

## I. Intro.

### A. In my office I have this stained wood carving I got in Bolivia



1. Here's a better look at it. It has profiles of 3 faces:

- a) There's the face of an alpaca, which is a common pack animal in the Andes Mountains
- b) And there are 2 human faces, a man and a woman representing some Bolivian indigenous peoples



2. Some of you know that 2 summers ago Janette & I & our 2 young adult sons all visited Bolivia. The big reason for the trip was to see our daughter Leah in action where she was serving with Mennonite Central Committee's year-long SALT program



3. What some of you may not know is that there was a deeper more personal reason for that trip, at least for me:

- a) You see that trip was a spiritual quest of sorts ... a pilgrimage to many of the places where I came of age ...

When I was in junior high, I went w/ my parents and younger sister to live in Bolivia, as my parents served under MCC

I spent my 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade years living in or near the city of Santa Cruz

b) So I went on that 2017 trip to finally return to places where I had once lived ... such as this very house, 40 years later. It was kind of a spiritual homecoming for me.

### **B. I consider my time in Bolivia a signpost of sorts in my life:**



1. In our younger years it can be very hard to discern our career direction ... we wish signposts would just pop up in life pointing us in directions toward our possible callings
2. My time in Bolivia as an early teenager may not have explicitly said “future pastor” for everyone to read ...
3. but Bolivia was pointing me to ministry nonetheless

## **II. How did Bolivia point the way toward my future ministries?**

### **A. It introduced me to a world of poverty & inequality in the poorest country in South America ...**

1. This led to a lifelong interest in issues of justice
2. My Bolivian experience showed me the richness of other languages and cultures in the world, and how God is lord over all these languages and cultures

a) I saw in person how God could be worshiped by more than just European-origin people like the ones I grew up with in Kansas ... that God could just as well be worshiped by indigenous descendants of the Incas or the Chiquitano people.

b) Some of these tiny Bolivian Mennonite churches where I worshiped had started as a result of Bible studies led by MCCers in the 1960s.

c) In these rural congregations struggling to survive, my view of the church itself expanded:

I saw God’s people very energetic with their voices and bodies

I saw God’s people generous with the little that they had materially

3. Through my time in Bolivia as a youth, God also became bigger to me ... a God who loves all people, but also cares deeply about suffering, poverty & injustice

### **B. No, I didn’t instantly become a social worker or a pastor right there in Bolivia ...**

1. but those experiences pointed the way to the ministries of social

work and pastoring that I would later enter.

2. And when it came time for me to leave my parents' home, I didn't suddenly just start working with people in a nursing home or just start pastoring a church ... I still needed some preparation for upcoming ministries ...

3. In a certain way the same was true for Jesus

### III. (Preparation for Jesus' ministries)

#### A. At about age of 30, Jesus left his parents in Nazareth behind & started showing up on the scene of biblical history

1. But he didn't burst into our Bibles by immediately performing miracles & drawing instant crowds as a teacher

a) That did indeed happen with Jesus, but only later

b) First, some preparation for ministry was needed, even by Jesus

2. That preparation came in the first two New Testament scenes where we find the adult Jesus:

a) His baptism by his cousin John AND

b) His temptations by the devil in the wilderness.

3. Let's look at those 2 ways that Jesus prepared for his coming ministry

#### B. Some people look at the baptism of Jesus merely as an example for us later followers ... but not necessarily meaningful to Jesus himself

1. But in fact this baptism of Jesus, who did not need a cleansing from sin, was meaningful and symbolic for his future ministry:

a) In his baptism, Jesus experienced the Holy Spirit empowering him and launching him on his upcoming mission

b) In a hidden, low-key kind of way, this was a coronation ... this was the inauguration ceremony of King Jesus!

2. So if we didn't hear “king” language here, what clues do we have of this?

#### C. In Luke 3:22 there are 3 clues of Jesus being honored & sent:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> we have the divine action of Holy Spirit coming down on him in bodily form like a dove ... It means other people noticed it & it wasn't just something from the Gospel writer's imagination

2. Then, we have this publicly heard voice from heaven, with some very significant words: “You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well-pleased!”

- a) Now these sound like wonderful warm-fuzzy words to any of us ... Who wouldn't like to hear a parent or grand-parent saying, “Good job! I love you & I'm proud of you!”? But this is much more than just a divine hug or pat on the back ...
- b) The voice to Jesus from heaven is actually repeating 2 Old Testament passages, and that's where we get 2 more clues that Jesus' baptism is really his ministry launching ground:
- c) That phrase “You are my Son the Beloved” is our 2<sup>nd</sup> clue ... It's not just some mystical statement proving Jesus' divinity ... These words come from Psalm 2, verse 7

If you have your Bibles, look up Psalm 2. This is called a royal psalm, sometimes even a coronation psalm ... announcing God's king in Jerusalem thru the monarchy of David

*Read Ps. 2:1-2 ... Remember what Samuel did to make young David king? He anointed him*

In the O.T. when an Israelite king was enthroned, it was believed that Yahweh adopted that king as a son to do God's work.

- (a) So keep that in mind when you read Ps. 2:7, where the Israelite king himself speaks, he is recalling Yahweh's word to him marking him as king: “You are my son; today I have begotten you”
- (b) So at the Jordan River, to Jewish people familiar with the stories of the kings of Judah, *Jesus is being divinely affirmed as king in the line of David, in order to do God's work!*

3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> clue that Jesus is being launched on a mission comes in the next words in Luke 3:22, “with you I am well pleased”. These words come from Isaiah 42:1, which you may want to look up

- a) Isaiah 42 is one of the so-called “Servant Songs” describing an ideal person or people who will be a serving savior figure for Israel
- b) *Read Isa. 42:1 ... This phrase, repeated from heaven at Jesus' baptism, identifies Jesus as a suffering servant*
- c) For many Jewish listeners, this last phrase of the heavenly voice does not blend well with the first one that identified him as a king.

If you've ever read in the Bible about the kings of ancient Israel & Judah, most of those kings were not servants at all but selfishly misused their power! (like kings & presidents & dictators today!)

So it sounds like a contradiction ... Was Jesus a king? Or a servant?

God here is saying Jesus is both, but the people had never seen a consistent humble servant king. They couldn't imagine it!

**D. So how will Jesus be a servant king? How will he use his power to establish his kingdom?**

#### IV. **Jesus goes into the wilderness to find out.**

**A. And this is where Satan tempts him, in another preparation for ministry.** I find it helpful to think of these temptations as different ways Jesus might set up a kingdom ... ways he might establish a following for himself

**B. The 1<sup>st</sup> temptation is to feed the many hungry poor people – turning stones into bread**

1. This way of being king is to appeal to their self-interest ... give them food, or money or better jobs, and they'll follow you anywhere, Jesus!

2. Renowned commentator William Barclay called this the temptation to “bribe people to follow him”: & Jesus refuses it!

**C. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> temptation, Satan takes Jesus on a high mountain & offers him all the political and military power in the world**

1. Some would call this the temptation of compromised allegiance because Jesus responds with the OT quote, “Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.”

2. But I also see here the temptation for Jesus to be a dominating military king ... for him to force people into his kingdom ...

3. Jesus refuses to build God's kingdom on military might

**D. The third temptation, being saved after jumping down from the pinnacle of the Jerusalem Temple, is to be a spiritual superman Messiah**

1. The temptation is to overwhelm people with his supernatural powers. Surely if he bounced right back up unhurt after jumping from the rooftop, then people would want to follow this kind of king!

2. Barclay called this the temptation to “sensationalism” ...

3. Although Jesus sometimes performed miracles, he also refused to do so on demand. Perhaps you remember in Luke 23:8 when Jesus said & did nothing before King Herod who wanted him to perform some kind of sign.

**E. In all these temptations, He was pushed to establish his kingdom by coming “over” and “above” the people, rather than from “underneath” which is the servant way.**

**V. So as the adult Jesus first showed up publicly in Judea, we have seen signposts in his baptism and his temptations, pointing toward his mission in this world**

**A. To you adults here, if you looked back on your formative years, what would you identify as the signposts that pointed toward your life’s mission?**

1. But as I look around in our sanctuary today, other than this pulpit, I don’t see a chalkboard or power tools or other typical symbols of people who are on a mission with Jesus
2. (Well, OK, it’s true many do use microphones and musical instruments as symbols of mission, and you could call our ramp project a symbol of mission for greater accessibility up front)
3. What I do notice is a table obviously laid out in preparation for the Lord’s Supper
4. So what do these learnings from Jesus’ preparations for ministry have to do with communion?

**B. The Lord’s Supper reminds us & gives us a glimpse of what kind of Lord we follow**

1. When Jesus gathered his disciples that final time in Jerusalem to observe the Passover with him, he told them they should do what he was doing ...
2. They should repeat this meal with the special and unique meaning that he was reshaping it with.
3. Jesus took a meal that highlighted a sacrificial lamb (recalling God’s deliverance of slaves from Egypt) ... and he made it into a meal recalling his own self-sacrifice, which was the ultimate means of God’s deliverance of us from sin

**C. So what then are we doing when we come to this communion table?**

1. In the Lord’s Supper, we aren’t merely saying “I believe in the Jesus who gave himself to us for the forgiveness of sins.”
2. We are doing more than just affirming individual beliefs.
  - a) Here at this table, we are re-forming a living faith community that is fed by Jesus, healed by Jesus and filled with peace, as Pastor Cindy said two weeks ago
  - b) We are committing ourselves to follow in the footsteps of this master in HIS kind of mission, rather than taking our human purposes and thinly applying the name of Jesus over them.
3. In this simplified meal, we declare something for all to hear ... we demonstrate for all to see, three truths found in the Lord’s Supper:
  - a) 1<sup>st</sup>: “I believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord” ...

We’re saying “I find my ultimate meaning and purpose in Jesus

Christ. He is the nourishment that feeds me and heals me.”

Believing in Jesus is a lovely creed, but let me boil it down a little more ... Here’s a simpler way to express this meaning of the Lord’s Supper:

When you come to this table, you’re declaring, “I live through Jesus.”

b) 2<sup>nd</sup>: “The Jesus way of living in this world will be my way of living”

Simpler translation: “Jesus is seen in me”

That’s much easier said than done.

(a) Two weeks ago Pastor Cindy reminded us that coming to the table with Jesus is never “dinner as usual”

(b) In Jesus’ Parable of the Banquet, she showed us that Jesus calls us to hang out with and identify with His people who are unlike ourselves

(c) Sharing in this bread and cup is not just a symbol of what you believe, but also of how you live and who you follow

c) 3<sup>rd</sup>: “The Jesus people of faith will be my people as well. I belong with them as much as I belong with Jesus.”

Simpler translation: “Jesus is seen in us”

This is why we repeat the Lord’s Supper all gathered together. We don’t go to the privacy of our own homes to do this meal.

This is exactly one of the ways we declare “Jesus is seen in us.”

4. As we re-enact the Lord’s Supper over time, these truths begin to shape us more and more into the Master’s image.

**D. May the bread and the cup, these symbols of the Jesus way, remind us of the one who let his baptism and temptations shape him for ministry as a servant king.**

## VI. Conclusion

**A. For our musical response, we will be singing a bilingual communion song “Pan de Vida” which I invite you to turn to in green songbook, #85, as the band comes forward**

1. There are alternating phrases in English & Spanish and you can find the translations of the Spanish at the bottom of the page.

2. But just now I invite you to keep the songbooks open as we take some moments of silence to ponder the truths & mysteries in the Lord’s Supper

**B. (Leave PPT on screen as pianist plays softly thru STJ 85, then band lead singing thru refrain 3 times)**