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October 28, 2018
Scripture: Luke 15: 1-7 (The Message Version)
Sermon Title: Mission to the Margins

Prayer....

Introduction: Today, we finish our sermon series on the Mission of the Church Today by exploring the theme of the Church's call to engage in a Mission to the Margins. Our mission is to be a church of Grace, Hope, and Love in Newberg. We demonstrate this mission especially when we care for those who are on the margins of society.

Central America Story- Canonization- Sainthood of Archbishop of El Salvador Oscar Romero who was assassinated in 1980- He showed us how to leave his comfort zone and care for the poor and oppressed in his country. He spoke out against the killings of innocent people, including priests. He chose to speak against his government and then was killed by the government military. Canonized by Pope Francis on October 14th.

This week there are two stories among many that captured my attention.

1. Caravan of people from Central America coming to the border between Mexico and the United States. Estimates range from 4,000 to 7,000 people. Close to 25% are children.
2. Close to one dozen explosive devices being sent in the mail to major leaders of the Democratic party, including the homes of Hillary and Bill Clinton, Michelle and Barack Obama. Suspect Cesar Sayoc, thankful to FBI.
3. How are we as Christian called to respond to these concerns?
How might Jesus invite us to respond?
4. We are called to respond with compassion to the caravan, even as we work to address the challenge of immigration and the need for immigration reform.
5. We are called to unite as a country and to stop rhetoric by both those on the far right and those on the far left that try to demonize the other. It is too easy to use rhetoric to feed hatred. We need to return to a moral compass in this country by teaching our children to love and not hate, to welcome the refugee and the immigrant, and to work across the aisle politically to work for justice and peace. We ultimately are called to follow the example of Jesus, who deeply cared about the poor and oppressed and all those on the margins.

Why did Jesus care for those on the margins?

Jesus identified with the marginalized.

- Jesus was part of an oppressed minority group within the Roman Empire. He was a refugee in Egypt for some time.
- Simple life of a carpenter's son. Can anything good come out of ?
- Low income, educated but not highly educated.

Jesus chose for his followers people on the margins.

- Fishermen, Tax Collectors, zealots. He partied with sinners and hung out with Samaritans, people with leprosy, demon possessed, the unclean, women and children, showed compassion to prostitutes.
- Not impressed with wealth or power but with those who were willing to be humbled and follow him.

Jesus calls us to reach care for those on the margins of society.

- Jesus goes out to save the lost.
- Some people who are on the margins might need to repent like the tax collectors or those who are caught up in some unhealthy behavior, but also those who are lost because they feel alone.

Who are the people on the margins in our world?

- Struggling in some kind of sinful behavior or maybe a self-destructive behavior. Jesus wants to heal all of us if we struggle with sinful actions, such as pride, greed, lust, or some other unrighteous attitude or behavior.
- God also wants us to reach out to those who might normally feel alienated from church. These people are not on the margins due to personal sin, but because society does not accept them as equal. People with addictions, depression, other illnesses. People with physical or intellectual disabilities might be viewed as those on the margins. Sometimes those on the margins might be seen as different due to the color of their skin or their cultural heritage. Some people are viewed on the margins because of sexual orientation or who they choose to love. Some people are on the margins because they appear to be too old or too young. Some people are viewed as too poor or uneducated.
- Jesus invites everyone to the party. We are all called to party with Jesus regardless of whether societal norms sometimes divide us.

Remember that we all have felt like a person on the margins at some point? Maybe some have felt that more than others, but we all know what it is like to not be included?

- Have you ever felt like you were not accepted by a group or not affirmed in a job?
- Have you ever struggled with an addiction or with your own bout of depression?
- Have you ever wondered if life was worth living or struggled to have the energy to make it through the day?
- Have you ever hurt someone close to you or felt like you did not deserve to be loved?

The Call of the Church is to care for those on the margins. We reach out with grace, hope, and love to those who feel lost and unaccepted and we say, You have a home with us. We are your family. Here in this church you belong. Here at Newberg First Presbyterian you are known and you are loved. This is the mission of the church today- Prayer