

The Classroom: Learning in Community

Series: Starting Back

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Broadway Christian Church

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Psalm 111

Let's show Aliya's first day of Kindergarten picture during the Kid's moment. I'll cue it

Theme: In the Classroom of Community, we adore, we hear stories of justice and we see God's face.

PRAYER

Will you pray with me?

Merciful God, send your blessings to us that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing to you, my rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14) Edify the power your Holy Spirit in this place.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a seat for you. (Bell)

This week all across our town in schools public and private, *pre* to high, students filed in to **start back**. Some were more eager than others, but at the end of the day, even the first one, the answer to the perennial question,

“What did you learn at school today?”

was not, “Nothing.”

For at the very least, there was a discipline and rhythm for starting something new.

Let's take attendance.

Broadway?

Here!

We are present and ready to build on the understanding and wisdom that makes us tremble in the best kind of fear there is; respecting Holy Presence.

For the intoning ring that we talked about last week- as the reminder that we are known and we are loved, even in the chaos- rang out in urgency, like the evacuation drill.

We find ourselves now back in this classroom of sanctuary, not sure who all our teachers will be.

Yet in this wondering, we rest in the absolute truth that the learning will take place.

We remember our previous teacher, and we pause to thank God for lessons taught, upon which we will continue to build.

And we say a prayer for his wellbeing.

Here we are- each called by name... x x x
Here we are- reminded every time we attend this place of learning, that we belong to God.

We are the privileged to come in together, as community, to be led and fed by the one who is deserving of our adoration, and our faithfulness.

This is the Sunday's School and it shapes and changes us for each new week, and the answer to, "What did you learn?", might be an insight, a song, a person, a word, a prayer, but having come, the answer will not be, "Nothing." Because you cannot check God's Spirit at the door, for it is the door.

So open it up and enter in to receive, participate and see.

We've got the classroom, the lesson plan and the homework.

I. The Classroom: Enter to Adore

Do you remember having a little desk? Oh how I loved Miss Kinney, she invited us to bring a small something from home to place on the desk that would make it our own.

I brought my little Dutch Girl doll and a rolling date calendar to prop her up.

Pam F., to my right, brought an Arizona cactus.

Our desks were set up in fours, facing one another. Even as she taught, we were looking at each other.

This was most memorable when it was time for music and Larry, across the desk, sang the words, *thine alabaster cities...* by squeezing in an extra "d" and turning it into a bad word, much to his own delight.

But I remember Larry B every time I sing those lyrics.

I remember the classroom where we were set up to see each other in community. Sort of like this sanctuary arrangement, look across, see each other, and know that this is what Jesus intended for us to be, church together.

*“Peter, who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16)
“You are the Christ, the son of the living God.”
“Blessed are you, for flesh and blood did not reveal
this to you but God who is in heaven. Upon you Petra
(meaning Rock), I will build my church.”*

*With my heart, I'll praise my maker, ever in God's
temple sing. I thank the Lord with all my heart, in the
company of those who do right in the congregation.*

With great adoration ring (Psalm 111:1)
When we are in community as congregation, we
gather for the common goal to thank and praise God.

In knowing and feeling the character of God and
understanding that great and glorious mercy is
toward us, then we begin to wear mercy ourselves.

*To whom have you shown mercy, having known
God's mercy for you? (Selah)

God does not need our adoration for God's own
elevation!
No, the turn is that in knowing the character of God,
even as the Psalmist does, with all creation, we
gratefully adore God as the giver and move toward
being adore-able creation ourselves.

*Who have you adored because God first adored
you? (Selah)

We come together, at Jesus' instruction through
Peter, to be church, to praise God in company.
In doing so, we have accountability partners.
We know we heard the ways of mercy and adoration,
we now *know better* because we have been in the
classroom of community.

I know you know
I know you know I know
I know you know I know you know
Praise God!

2. The Lesson Plan: Listen and Learn
God's character is consistent with God's deeds. We
come to the community classroom to open the book
and to hear the stories.
The objective: To have them written on our hearts
and the wisdom they teach to be on our lips.
We are chosen to carry the temple teachings because
we have known God's faithfulness through the ages
and in living it, we are to move through the world,
doing to others what we know our God has done
unto us. Do we? IN DEED WE DO.

Our kindergartners today open their new Bibles.
When they open it to the very middle, there they will
find the Psalms we sing this season!
Psalm 111 sings of God's deeds being trustworthy,
forever (x5), and fulfilled by truth and right doing.
We know through the history of generations of the
faithful that God is gracious and all caring.
God has made covenants; holy promises that reveal a
faithfulness that moves in compassion and pity for
our human condition; shortcomings and potential.
God has used:
the ego of David,
the deceit of Jacob,
adultery and
wound-touching doubt ,
to reveal God's story!
As Jesus stoops to draw lines in the sand, we learn to
lay down stones.

We hear the stories together, we all have the
teaching and again we can support one another in
the move towards God's
justice tempered with (your) love.
Even when we misstep, God is righting us.
The minute my bone broke, pain was my teacher and
the healing had begun.

I have apologies to make in the classroom for my
many mistakes.

Dear Michael P. Please forgive 3rd grader me for not
being bigger than your meanness on the morning you
returned to school after your mother's suicide.

As we lean into God with our own fallible, free will,
God will help us through what we have done and
what we have failed to do with great love and
assurance of our redemptive, liberating deliverance.
We will heal in regret that teaches us to go and sin no
more.

This knocks the dunce cap of guilt off our heads and
frees us to move toward wisdom.

We come back to church to listen and learn.

*Who is it that knows **God's** restorative justice
because **you** have loved instead of judged them?
(Selah)

3. The Homework: Do More

What was your favorite class?

Chances are good that you also liked that teacher. I
loved junior high health. Mrs. D. made everything
fun. I wanted to be smart for her. She put so much
effort out, she was worthy of my homework.

She taught us anatomy and she had a game day review. The boys versus the girls.
The winning team would get an extra point on tomorrow's test.
I went home and got out my favorite Encyclopedia Britannica -volume, H, for Human Anatomy; those cellophane pages laid over each other to stack up the neuro-muscular-skeletal system!
I poured over the bones.

The review game got rowdy.
We weren't allowed to leave our desks.
Game point...
When she pointed to the sternum,
up shot my right hand, feverishly raised while I balanced my weight hopping on one foot,
left hand clawing the desk top for balance.
"Terry?"
"Scrotum!"
The whole room moved in a slow motion roar of laughter and I was the only one whose chief concern was that the girls lost.
Even now I see Mrs. Davidson's face, smiling at me in a pitiful adoration...
like today's Psalm. *Evermore your face shall see.*

God's laws are wrought of love and equity and we want to know more .
Psalm 1: I love your word, I meditate on it day and night.
We come to the teacher, to learn more.

Our lips learn to sing the songs and offer prayers of glory.
Fear of the Lord, or R.E.S.P.E.C.T. (Rest in peace Aretha) is where wisdom begins;
sure knowledge is for all who keep God's laws.

And here, even in our wrong- answer- exuberance,
God smiles on us for trying again and again.
We all fall short of the glory of God... (Romans 3.23)
Still we will see God's face.

*To whom have you shown the Face of God? (Selah)

Conclusion

We adore, we hear stories of justice and we see God's face. Those are the lessons for us in Psalm 111.
Church community is simple math.

One person plus another person equals one church.

I taught high school for 28 years. I worked hard on lesson plans to create expected outcomes. Some days they went just as hoped and other days I begged God to bolster my weakness with a measure of miraculous grace. God always came through. Prayer changes me.

When I began to plan worship for our church in 1999, I was always astounded by the surprise of God to add in a holiness and meaning that were way beyond my planning and our delivery. This kind of awesome mystery fuels and affirms God's intentions for this church. This is God's church.

Like God picking the favorite hymn of the McGee family to be sung the day they had planned to come forward at the invitation and join the church. Affirmed.

Or the Mother's Day when our Pilipino friend stood to sing an acapella tribute to his dearly departed mother and left the country the next week. Affirmed.

Or the countless days when the choir anthem or prayer, or sermon was astonishingly, exactly what someone needed to hear. Affirmed.

Or the weeks old plan to name this day's teaching: Learning in Community. Affirmed

God does these beautiful things in our midst. They might not feel especially for you every Sunday but the answer to:

"What did you learn at church today?" will be, "Something..."

Here is a seat for you.

Roll Call.

Broadway?

Here!

Aliya's picture

Amen.