

Sermon, *Let Them*
The Very Rev. David J. Marshall, All Angels 3.16.25

I have some bad news for you. No matter how hard you try, you cannot change someone else's behavior. You cannot change their mind. You cannot change their attitude. Each person can choose to change their mind, their attitude and their behavior; but, you cannot change it for them without their permission. More bad news: no matter how hard you try, some people will have negative feelings about you. Your children are going to make their own decisions. Same with your grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and so on. If your parents are still alive, you also cannot change their minds or their behaviors either.

What is the good news then? You have the power to change your own mind, your behavior, your attitude and what you think about other people.

I have been reading a book about this, titled *Let Them* by Mel Robins. She tells a story about how the book came about. Her son had a prom. All four couples showed up at the Robins's home. As they were getting ready to leave for dinner, she asked her son where they are going for dinner. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Amigos" which is a local taco shop. She didn't think that was right on prom night so she got all worked up and then got other parents involved. They called around to find who has seating for all these teens on a prom night – the answer, none. Mel felt like her head was going to explode. Her daughter, home from college, took her into the kitchen and said these life changing words: "Mom, if they want to go to Amigos, let them." Let them go out into the rain, unprepared, let them spill taco meat on their fancy clothes; let them. Her daughter went on, "You are ruining this night for dad, for your son, for all the kids and especially for yourself; let them go."

It changed her life.

She worked on the Let Them theory and added a second, and equally important part, "Let me." Let them go out into the rain to a taco shop on prom night. Let me take a moment to pause, take a breath, and let me be the best mom I can be by letting them make their own decisions. Let them/let me has changed her life.

Mel Robins is not a theologian so let me add in some theology around what she is saying. In today's Gospel lesson (Luke 13:31-35), Jesus is told that King Herod is out to kill him. Jesus responds by saying that he – Jesus – will keep doing what he is called to do and will head to Jerusalem. He then laments that he wishes he could be like a mother hen who stretches out her wings to protect her chicks but, "You were not willing." In other words, we are like the chicks who run out from underneath the protection of the mother hen's wings – we were not willing to stay and be protected. It's like he is saying, let them go out from underneath my protective wings. Let me continue doing the work I am called to do.

Luke does not record the pauses between statements here. But, in my mind's eye, I see Jesus pausing, taking a couple of breathes before responding with what he said above. He was gathering himself first and then, in the words of Mel Robins: Let me do what I am called to do.

In our reading from St. Paul's letter to the Church in Philippi, he uses some of his harshest language for those who he called, "enemies of the cross". But, the point of that section of the letter is for those in the church to "stand fast" in the faith and tradition that has been passed to them. To imitate Paul who is imitating Christ. The Let Them Theory would say: let those who are enemies of the cross live as they are going to live. Let us, however, pause and remember who we are called to be. He reminded them to live humbly like Christ. It takes a humble person to recognize that other people are going to do what they want to do. It also takes a humble person to say to oneself that I am going to focus on what I can change in myself.

Again, the bad news is that you cannot change the actions and ways of other people. If Jesus couldn't; if Paul couldn't, nor can we. On Friday, I was trying to get onto the island for Anne Robert's Memorial Service. But, someone in front of me did not have the same concept of time and speed as me. They thought 28 mph was plenty for the Gulf of Mexico Drive (posted limit is 45). I had to practice this sermon – if they want to go 28 mph, let them. And, let me take a moment to breathe, relax, and practice my homily so that I can be the best priest I can be when I (eventually) make it. And, it works.

It takes about six seconds for our minds to react to an emotion that pops up. It's pretty quick. And, there is very little we can do to stop it. But, we do not have to engage in every emotion that comes up. If we don't engage in a particular emotion, it generally leaves in about 90 seconds. If we do react, we can carry that emotion through our next three human encounters (or more if we really try). It's human nature; it's how we are designed. But, if we pause, take a breath, and remind ourselves to stand fast in our faith, to remember who we are, that 90 seconds will pass and we will be all the better for it.

Following in our faith tradition of letting others be who they are going to be and for us to take a moment to pause, reflect, and remember who we are in Christ, it will help us remain steadfast in our faith. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.