



## **Sermons** **from Northwood United Church**

**“Learn to Dance.”**

**Isaiah 40:21-31 Mark 1:29-39**

**Will Sparks**

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May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our lives be acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

I want to start this morning by telling you something I learned while I was away last week. All life falls somewhere on a spectrum of chaos and order, and the most creative place is a kind of dancing between order and chaos. Think about it. It is true on the level of a household, and a whole society. Here we have order: a place for everything and everything in its place; people following the rules. And quite close to it in the middle of this spectrum is chaos, when order is disturbed by some new thing that breaks down the order of things. A new child in the home brings chaos, a joyful state in which nothing will ever be the same. The messy part of making dinner when things get peeled and chopped up and flour gets on your shirt. The messy part of a relationship when human differences unceremoniously bump into each other. Creative life emerges in the dance between order and chaos.

However, further out on the order side of the spectrum we have control- order so carefully adhered to that nothing unexpected is allowed- order so entrenched that new life just never happens. Here we find the home that is so perfectly put together and nothing is out of place to the degree that you wonder if humans actually live in this home. I used to live in a townhouse complex where some of my neighbors were so bound by the rules that the kids dared not go outside. Order is good. Too much order becomes control and it is a scary sterile place, destructive to the soul and to community. And at the far other end of the spectrum, beyond chaos we have chamos- chaos gone viral. This is the home that is so chaotic you can't find anything and it's hard to move. Here life is out of control completely. Chamos often leads to either despair and depression, or revolution. The protest has become a riot. Too much chaos becomes chamos and it is a scary hurtful place destructive to the soul and to community.

Can anybody relate to this when you think about your life or our communities, about the world? Now think about our gospel for this week. In Mark we have a fast moving story of Jesus healing, engaging with what the bible calls demons, who, for our purposes at this moment we might think of as the powers at either end of the spectrum, the voices of control or chamos. He goes from place to place, proclaiming the gospel and when his disciples search him out wanting him to set up shop in one place he says, no. At this stage, the gospel needs to spread, must not become too domesticated. He is dancing among the rising expectations and you can hear the excitement in the voices of the disciples as they come to him during his quiet time in the morning. “Guess what! You're a hit, a success, a superstar! Everybody is asking for you...” Jesus simply replies, “I didn't come here for stardom and fame. I didn't even come to heal every person who needs healing. We must leave this place and move on. I must not let popularity unhinge me.”

How did he do that? How did he manage to stay focused despite the demands, despite the pace, and despite the temptations? How did he keep on track, not venturing too far from that creative place between order and chaos?

Well I think a clue lies in the early morning, and his choice to be in a “lonely place.” Feeling the last of the cold of the night and the first of the day's warmth, that crossing point when you see and feel the change from night and day. It is a powerful place to re-focus, draw self near to your deep self, and place all of that in the openness and wideness of the mystery of

what is happening about you (as night evolves into day, sleep into wake, silence into sound). In that quiet shifting time, God moves us, draws back the curtain, and draws us back to the purpose of our life- re-hinges us, reconnects us to the pivot point, and the solid post upon which our life swings back and forth.

Do you have moments in your life in which you stop, steal away to a lonely place or a lonely time in which you open yourself to the re-hinging presence of God? It doesn't have to be fancy- it may be a walk, a morning yoga routine, a simple cup of tea. Do you have people who are that lonely place in your life where you go and are reminded what your life is all about? Do you have places you go where you are free enough of the order and the chaos of life to remember who you are in the midst of it all? Adopting a practice of returning to that grounded place and finding moments to return to that grounded place, like Jesus in the early morning, is critical.

I believe that we all must learn to dance the creative dance of order and chaos. We will all dance it differently. Some of us will lean toward one side or the other, struggle more with one side or the other. Sometimes life swings feverishly back and forth. Sometimes life will take us far out on one end or the other- these can be the most painful times, when the tables are overturned and the powers of can move swiftly in to exert themselves.

The gospel proclamation, the good news to which Jesus pointed and in which he lived, to which he called us with his life is that no matter where you find yourself on this spectrum, God's spirit calls you in to dance, and to find the holy ground in the middle where life abundant can emerge. Amen.