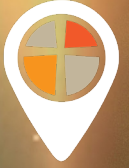


ANXIOUS (FOR NOTHING)



CUSTER ROAD
United Methodist Church

WEEK 5: WE'VE NEVER DONE IT THIS WAY BEFORE 2/7/2021

SCRIPTURE

John 5:1-9

BACKGROUND

The Gospel of John is considered to be the more developed narrative of Jesus out of the four Gospels. With its highly developed theology and prose, it remains the favorite gospel of many throughout history. The Gospel of John was written in response to the crisis of Jewish Christians being persecuted and sent out of synagogues. Jews had a sense of identity around synagogues, and being put out of it meant deep rejection and denial of their Jewish identity. John urges the Jewish community to stay in solidarity despite the consequences of the confession of Jesus, defending Jesus as the Word (logos) incarnate, the Son of God.

While we find similar stories in other gospels, this story remains uniquely found only in the Gospel of John. The paralyzed man by the pool knows only one way to be saved from his illness, and it is in the power of the pool. But because of the "whippersnappers" around him, he has not been able to get into the pool for the last 38 years. The weight of this reality may be too paralyzing, that this man could not think of any other ways to redeem himself. Then Jesus commands him to pick up his mat and walk. The mat here is "krabbatos," a mat made by the poor as bedding, magnifying the description of the poverty of the paralyzed man.

Now, the Jews and the religious authority are upset, because the paralyzed man has violated the religious tradition. Jesus is pushing some envelopes. He is also pushing some buttons. By juxtaposing this narrative with his discourse about his identity, the author of John makes the case for the divinity of Jesus and the obtuseness of his Jewish community.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Why was it hard for the paralyzed man to think of any other ways for him to be redeemed? _____

Let's look at things from the perspective of the paralyzed man: how would it be like for him to imagine any other ways to be healed other than the pool? _____

To the paralyzed man, the pool was "the sacred cow," an immovable truth. What are the "pools" in our lives that we hold so tightly that we are not allowing God to surprise us and transform us? _____

Let's look at things from the perspective of the Jews: how would it be like for them to see a miracle happening from a place of religious violation? _____

Where are those places of religious violation in our lives that God is calling us to see God's working? _____
