

Your Job Description  
3 September 2017  
Romans 12:9-21; Mt. 16:21-28  
All Saints Lutheran Church, ELCA  
The Rev. Dr. Jules Erickson

Good morning.

You have heard me mention Pastor Lisa before...I had the joy of preaching her ordination sermon a couple of months ago down in Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, home of the Blossums.

Go Blossums!

Since she started her first call she will text me or call me and say something like:  
“Jules, you cannot make this up. Listen to this story.”

And, I will listen, and laugh – because it is true – you cannot make up some of the things that happens within the walls of a church.

Tuesday night she called me up and said, “Jules, we have BATS in the sanctuary and I called three exterminators and only one of them called me back. It’s so frustrating.”

To which I said: Well, why don’t you just go in there and confirm all of them?  
They’ll be gone in a heartbeat.

Good one.

All of us have a pretty good idea of what we are called to ‘do’ as workers, parents, partners, teachers, preachers, whatever our ‘job’ happens to be.

Most of us have a guideline to follow called a ‘Position Explanation’ or ‘Job Description’.

Documents like that help us stay within the parameters of the work we are called to address.

We talked about that last week in the sermon: if you teach, just teach. If you help, don't judge – put a smile on your face and help.

Today, the Romans passage continues from where we left off last week with more suggestions of how to be a Christian from Paul's perspective.

But before we get in to that, I'd like to tell you a story I heard last Sunday.

Mr. Gislason, my junior and senior high science teacher, was telling me a story about a student that went to Indonesia and was told: if someone asks your religion do not say you are a Christian, tell them that you are a Follower of Jesus.

Semantics apparently make a difference in this case.

I'm wondering if that might have been going on with Jesus and Peter in the gospel lesson we heard today.

Jesus had a very clear mission: giving His life so that everyone, all people, would have new life: resurrection lives – just like his.

He had to go to Jerusalem.

Peter was blocking his way, actually, Peter rebuked Jesus – the Son of God.

Rebuked – another one of those theobabble words that we use all the time, you know...

at the grocery store, filling up the vehicle with gas, in our homes...

What does that actually mean?

The Dictionary says the word rebuke means to express sharp disapproval or criticism of (someone) because of their behavior or actions.

It feels a little like shame to me. A bit judgy.

By the way. Did you know that the research shows that you can alter someone's behavior by guilt but not shame?

Shame is the bossy pants that TELLS you that you'll never measure up.  
Guilt says – you made a mistake, try again. Change. It'll be okay. Really!

Here Peter rebukes Jesus and Jesus shuts him down by actually calling him Satan.  
Not only that, you, Peter, are a stumbling block – you're stuck in this moment –  
not in the life to come.

You know the rest, you heard it read: deny yourselves and follow me.

Follow me. Be a follower of Jesus.

That is the job description for a disciple of Jesus: to follow.

Thank goodness Paul comes along and sheds more light on what that actually  
means.

Here in the Message version it is really straightforward: love. Love from the  
center of who you are. Don't fake it.  
Be good friends. Bless. Don't hit back. Feed people. Give people a cup of cold  
water. Do good.  
Or, as Sandi Alexander said in a recent eulogy for Richard Balsimo: show up.

Show up.

Beth's dad died last week and the wake and funeral were Friday and Saturday  
respectfully.

Friends of ours showed up, fed us, moved mulch; moved in with the doodles;  
checked in by phone or email.

They sent cards of support, bought groceries, ran errands, and simply, beautifully:  
showed up.

They loved us through this time of grief and transition.

“Laugh with your happy friends when they are happy; share tears when they're  
down.” Amen.

Here's the one that I think we all struggle with:  
"Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone.  
If you've got it in you, get along with everybody.  
Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do.  
'I'll do the judging,' says God. 'I'll take care of it.'"

The concern I currently have about our culture is that there are too many people sitting in what Brené Brown calls the 'cheap seats.'

Let me give you her definition from The Daring Way™ curricula.

***"Cheap seats – these seats include the anonymous critics, those who criticize us but are not connected to our day-to-day lives."***

The cheap seats are filled with people that rate your Google site a 'one' and criticize its leadership with scathing words having never entered the doors of this sacred space.

For example, some guy from Utah...I digress.

Google finally took that one down from our site.

I really do not like the cheap seated individuals – especially because we give them too much time and space in our heads and hearts. Anonymous critics and their opinions do not count.

There are other seats, too, that The Daring Way™ curricula examines – and we will, too, as the course will be offered this fall on Wednesday nights...and I quote:

**"The Box Seats** – include the people who built the arena.

In other words, they are the ones who set up the messages about us or dictate the expectations we feel we must meet.

Sometimes we buy into these messages and therefore find ourselves sitting in the section."

*Within the church these are the folks that maybe, just maybe, think that both ends of the ham should be cut off before baking it.*

*Okay. What? I know it's an oldie, but a goodie. Imagine the scene where the youngest generation is cutting off the ends of a ham for Easter brunch. Why are you doing that?*

*Because mom did it? Why did mom do it? I don't know, let's ask grandma. Grandma's answer? The pan was not big enough for the ham. I think you get what I mean here...*

### **Back to Rising Strong:**

**The Critics Section** – these seats include the messages of comparison, scarcity, and shame.

Comparison is when we look at how we measure up to our perceptions of others.

Scarcity is the message or feeling that we are never enough.

Shame is the painful feeling of being less than, and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.

*I will tell you that the only people's opinions that matter are the ones you trust the most – people who can fit on to a piece of paper that is one inch by inch in size.*

*And then there is the final section from Brené.*

**The Support Section** – this section includes the most important seats in the arena: empathy and self-compassion.

The people in our lives who demonstrate empathy for us sit here, as do the supportive messages of empathy and self-compassion.

These people and messages are the key to overcoming what we hear for the other sections and finding the courage to show up and be seen.” Unquote.

Show up. Do good. Be kind.

This is what we are asked to do as Followers of Jesus Christ.

It is OUR Job Description.

In addition to that we are Followers of Jesus Christ who in response to God's grace proclaim the good news, grow in faith, and serve with Joy.

Share the good news. Be kind.

Grow in faith: Show up.

Serve with joy: Do good.

It's not rocket science but it is a lot of work – primarily because we have to unlearn the judgmental wiring and rewire a heart of compassion and empathy towards ourselves and towards those we encounter.

This job description is always expanding, too.

It is fluid and meets us wherever we are at in life.

Perhaps that is the work of the Holy Spirit within its words, sighing when there are no words, abiding with us when we are feeling shame, sad, or isolated.

That's where I'm going to leave it today: Be kind. Show up. Do good.

And for this simple and profound job description we can all say: Thanks be to God. Amen.