

"Connectedness"

Mark 9:38-50

James 5:13-20



Science shows us that people who live together begin to look like each other. Perhaps there is a connection between us as human beings we don't really understand.

I have often taken my grandson who is three years old into my arms when he is tired. He sits for a few moments then he breaks away from me with renewed energy. I, on the other hand, am exhausted. Perhaps there is a connection between us as human beings we don't really understand.

I grew up beside twins. They lived next door. Watching them was amazing. Often when one was hurt – a bruised knee, a scrape or something else -- the one not hurt would be the one crying. Perhaps there is a connection between us as human beings we don't really understand.

Often people talk about their deep connection to nature. In reality we all share 67% of the same dna as the trees we walk by every day. A walk among trees is truly a walk among friends. Perhaps there is a connection between all God's creation we don't really understand.

You will remember the tsunami in Thailand several years ago. It was reported at that time that all the animals and the indigenous peoples of the land had fled long before the tsunami hit because they felt it through their feet. Perhaps there is a connection between us as human beings we don't really understand.

Bill Nye, the science guy tells us that scientifically humans are all one people. The colour of skin is a consequence of ultraviolet light of latitude and of climate. Scientifically there is no such thing as race - we are all one species . We are much more alike than we are different. We all came from Africa. We are all made of the same stardust. We are all going to live and die on the same planet. We have to work together. Perhaps there is a connection between us as human beings we don't really understand.

Prayer studies from a scientific perspective tell us that people prayed for, recover more quickly than those who were not prayed for - regardless of whether or not they knew they were being prayed for. Perhaps there is a connection between us as human beings we don't really understand.

These examples of beautiful deep social awareness and connectedness are at the heart of Jesus' teachings. Traditionally we have referred to it as the presence of God within or the spirit of God that dwells in each of our hearts. Unfortunately in our western world, we have understood that in an individual way – the Spirit of God is in you and spirit of God is in me. Jesus teachings refer to the spirit of God is in us and through us connecting us all

In God we live and move and have our being.

In God we are all connected to each other.

We are not a collective of individuals but all part of the same body humans are the body of Christ the body of God. In Western culture fixation on individuality prevents us from hearing words of Jesus.

I had trouble with my computer the other day so had to take it in to a technician. The program causing difficulty was "Pages" and so it was open to my sermon notes that I had been writing. The technician read the line about fixation on individuality preventing us from hearing the words of Jesus and he said "beautiful". Then he added, "Individuality is important but is not our essence. Our essence is connectedness to each other as humans and to the world at large and our individuality is simply the coat that we wear everyday". And I said beautiful I will use that on Sunday.

In today's passage from Mark's gospel the disciples were complaining because others were casting out demons in the name of Jesus. "How dare they? They are not us. We are your followers. Not them."

An "we and they mentality" had invaded their thinking. Jesus response was powerful. "If you are not against us you are for us", he said. Who ever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

We are called to cut off that which is part of us that prevents us from seeing each other as God's people and in doing so we will experience salvation.

We are called to cut off the arms or the legs of biases and prejudices, of racism and misogyny, of intolerance and hatred - the list goes on

We are called to cut off the "objectification" of others – seeing others as less than human or less than we are ourselves.

We are called to love instead of to judge others as if we were God.

We are called to stop assuming we know for certain that God couldn't love or accept people we don't love or accept. We are called to stop assuming everyone must be like us.

We are called to cut out these cancers within us, for they are barriers to others experiencing God and ultimately to ourselves experiencing God.

At the end of his first year of presidency, Bill Clinton said his greatest surprise was the anger of Christians - the fierce anger of Christians – at everyone and everything they disagreed with – fierce anger.

Fierce anger has nothing to do with following Jesus. To follow Jesus is to be as connected to each other as we are to God through Jesus. To follow Jesus on this Way, is to experience salvation. And when we fail at it, we lean into Jesus in prayer, remembering that he takes us all into his arms and transfers energy of love and compassion and forgiveness into all. For that is who he is.

Thanks be to God.