

Just hearing someone ask and inviting me to say my yes. To say my "yes, I am thirsty, I am hungry. I am hurting. I am tired." Just hearing someone ask gives me hope that someone actually sees me for who I am and how I am.

Are you thirsty? Are you hungry? Are you hurting? Are you tired?

Oh my God, thank you for asking. I still might be afraid to give you my real answer. But at least you are opening the door. At least you are giving me the opportunity. At least you are giving truth a chance, to take her first breath, to make her first cry.

And Jesus knows the answer before we can open our mouths. It's why he asks the question.

Jesus is setting a table in the wilderness and saying, "if anyone thirsts, come to me and drink."

And even before we can give our yes, Jesus also knows how afraid we can be to give us.

And so even before we can give our yes, Jesus doesn't call us weak, he doesn't tell us to get over it and ... he doesn't make it all go away.

Jesus asks the question and then says "Come here. Don't be afraid. Come here. Your vulnerability is your strength.

"Come here ... let me kiss it and make it better."

Here at All Saints Church, we say "we walk with a revolutionary Jesus," and what makes Jesus revolutionary is ancient and true and simple.

It's as simple as a question.

It's as simple as an invitation.

Jesus leads by setting a table and inviting everyone to come -- and the only qualification for you to have a seat is your honest human need. Are you thirsty? Come and drink! Are you hungry? Come and eat! Are you hurting? Show us your wounds! Are you tired? Lay your head here for just a little while.

Jesus leads ... by inviting those among us who are most on the outside and removing every barrier to those voices being heard, that beauty being seen and that power being felt.

Jesus leads ... by seeing us fully as we really are ... and contrary to everything the world tells us by reminding us of the deep truth we speak every time we gather ... that

God. Dwells. In. You.

Alice Walker writes, "the most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

Jesus reminds us that we don't need to pin our hopes on a king or anyone else who promises us the moon ... that we are made in the image of God and the greatest power of all is right inside us, flows through us and binds us together. The power of God's eternal, abiding, revolutionary love.

Not because love is a quick fix or an instant miracle cure. But because what was true when the tears rolled down our face and the blood trickled down our knee so long ago is still true today.

That no one ... not even God ... can promise the pain will go away ... but God does promise that if we come to the table, we will never have to endure it alone.

Bell Hooks writes, "To be truly visionary, we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality."

Jesus meets us in the wilderness, sets a table, and invites us to lay our whole lives, in all our glorious messiness, on this table together. To look at all of it openly and honestly ... and to imagine that love is greater, that love is more powerful, that love can sustain us in the most barren of wildernesses. That

Love.

Heals.

Every.

Body.

So often I want someone magically just to make everything better.

So often I want to be able to magically make everything better for those whom I love who are hurting so much.

So often, I feel so powerless and I can be so tempted to seek the easy fix or even to try to pretend I have it myself.

But that's not how healing works. Healing is slow work. It takes so long to even begin to trust that there are safe places to shed our tears and even longer for those tears to make their way out.

Healing is the long, slow work of love refusing to leave ... of God refusing to leave us ... of us refusing to leave one another.

Healing begins when we begin to recognize not even that healing is possible but that healing is something that just maybe we deserve, something of which just maybe we are worthy.

Healing begins when we begin to trust that love just might be for us.

That's what Jesus offers.

And walking with the revolutionary Jesus means we have to learn to not accept the quick fix of the latest king or savior.

We have to learn to leave behind the ephemeral feeling of power that comes from the lies of supremacy and superiority.

Walking with the revolutionary Jesus means, as Nina Simone sings, “we’ve got to learn to leave the table when love’s no longer being served.”

And this is where we come in. This is where we come in because this is the table in our wilderness where love is served.

And Jesus gathers us around the table ... and lays his life on the table ... and invites us to do the same. Not just the parts of our life that we think are acceptable but all of it ... the messier the better.

Jesus wants all our skinned knees and banged elbows and goose eggs on the heads. Jesus wants all our biopsy results and broken relationships and unpaid bills. All our addictions and attractions that terrify us and depths of despair and holes in our hearts.

Jesus wants all the weight of oppression we bear, the oppression we wield, and all the dreams we have long since stopped believing could be true.

And Jesus wants it all on this table of love. All of us. All of me. All of you.

And then Jesus looks each of us in the eye and says:

Are you thirsty? Come and drink.

Are you hungry? Come and eat.

Are you tired? Stay for the night.

Are you hurt? Come here ...

“Let me kiss it ... and make it better.”

Amen.