

The Rev. Kate Byrd  
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## A Jesus Worldview

Many of you may know that last September I traveled to Yellowstone National Park on a retreat with Rev. Kristen Tucker, from our neighboring congregation First Baptist. Kristen was gracious enough to invite me as her roommate for this 7 day all expense paid excursion to one of the United States oldest National Parks. But I have to be honest with you, when she first asked me if I would like to attend a retreat entitled “The Jesus Worldview,” I was hesitant. Not just because I would be leaving my husband alone with our three children for 7 days and 6 nights, but also because I had no idea what a Jesus Worldview was. And, while I maybe should have originally thought hey, Jesus, yeah I’m down. Or, even their Christian ministers, I’m a Christian minister, this will be awesome (because let’s be real we’re going to Yellowstone), that was not my first reaction. My first reaction was hesitation and, I hate to admit, maybe even a bit of suspicion. As I wondered, do they believe what I believe, is their Jesus my Jesus?

Of course, in the end, my overwhelming desire to go to Yellowstone and spend time with Kristen won out. At the end of the day I was going to one of the world’s most incredible geological sights for the mere cost of a plane ticket, and I was going to get to do it with another Woman minister whom I love and respect. But, in the moment when she invited me, I wondered what I was getting myself into. And, what I got myself into though one of the most transformational journeys of my life, even more vast than the expanse and diverse than the topography of the Yellowstone and Grand Tetons combined (both of which we traveled extensively). As our guide, the Rev. Johnny Pierce presented us with the idea and challenge that we, as Christians, especially in today's world, need to take on a Jesus Worldview. In order that we might profess our faith, and understand our religious identity, through the lens of the one whom we as Christians proclaim to follow, that being Jesus Christ.

Today, we hear Paul say in his letter to the Corinthians, “If I proclaim the gospel [the good news of Jesus Christ], this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!” Going on to speak of the beauty, gift, and blessing that is our Gospel and good news. A Gospel we are called, and hopefully more so compelled, to share with the world. As Paul states, “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. [And] I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.” Now, in order for us to truly (or at least slightly) begin to understand where Paul is coming from as he states his purpose to “become all things to all people” for the sake the gospel, we have to go back to last week's reading from 1 Corinthians Chapter 8. And, if you don’t remember it well then... shame on you. Just kidding, I don’t either, so let me refresh our memories. As last week's theme was “concerning food sacrificed to idols,” a discussion Paul begins with those infamous words: “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” Going on to say, “Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him.” Attempting to address both the wealthier Corinthians' concerns regarding various high society parties where meat sacrificed to idol gods was commonly served; and the less wealthy Corinthians who didn’t even have access to purchasing said meat in the first place. Leading Paul to conclude that “if food is a cause for their falling,” i.e. the wealthy and not wealthy Corinthians, consuming or not consuming meat sacrificed to idols, then “I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.” And while to me the consuming or not consuming of meat may seem a trite thing to argue over, and even more so possibly a strange (maybe even comical) thing to divide an entire church over. At the same time, an argument that is concerned with the haves vs. the have nots, or even more so the religiously correct vs incorrect, is one I am, and I would guess you as well, are fairly familiar with.

For Paul the Gospel's message is centered around the freedom (i.e. salvation) we receive through Jesus Christ as it is grounded most assuredly in love. God's love for us in Jesus Christ, and our love now for one another because of Jesus Christ. But, this freedom that Christ offers, is not purely the absence of restraint, but the blessing of God's liberation in love to open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds to the gift that being free through Jesus, now invites us to become united together, as one body in Christ. Me to you and you to me, in that greater, holier, life freeing and life giving blessing we call salvation.

It is interesting to me, that I was so skeptical of what a "Jesus Worldview" might be, and more so what I would learn on those 7 days in one of our country's most breathtaking landscapes. I mean we share the same faith, right? We live in the same country. Shouldn't we have the same "worldview"? Why are we so skeptical of one another? As I learned from Johnnie on my trip, and as I (and I would guess you) have experienced in the world, on the news, and even maybe with our peers, being Christian today means many different things to many different people. And too often, I fear, it means being associated with specific and often narrowly defined doctrinal beliefs that surround hot button political, ethical, and social issues. Which are almost always bolstered by various verses from within the 66 vast and varied books of our Bible, allowing us to take on a Biblical Worldview, instead of a Jesus Worldview. Because, for the most part a Biblical Worldview can support whatever beliefs, ideologies, and theological standpoints we like. Often, if not always, leaving Jesus behind. This is not to say the books of our Bible are not good and sacred texts. They are foundational to our faith, yes, they are sacred, yes, and they are to be held in love as part of our redemption narrative, for sure. Not as fodder to argue we are right and someone else is wrong. And this is where the necessity of "A Jesus Worldview" comes in, keeping us faithful to the Gospel. That good news of Jesus Christ and freedom of salvation. Allowing us no longer to be bound by the obligations of our world, or ideologies, or even our own viewpoints, but instead to one another, to God, and even to ourselves in love. A love so powerful that it can compel us to look beyond arguments, beyond doctrines, maybe even beyond our desire to be right. So that we might look towards one another as beloved children of God.

Last week I invited the Rev. Johnnie Pierce to speak at our vestry retreat on the Jesus Worldview so that we could see how this new lens might inform our view of the world and our future at St. Paul's. In our time together one of the biggest questions that came up was how might a Jesus Worldview spur us towards the work of not only charity but also (maybe more so) justice. Or, to put it in the words of Jesus, how might a Jesus worldview allow us to more fully love God, with all our heart, mind and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves. While this question felt (and frankly in reality is) daunting, I truly believe it starts with simply sharing the love of God with those around us, and moving from there. Taking on the words of Paul, "If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me." An obligation to share the gift and blessing of the good news. The good news that we are not called to be right or wrong, or to have all the answers, we are simply called to love, to love God, to love ourselves, and to love one another. I hope you will join our vestry and I as we work to consider how taking on a Jesus worldview might shape the way we take on Paul's call to share the Gospel in all its good news, in all its blessings, and in all its love! Amen.