

SESSION FIVE // Kinship and Kingdom with Father Greg Boyle

Watch Film

<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/kinship-and-kingdom>

Going Deeper

“No kinship, no peace. No kinship, no justice.” According to Father Boyle, working towards any worthy goals you want to focus on won’t manifest without kinship. Describe ways in which you experience *kinship*—“exquisite mutuality with each another” as Father Boyle puts it—not only with God, but in other areas of your life. Where do you experience a taste of the Kingdom?

Father Boyle recites an old riddle: “The only difference between God and me is God never thinks He’s me.” How do you play God? What contemplative practices do you keep (silence, meditation, prayer, solitude, sabbath, etc.) to “break out of a God that is so tiny and a mirror image of who [you] are”? If you don’t know any contemplative practices, spend time researching something that interests you.

Father Boyle expresses that you can’t demonize people you know and love. He discusses throughout the film ways we can grow from a fractured humanity towards just being “us”. Ask for help from God and trusted others to give you insight to where you put up barriers to “others”. Just as an experiment. Sometimes we need help seeing barriers we’ve installed to keep people at a distance. Write about what you discover. Pray about it.

Father Boyle says that Jesus is about a “Compassion that’s really larger than the one that we have... Compassion that seeks to stand in awe at what people have to carry and how they carry it rather than judgment. Awe is where God would have us be. Where people are honoring other rather than judging...” How have you experienced awe like he describes? It brings tears to my eyes. There is strength and beauty to be found in atypical people and places.

Try to imagine a God who wants a divided humanity. What happens in your heart? What is the next right thing for you to do to promote “us”.

Jesus was only about dismantling the barriers that exclude. Jesus was only about expanding the circle of compassion, hoping no one would be standing outside of it.—Father Gregory Boyle

Reflection

Us and them is the opposite of God...how do we obliterate the illusion that we are separate, and how do we get to a place where its just "us"?...There is no such thing as an enemy....

Demonizing is always a lie, it's always untruth.—Father Greg Boyle

My daughter was fired this weekend for breaking a policy. She worked at a Christian company, and had never been written up once. She was scapegoated, to make a point to other staff members that even people with good records are not above the law. What got me about the way they fired her, was that they chose to say things that were unprofessionally hateful and demonizing coupled with “you know how deeply we love you”, likely because they are a faith-based company and feel permissive to do so.

Even while shaking with anger and emotionally overrun, I chose to call the man who fired her, who also happens to be the owner of the company. I thanked him for her job and let him know how much growth I had seen in her over the last year and a half. It's so true, it's been a good experience for her, even this firing. But I also let him know, that it's not okay to attack someone's character or to use God to shame others in any way. It's spiritually abusive. I told him a story of how I knew my daughter's heart was just fine, and how God was certainly okay with who she is and is becoming.

I let him know when he brought certain things up that I didn't call to challenge his decisions or beg for her job back, just to tell him what I knew was true and to express my gratitude. I chose to reach across the table to someone with different beliefs about God than mine. I don't know what came over me—this is way out of character from my normal run-and-hide, duck-and-cover, save-yourself-at-all-cost behavior.

Maybe I did it because this film inspired me this past week, and hearing Father Boyle's words in my head over and over—that *demonizing is always a lie, it's always untruth*—which brought up thought after negative thought that I had during the 2016 Presidential election cycle. I made enemies of candidates, of people on TV, of people who fanned hate and acted against brother and sisterhood. I re-tasted a lot of undigested, unsettling material.

I know we could have walked out and flipped the not-so-nice finger at this company and made our way on with life with seemingly justified ugliness—only we couldn't this time. I couldn't not stand for her honor, and that I couldn't not speak truth in Love and with dignity. I couldn't make him the enemy—*okay, I still harbor irritation*

and frustration and quite a bit of “who does he think he is”, but this is a brand new hurt, and I am still in process—let’s say I don’t want to make him my enemy, that I want to draw close to God’s source of Love and learn how to stand heart to heart with this man and Love regardless.

I had a vision about the earth during all of this, and in the vision, I was shown a globe, with a line drawn around it marking the equator. Then my eyes were called to the United States and Mexico border, and then I saw state lines, and outlines of countries...even outlines of continents where the sea meets the land. Then, I saw the globe turn, the lines fall away, and the earth come alive! Even the sea borders were gone as the waters revealed how the land continues to slope beneath the water never letting go of itself completely.

Every place, connected.

I know I have given a zoomed in, powder-puff view of a world-wide issue of enemy making. We have found ways to hate ourselves, and project hatred onto others. We have found reasons to fight, reasons to harden. We have forgotten we are all connected in deep and superficial ways. It will take each of us in our everyday lives to step over invisible lines, to reach through barriers that may not exist, and to dismantle walls built on our lands and in our hearts while holding to the center of God’s always greater Love. May God’s Kingdom come.