

Sermon: How to Win by Losing**Scripture: John 20:1-18****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: Easter, April 1, 2018**

On Palm Sunday last week I invited us to get their heads and hearts around 3 commonly accepted lies we all live with that the teacher and writer Henri Nouwen articulated. These lies are “I am what I have, I am what I do, and I am what others say about me.” These lies tempted Jesus, because he was human, as they tempt us all and he had to overcome them in order to follow His true and given path as we all do. We are so much more than what we have and what we do and what others say about us, we are each a unique and beautiful aspect of the infinite mystery of God.

We were granted this shining gift of life not to use for our own purposes but to offer for the purposes of God, the purposes of Love, and the more work we can do to open to our soul’s true identity as a conduit of Love above all else, the better. The difficulty of living this way and why we default to basing our identity off of what we have and what we do and what others say about us rather than what Love calls us to, is quite simply that love makes us vulnerable. To quote a 70’s rock band, “love hurts, love scars, love wounds and mars... ooooo love hurts.” And since the animal aspect of our brains move us quite instinctively to safety and protection, power and control, wherever possible we have to do some serious over-riding of our instincts in order to do what Love bids us to do.

We quite naturally want to be first but sometimes love calls us to be last. We understandably want to win but sometimes love calls us to

lose. We instinctually want to hang on but so often love calls us to let go. We logically want to be out of harm's way but love often exposes us. We reasonably want to live but sometimes love calls us to die.

And given we are most essentially sons, daughters, children of God who is Love, then we MUST do the work of burrowing down into that deeper core place where resides our true selves and learn to live our lives out of the wellspring of Love... well, no we don't, really, HAVE to do that at all. That's the terrible and beautiful freedom we have. We can stay living from here, the thin existence in the fight to be first and to win and to accumulate and to be safe from the other ... but to become most fully and beautifully who we were meant to become we must forsake those more superficial drives to get to that spring of love from which all creation has sprung and by which all creation wants to be fulfilled.

And this is what lies at the heart of Easter. It is this phenomenal and spectacular affirmation of the truth, power and supremacy of LOVE. Love spread THIS WIDE! God descended from heaven and once human, God had to drill down even deeper through the human drives to avoid loss and to bypass broken-heartedness and to evade pain and to be first, God had to drill down beyond all that in human life to access the hidden but vital spring of Love so that then through the spirit of that human, Jesus Christ, God could be a gushing fountain of that Love Source, out to the world.

It was quite intentionally a plan of salvation that was not top-down – though it could have been, by the Creator of the Universe, it sure could have been, but because the Creator is essentially Love it was a bottom-up plan. It had to be a plan worked from the bottom up.... which

over the course of history, as you've likely noticed, is how Good tends to come into and transform the world. Rarely does it ever come from the top down. Not from crafty politicians in Washington but from children marching out in the streets. Not from adored sport and film personalities but the silenced women who find a voice. Not from those with uniform and weapons loaded for our protection but from those crying out and tired of being the collaterally damaged because of their skin color. Not from those making millions off of earth-damaging industry but those making personal sacrifices to live in more sustainable ways on this earth.

After the hanging of God on the cross of Good Friday and the Easter victory of Love through loss, we learn among other things that the work of God, the movement of Love, is by way of vulnerability and loss and death and letting go rather than through strength and accumulation and domination. And that's how we win by losing... we are willing, like Jesus, to lose our small ego-guarded individualized selves to Love's larger purposes.

May the season of Easter and the coming of this new spring, long-awaited, give you a glimpse, offer you a whisper, of what Love demands from you in your unique and beautiful life and then may the living Spirit of Christ, the Loving presence of God, give you the courage and wisdom to offer yourself towards that end. Amen!