

3.28.10 EGCC Middle School Class

Theme: "Crucifixion & Resurrection"

TELL

- In the Nooma we're going to watch, there's a "gentleman" with an umbrella.
- He's symbolic. Think of him representing "the false self."
- The people he's "talking" to cannot see him. But they sometimes they "hear" him.
- Pay attention to what he's telling them to do.

WATCH Nooma Video: Tomato

ASK

Rob Bell said in the clip, "Jesus invites that part of us to die. The part of us that always has to be right. The part of us that always has to be better. The part of us that always has to look good. Jesus invites that part of us to die. Jesus teaches us how to die so that we can really live."

- So what were some of the things the man with the pink umbrella "suggested" that the people in the video do? (drive through the parking bar; talk on the cell phone, buy stuff, play video games, drink more soda, etc)
- Do you think those things those people did showed the truth of who God made them to be?
- In what ways do you think these people are doing harm to themselves or others by not being the truth of who they are?
- If you told them some these ways that you think they are harming themselves, do you think they would apologize?

Rob Bell said in the clip, "Think about relationships, about broken relationships, that aren't going to get any better until somebody is the first to apologize. Why is that so hard? Because saying you are sorry is a form of death. It's a refusal to carry on the false self and prop it up."

- Can you think of times when it's been hard for you to say sorry?
- Have you ever thought about saying sorry as a form of death before?
- If you do think about saying sorry this way, does it help you to think about why it's so hard sometimes to say sorry?

Rob Bell said in the clip, "So when the Bible tells a story of God bringing new life to the world, how does the story go? It's about Jesus who dies and rises again. It's about death bringing about new life. Jesus doesn't just enter the process for himself, he also invites people to take up their own cross. Jesus says at one point, "Unless you lose your life for My sake, you'll never find it." Jesus says in another teaching, that 'unless a seed falls to the ground, it can't produce new life.' "

- This Sunday is Palm Sunday.
- It is the start of the week we call Holy Week
- Palm Sunday is when Jesus enters Jerusalem in style. Everybody's excited.
- By the end of the week, by Friday, he is arrested and crucified.
- Next Sunday, we celebrate Easter, the day we remember the resurrection of Jesus.

- Crucifixion and Resurrection are difficult things to think about.
- Thinking about Jesus as a seed that brings new life to the world is one way to think about crucifixion and resurrection.
- So let's think about seeds for a moment:

DO The Acorn-thought experiment:

- Let's think about a specific seed: An acorn
- What's the true purpose of an acorn? (to become an oak tree).
- How would an acorn do that? (by getting into the ground and then sitting there soaking up rain, nutrients in the soil, sunlight)
- Let's say an acorn is successful to its true nature and becomes an oak tree.
 - If you dug up that oak tree and tipped it over, would there be an acorn at the bottom of it? (No. of course not, don't be silly).
 - So then where did the acorn go? (It's gone, it was destroyed in its transformation into a oak tree)
 - In order for an acorn to be its true self, it has to cease being an acorn.
- Now, let's imagine that this acorn *liked* being an acorn.
 - Let's say it wanted to hang out where it grew up, on the branch of an oak tree.
 - Let's say it just wanted to have fun and be cool. Or maybe it just wanted to work hard and become a successful business-acorn.
 - That's fine, right?
 - But what if ALL the acorns did that? What if all acorns decided they were going to hang out and be cool or work really hard? Then what would happen? (There'd be no more oak trees).
 - So if that happened, if all the acorns forgot what their true purpose was, and there were no more oak trees, and all the acorns were dying, then what would be needed to grow another oak tree? (An acorn would be needed to remind the other acorns what it meant to be an acorn...by being a "true" acorn)
- That's who Jesus is – that acorn who reminds the other acorns what it means to be a true acorn by being a true acorn.
- Let's look at a scripture passage where Jesus is talking about living into the truth of being a true acorn...

READ John 12:20-27 (NRSV)

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. 27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say— "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

NOTES:

If a question is raised about Verse 20 and 21 – here's some cultural context:

Greeks were non-Jews. Therefore, they would be considered Gentiles and unclean and Israelites tried to keep themselves separate from Gentiles. The Greeks knew this, but they wanted to meet with Jesus – most likely to honor him. They most likely approached Philip because Philip is a Greek name. Philip, most likely, had a Greek father and Jewish mother, making him, like the apostle Paul (who shows up later, in the book of Acts), a Roman citizen *and* an Israelite (such things happened). Which means, Philip would have a more sympathetic ear and be helpful in getting Jesus to meet with them.

Jesus' response to Philip and Andrew is code for what's to happen once Jesus lives out his true purpose: Then there will be no Gentile or Jew, there will be no permission-getting needed in order to talk to each other, if you are paying attention to God, seeking God's kingdom, then you belong.

ASK

- Do verses 24 & 25 sound familiar to the acorn-thought experiment? (It should!)
 - Why or why not?
- In verse 27, does it surprise you that even though Jesus is clear about what he is to do, that his "soul is troubled?"
 - Why do you think his soul is troubled? (Because he doesn't want to die)

TELL

- In verse 23, Jesus says the hour has come to be glorified.
- Living out our true selves is a glorious thing, even if it is hard and scary.
- That's why Jesus does it.
- It's also why Jesus invites us to follow him, so that we may live the way we were created to live.
- This does not mean that we will be crucified in the same way Jesus is.
- But it does mean that when we follow Jesus, our false selves will die off.
- Being an acorn is not our true self – being an oak tree is who we are.
- But in order to get there, we have to be willing to let go of being an acorn.
- Like Rob Bell says in the video, "Jesus invites us to die so that we can really live."
- That's the Good News for Today.

If somehow, there is time...

EXPLAIN Activity: \$2 negotiation

- Divide the class into groups of three.
- Give each group two \$1 dollar bills
- Tell them that they MAY NOT rip the bills in any way.
- Then tell them that they have 5 minutes to decide between the three of them who will keep the money.

- *Decide* is a key word here – one person may not just take the money and run away with it.
- If all else fails, a simple majority vote can be used to decide
- Two members can each end up with a dollar or one person can end up with both dollars.
- I will give you a warning when there's 1 minute left.
- After 5 minutes, any team still undecided will lose the money (teachers will take it back).
- This is not just an exercise, whoever ends up with the money *will* get to keep the money.

DO \$2 Negotiation

Notes:

- You can have any size of group you want, just be sure to have one less dollar than there are people in the group.
- If the groups have an even number of people, know that those groups tend to come to a stalemate more often (due to ties in the voting).
- Watch carefully to see how they decide.
- Keep track of who does not get the money.
 - Especially look for those who are volunteering to not take the money
 - It's up to you, but I usually hold, after class, the students who didn't get money, but were in groups that kept the money. I keep them after class to give them their own dollar and to thank them for participating in the activity.
 - For those who volunteered to let go of their money, whose groups didn't even have to vote, I give them two dollars and tell them to keep thinking and acting in this unselfish way, even though it can be hard.
- This can become an emotionally charged activity, especially if there's a member in the group who is getting ganged up on. I don't know if that is a concern for this class, but if it is, you might want to arrange the small groups according to this concern.

ASK

- So did any of you really really really want the money?
- So how did you decide who got the money?
 - Did you say what you wanted or did you ask others what they wanted?
- Did any of you tell others in your group that they could have the money?
 - If so, why? What made you say that?
- Did what we talk about in class today influence your thinking at all during this activity?
 - Did any of you think that trying to get this dollar or two at the expense of someone else in the group was not the truth of who you were?

TELL

- The point of this activity is to show how challenging it can be just to let go of a dollar or two.
- If it's challenging to let go of just a dollar or two, just think how difficult it can be to let go of our acorn/false selves?
- That's why Jesus is such a gift.

- Because by following Jesus, we learn, sometimes incrementally, sometimes in a flash of understanding, but we learn how to let go of being an acorn and how to be an oak tree.
- When we follow Jesus, Jesus teaches us how to invite God in to our lives so that we can be our true selves, not false selves.

