

### 9.12.21 L24P18 One Heart Big Enough to Bear the World's Suffering

- One of the great preachers [Karl Barth] of the last century said that the work of a good preacher is “to hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.”

- And during the past year or so the newspaper headlines have been much the same

- I don't have to explain – all I have to do is name...

Coronavirus... political polarization... anger and rage

- It got so bad this past week, that in the village where we live, extra police had to turn out and guard the schools on opening day because someone on Facebook called for people to take up arms and go to the schools to set the students free from masks – armed people marching on a school?

Someone has a crazy sense of law and order!

- With all the bad news in the headlines, it's no wonder that according to the Kaiser Family Foundation which is a non-profit organization dedicated to public health, instead of one in ten people saying that they are experiencing anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideas – and one in ten is bad enough, now that has risen during the pandemic by 300% to four in ten people. And there are about \_\_\_\_ people here today
- The headlines are bad, because the times are bad
- Almost 40 years ago, the country singer Anne Murray sang a song that in part goes like this:

There's a local paper rolled up in a rubber band

One more sad story's one more than I can stand

Just once how I'd like to see the headline say

"Not much to print today, can't find nothin' bad to say",  
because...

Nobody robbed a liquor store on the lower part of town

Nobody OD'ed, nobody burned a single buildin' down

Nobody fired a shot in anger, nobody had to die in vain

We sure could use a little good news today [A Little Good News, 1983, Universal Music]

- There's more in that song, and all you have to do is change Lebanon to Afghanistan, and Bryant Gumbel to Gail King or George Stepanopoulos, and now almost 40

years later, not much has changed – we sure could use “A Little Good News Today.”

- The bad stuff that surrounds us, the bad stuff that continually seems to flow throughout the world, the bad stuff that seems to threaten to overwhelm us in the headlines – and that doesn’t even count our personal struggles that we may have with families, jobs, or health – the bad stuff frankly IS bigger than we are
- The truth is, NO ONE... NO ONE has a heart that is big enough to carry all the sorrow of the world that we experience and read in the headlines
- NO ONE has a heart big enough to carry all the sorrow in life without becoming ill
- NO ONE has a heart big enough to carry it all... unless you are Jesus Christ.
  - And you are not Jesus, and I am not Jesus, but we DO encounter the Jesus with the huge world-embracing heart that is big enough in our Gospel reading for today
  - It’s a story that if we do not know it, we need to learn it, because this story is a faithful anchor for distressed lives, and bad times, and terrible headlines
  - Jesus asked his disciples who other people said that he was, and they responded to the question with some popular but wrong answers like John the Baptist or one of the prophets raised up and returned
  - But then Peter spoke up and said to Jesus: “*You are the Messiah!*” [Mark 8:29]
  - Then Jesus told Peter and the other disciples *what it meant* for him to be the Messiah, or in Greek, what it meant to be the Christ: “...the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” [Mark 8:31]
  - The Messiah, the Christ suffering and dying – that WAS NOT what Peter or any other disciple thought the Messiah would do, so Peter objected
  - But Jesus Christ firmly told Peter that suffering and death was God’s vision for his mission as the Messiah
- For Peter, for the disciples, and even for us, we want or tend to want a Messiah who is only powerful and glorious. But

instead, Jesus is the Christ who dared to give up power and glory in exchange for suffering and death

- And then, only after that, would come resurrection
- In other words, Jesus the Christ knows exactly how bad, Jesus the Christ knows exactly how distressful, and Jesus the Christ knows exactly how terrible the world can be
- The Good News is that Jesus knows, Jesus still lives, AND Jesus has a heart big enough to wrap himself around the suffering of both hurting individuals, and a heart big enough to wrap himself around the pain of the whole world
- The Eastern Orthodox branch of the church has a special way to express this heart of Jesus
  - Most of you have probably seen ICONS in other churches, in the home of friends, or perhaps in sometimes in your own homes
  - Icons look like stylized painting, that are more flat-looking and two dimensional than fully three dimensional paintings, and these icons are head-on portraits of Jesus or a notable saint
  - Christian icons try to visually portray a deep faithful truth, and so now if I describe the Sacred Heart Icon to you, you will be able to picture this truth in your mind even if you have never seen what the Sacred Heart icon looks like
  - Close your eyes for a minute, take a deep breath and relax, and picture Jesus Christ risen from the dead with a halo... his nail-wounded hands are raised in blessing to you... and in the middle of his chest his heart is exposed
  - His heart is exposed not in a bloody, medical way, but his heart is exposed and glowing to show that Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the Christ who suffered and died has been raised with a heart that glows for us
- The heart of Jesus Christ is there for us, and big enough to share and carry our pain and the pain of the world
- And the sacred heart of Jesus the Messiah who knows first-hand human suffering is the Good News, it is the Good News that we could use today, and this heart-driven passionate Christ

is the Good News which we need to remember and celebrate and share with the world