August 4th , 2019

Springfield Presbyterian Church

Ordinary Time

10:30 am

KonMari-ing Your Treasures

I. Opening Chapter Two

As many of you know, I have a lot of transitions happening in my life, particularly around my divorce, and I’ve labeled this transition for myself: ‘chapter two.’ Transitions are hard where sometimes life is day-by-day or moment-by-moment, but on some days, transition is a great gift. When I chose to see ‘chapter two’ as blessing, there is this implied permission and freedom to try something new and to ask different questions. What will this new phase of life look like? What are my priorities? What do I want my life to look like, but more importantly, what is God calling my life to look like? The questions are hard, absolutely, but I feel an incredible freedom in being able to ask these questions too.

Some of you may know, some of you do may not – but part of my big transition came out of a sixteen hour period. I call it my ‘Oprah - Readjusting Priorities’ hours, others might call it a brush with life or death. You see, one Wednesday, I had a bunch of tests at Johns Hopkins and the doctors shared with me the fantastic news that I did not have MS! What wonderful news! Except, now, seeing more of the results and pending testing, the head neurologist was confident that the diagnosis was an upper-neuron disease, like ALS. When I found out that ALS was on the table, MS was looking good, honestly.

I remember driving back from Johns Hopkins and lying on my bed, doing the thing that no one should do – checking out Google to see what life would look like with this diagnosis. Terrible idea. Most people live three years, with only 20 percent living five years. At the best, I was hoping for five years and all the sudden, the earth started shattering. I started to ask the hard questions, questions more difficult that I’ve ever had to approach in my life, ‘Okay, Becca, if you were to have three more years – what could you definitely say that you want to happen?’ Many things came out in making my list, and I think you’ll be glad to know, that when I made my list, I wanted to serve SPC to my dying day.

It wasn’t until the next afternoon or evening that I was given the news that it wasn’t ALS, absolutely, but rather...get this...it’s Scurvy. That’s right, your 15th century pirate disease where I just needed to up my Vitamin C. I later found out that my nephew had Scurvy and apparently my blood line doesn’t metabolize C, or at least very well. Weird. Strange. Odd - but so much better than the other alternatives.

II. A Brush with Life

Now, I don’t go ahead and recommend you have Oprah hours or a brush with life and death to come to some pretty significant conclusions about your life, but as for me – I would rather not look back with fear, so I look back with blessing. Those 16 hours renewed my perspectives in ways that I don’t think I could conceive of otherwise. While I have a range of emotions about the transition, the recognition that I’m alive and breathing always sets me back to blessing.

Recognizing your blessings is such a big part of this life we live and in recognition of those blessings, we change what we say, how we act, and what we do. The issue with the Rich Man we hear about in the Gospel story today isn’t so much that he has an abundance of a harvest. An abundance is no bad thing – stashing away things like money for a safe retirement or pension – that’s not sinful. The real crux of the problem is that he isn’t grateful. The Rich Man uses a lot of ‘I and me and my’ statements – both in the English and original Greek. He doesn’t get that his blessings are from above and that the harvest is not simply by his hand, but by the good work that God does within his creation. The Rich Man is not a fool for being rich, he is a fool for not recognizing that abundance comes from above.

III. Kon Mari

No matter whether you’re headed to the Forbes billionaire list or you have a few things at your home, do you recognize the blessing? Do you see the provisions God has given you? Are you grateful?

And moreso, what do you have in your house that doesn’t give you blessing. Marie Kondo, in her book, ‘The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up’ teaches individuals about looking at their house than more that a structure, but a place where our whole wellbeing is at stake. When we have a bunch of stuff that cramps that space, our lives can feel cramped too. Kondo offers the theory that your ‘stuff’ affects way more than your household – it affects the way you live your life. In her method, she picks up an item and asks if it ‘sparks joy’ – but my new practice at home more looks like, ‘does this remind me of blessing?’ Is it an item that is helping me move forward? Is it a memory from the past that is actually diminishing my joy? Is it kept out of obligation, rather than simple enjoyment.

Kondo’s methodology goes farther than my comfort zone, but it’s worth asking the heart of the question – do your treasures spark joy, do they give you a sense of blessing? ~~I would also stretch the question into our faithful lives – does your faith, the way you live right now, does that spark joy for you?~~

~~If I look at it from a spiritual mindset, I can say, ‘What faith practices spark joy, what parts of my faith history do not spark joy, and how do I enter the next chapter with a stronger faith.’ For me, I do not deny the history of Christian crusades, homophobia, segregation, or male patriarchy – but I do not bring these things into my faith life. They are things I will not commit to continuing, I will advocate against, and choose to see as a sour part of our Christian past. Instead, I actively choose to live a life of faith that sparks joy for me – and this will be different for all of us – I choose to treasure the faith that engages my creative mind, a faith that moves beyond words but into action, and a faith that chooses welcome over and over again.~~

So, I ask you? First, you do not need a brush with death or a major transition to make these leaps – all you need is today, for that is all we are ever given. What will you choose to actively do? What are your priorities? W~~hat are your faithful priorities – what matters to you and gives you life in your relationship with Christ?~~ What are you willing to set down and let go? Set it down. Let it go. I encourage you, as we participate in this life-changing faith that demands we ask hard questions – may we give thanks and gratitude and praise to the one who blesses us beyond measure, and continues to work by the Spirit to radically change lives. Alleluia. Amen.