

SIERRA_WEEK_2_6cbxy

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Speakers:

Natalie Thomas - 21.85%

James Thomas - 18.82%

J. Sierra Reyes - 59.33%

Notes:

No notes.

Natalie Thomas 00:00:00

Hello and welcome to Bedtime Chapel's weekly scripture study. I am Natalie Thomas.

James Thomas 00:00:05

And I'm James Thomas. We are deacons in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.

Natalie Thomas 00:00:10

And Bedtime Chapel grew out of a shared desire of ours to support families who want to know, love, and follow Jesus in a post Christian world.

James Thomas

00:00:18

We offer a nightly prayer service that includes a short gospel reading. In this episode, we will be covering the readings for the second week of Epiphany, and we are continuing with Canon Sierra, who was our guest last week. And we are very glad to welcome you back. So as we continue our conversation moving through the beginning of the Gospel according to Mark, we were wondering if you would share a little bit about your experience forming children in faith.

00:00:48

How has it influenced your own relationship with the church and your own understanding of Jesus?

Natalie Thomas

00:00:54

Yeah.

J. Sierra Reyes

00:00:54

So I began ministry in Savannah, Georgia, and the rector and his wife at the time, who was also a priest, were so passionate about children's faith and ministry. And the wife, who was also a priest, created these events called parable parties that she would have for folks to be able to. Children to be able to engage with school scripture and the storytellings of Jesus.

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And I was a young priest at the time, and I loved the emphasis on creating opportunities for children to engage with scripture in the ways that are natural and comfortable to them, which is through play, through imaginative storytelling, through feeling and interactive activities that sometimes can be silly, but always with a message.

00:01:51

So I'm really thankful for that experience of just also seeing the fun that can be tapped into when engaging with scripture with children.

Natalie Thomas

00:02:04

I love that as someone who is admittedly not fun, as a human very often confirmed. It's not my strength. It's not my strength. I'm trying to be more fun. And I think that having children is a real invitation into play, you know. And so I love this idea that not only do my

kids invite me to be more playful with the world around me in a material sense, but also in a spiritual sense.

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And this, you know, what would it look like for me to, you know, play through the story of Zacchaeus with my kids and see what comes up for them. Right. And how. And how they acted out. And how does that joy and delight bring me closer to Jesus in a different way? What you said about the parable party is a great introduction to our next question because we do hear in this last set of readings, many parables and Jesus talking about teaching and story intentionally.

00:03:02

And we're curious about in your own home with. As you talked about last week, your husband and your daughter how storytelling or parable, telling either the stories of Jesus or using modern day parables shows up when you're talking about faith.

J. Sierra Reyes

00:03:19

One of the things that the parables really teach us and give to us are ways to make sense of ethics or how to treat one another. Many of them just sort of deep down are kind of virtue training and teachings. And so I think within our household, we definitely like to hear and experience how our daughter thinks through things.

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And so we use just sort of storytelling and parables just to hear from her as far as what her understanding is of whatever situation she's experiencing at school or among friends, and to take a sort of a cue from Jesus and ask more questions than statements and to really get an understanding from her as far as how she sees things.

00:04:18

And what I'm learning is often the way she sees things are different than how I would see them. And so just being in a posture of curiosity more than anything, because it's through those questions and sort of inviting her more and more out of her shell to be able to share what she sees as the question at hand and what are her options of how to address that question.

00:04:46

But really coming from the idea that the answer is within her, we can definitely guide her. And I feel like that wisdom and that just source of truth, I believe that's in her and just trying to coax that out. So we do that through just asking a lot of questions and being

curious with her about how she sees the world.

James Thomas

00:05:09

Amen. As we continue. And we actually started talking about this a little last week when we were talking about or we were keeping the feast of St. Peter, the confession of St. Peter. But one of the distinctive features of the Gospel of Mark is that the disciples are portrayed as consistently throughout the story, not getting it.

00:05:30

They sort of miss it. And you're talking about speaking in parables, and the disciples often miss it with Jesus as we begin to talk to children about that and about the betrayal of the disciples. And it strikes me now that with a young child, their introduction to a figure like Peter or John or James or Andrew might have just been a statue or a stained glass window in a church somewhere.

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To whatever extent they've seen this image carved in stone or depicted in artwork, maybe classically depicted in the Italianate style or something like that, something probably quite inaccurate historically in terms of how they look. But what does it mean to talk to kids about the disciples, who they are? Who are these people that are hoofing it around Galilee and the Decapolis and Capernaum with Jesus.

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In the Gospel of Mark, I would.

J. Sierra Reyes

00:06:31

First start by saying that the disciples, for me personally, for my own faith journey, is so. They are so necessary for me to understand just how countercultural Jesus was. That the disciples are, in my mind, mirrors to sort of bring and ground the just amazing radical message of hospitality and generosity that Jesus was preaching, how that did not fit into the world that Jesus found himself in and wouldn't fit in the world that we find ourselves in now.

00:07:16

So I feel like the disciples are like these places in which we can stand in their footprints and like, just sort of hear what Jesus is saying through this posture of disbelief and wondering and confusion. So I feel like the Gospels are so beautifully written to have that instrument through the disciples. I will also say that the disciples, along with other saints we have within our tradition, I think, are opportunities too, for our children to understand the very

enfleshment or incarnation of not only our Christ, but also the incarnation of our faith through real people, real circumstances, real times.

00:08:09

And so the disciples are, again, like mirrors that we can see our own lives within. And the confusion and, you know, all of the emotions that the disciples display in the Gospels are real emotions. Feeling like, who is the greatest of us? Or dropping everything in order to follow Jesus. And that feeling of, did I make the right decision?

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Or, you know, though I was a fisherman, I at least knew what the life of a fisherman was going to be like. I don't know what this new life of following who they think is a political figure, but who turns out not to be, what that's like. So I really value the role of the disciples in the telling of the story.

00:08:59

And, you know, even what you mentioned last week about Peter and him being called rock and how in Greek, Petra is rock, you know, like, for me, that's a joke. Like, I think that's hilarious.

James Thomas

00:09:12

Yeah.

J. Sierra Reyes

00:09:13

And he thinks when he walks in water and he realizes and gets scared, he thinks like a rock. And yet it's also, Peter, where Jesus built the church, like, upon this rock, I will build the church. And so just also showing that in our imperfection, in our idiosyncrasies and our things that we think are limiting, God is able to redeem and able to transform into something that is central to God's mission.

00:09:42

And so I would hope that for our children, like, for my daughter, for her to know that God uses all of her, not just the things that she's proud about, but even the things that she would feel insecure about, that God's able to Use all of her in order to bring forth love and justice in the world and to really love those things about her, just as God loves them about her.

Natalie Thomas

00:10:10

This is really touching me, what you're saying, Sierra. I grew up in a house where there

wasn't such tenderness around making mistakes or being playful with them. And that's something that I'm really trying intentionally not to pass on to my children, that if someone spills milk, we just say, oh, wow, that's silly, you know, or that's playful and even imperfections or missteps.

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And we've really adopted this phrase of silly mom, silly, you know, And Phoebe will say that kind of sometimes when she, you know, might slip or drop something. Our daughter will also has started to say that when she drops something, she'll say, oh, silly or silly mom, silly dad. And I love that.

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I love that there can be an acceptance and awareness of, wow, I dropped. But there's not. Doesn't make me bad, you know, that isn't something that we need to stop and stress about. And I can really imagine Jesus saying, silly Peter, silly Thomas. You know, just. There's a love that undergirds it. And it's something that I hope, you know, we have with one another and also with our kids.

J. Sierra Reyes

00:11:15

Amen.

Natalie Thomas

00:11:17

On the continued topic of parables, this week we hear the very famous parable of the Sower, in which Jesus talks about scripture scattering seeds and the importance of good soil for seeds to take to and to root into and to grow. And I'm just. I'm curious what your thought is. And I don't think there's a right answer or a wrong answer.

00:11:37

But to what extent we as caregivers can influence the soil of our kids? Or to what extent is it, you know, we get who we get, and how might we engage as parents on that spectrum?

J. Sierra Reyes

00:11:53

Yeah, I would engage with that question a couple of different ways. The first, and I think I get this from my mom. My mom was a person of really deep faith, and I really feel as though she prayed over my life from day one. And there's a. I don't know, there's something really special about when you feel like your life has been prayed over.

00:12:17

And I feel that for my mom. But one of the things my mom would always say is that, like, I

don't belong to her. I belong to God, and that she is a steward of that. And so she wants to be a source of love, but at the end of the day, I'm not hers.

00:12:35

I'm God's and so that sense of giving a person over to God is something that I think I've taken from my mom of. As much as I want our daughter to be successful, whatever that means, I don't know what even that means. I also know that it is not my doing, but it's really God's doing.

00:12:58

And for me, as someone who also, you know, has been around households of perfectionism, for me, that gives me a place just to breathe, to know that it's not up to me or the decisions of my husband and I to figure out who our daughter will be. But that is our daughter's journey.

00:13:18

And so then our role is to till the soil. You know, like the parable of creating an environment where her authentic self can take root. And so for me, what I find that to be really important is what is her self narrative or one way I've heard it described, which is really dated.

00:13:42

But like I once heard someone say about everyone has a tape player that sort of plays in their mind about the things that they believe about themselves, about their capabilities, about their being in the world. And sometimes that tape player can be very critical and can be very dehumanizing to that person. Oh, you're not good enough, you're not smart enough.

00:14:12

All the, you should be doing this, you should be doing that. And so I really feel like for my husband and I, our. Our call is to put as many affirming phrases in that tape player so that when she is out in the world, her psyche, her soul, speaks of positivity about the gift she is and not anything other than that.

00:14:40

And so for me, when I hear you say tilling the soil, that's how I take it as far as how can I sort of pre program that tape player as much as possible to have messages of affirmation, messages of love, messages of grace and mercy, messages of confidence, and allow that to be the narrative she goes out into the world in.

And I think this is in some ways how within society I feel like, particularly raising a young woman of a young child of color. She's going to hear alternative messages. And so I want the messages that rise up within her to be of God and to be of God's love for her. And so for my husband and I, that's how we want to till that soil for her so that she goes out into the world fully confident in her belovedness.

James Thomas

00:15:44

Thank you so much for that beautiful personal testimony on the parable of the Sower. And thank you for joining us again this week. And we are looking forward to continuing the journey for a few more weeks with you, Sierra, as we continue on our mark and journey here in Epiphany. I also want to thank Natalie for being with us, being here with me on this journey as well.

00:16:09

And thank you to the wider community of people praying with us. We want to stay in touch with you. You can find us on Facebook and Instagram. Our handle is Bedtime Chapel. Follow us, let us know what's working for you, what's not working for you. You can always email us at bedtimechapel at gmail com.

00:16:26

All of that is on our website. Same handle, Bedtime Chapel. And until next time, we'll be praying with.