

The Road Less Traveled – June 29, 2018

Sigh. Another week. Another deluge of people behaving badly. It's become almost a daily guarantee that we'll see at least one story that makes us shake our heads and wonder when it was that incivility became the norm in our society. Just this week you had the woman in San Francisco who called the police on an 8-year-old girl selling water on a street corner. There was the Virginia restaurant owner who booted White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders and her family because she works for the President. Then there was the woman on a Spirit Airlines flight who became irate after the flight was diverted because of a health emergency on board. Video showed the woman screaming and cursing at her fellow passengers and trying to rush the cockpit. And last but certainly not least, there are daily tweets from the President of the United States ridiculing people with whom he disagrees. And those who disagree with him? The give as good as they get.

We are becoming a people for whom confrontation is our default position. We are becoming a people for whom honest dialogue and debate is becoming impossible. We are becoming a people who have lost sight of the fundamental truth that we can actually learn from those who disagree with us, who don't see the world as we do. And we are becoming a people who increasingly see the world in stark black and white and who evaluate personhood based on whose side someone is on. If someone agrees with me, he is one of the good guys. If someone disagrees with me, she is a bad person.

It's even happening in the church. As The United Methodist Church heads toward a special called General Conference in February 2019 to try to find common ground on the issue of same-gender relationships, it's happening to us. The various sides launch vicious little volleys at each other in the name of faith, and it starts to feel like my choice is between loving Jesus and loving each other. And I've never thought of those two as mutually exclusive.

All this is to say that people are watching. You and I live out our faith on the world stage. Our faith is not something that stops at the door to the Sanctuary. It is supposed to define us. People are supposed to see it. And so I guess the question is, what are we showing them? Jesus managed to love even those who sought to kill him. How much of that love do others see in us?

Because it makes a difference, all the difference in the world. Amid all of the news of people behaving badly this week, there was one story that gave me hope. The story started with a Facebook post from a woman who was on an Alaska Airlines flight. On board that flight was a man who is deaf and blind. He was flying alone in the dark silence of his world, and the flight crew struggled to communicate with him. Clara Daly, a 15-year-old from California, took American Sign Language her freshman year in high school. When she realized the situation, she knelt down in front of the man and began signing in his hand. She made sure his needs were met and kept him company for the rest of the flight. She made sure he was not alone. You can read the story [here](#).

The kindness of strangers. Or people behaving badly. What do people say about us?

See you Sunday.