

Note: We transferred scripture readings for June 24th back to June 21st in order highlight John the Baptist's Nazarene-ness

The collect for today sums up God's call right now: *Following his (John's) example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord*

I have been with you since 2017. You've probably figured out how I process the world. You can count the number of overtly "political sermons" I have given on the fingers of one hand. Trinity Sunday 2020 brought me up to four. "Nice guy" is a default setting for me. But even nice guys can irritate. I made the point on Trinity Sunday to stop saying "all lives matter." I used Luke 15 as way to frame this moment where we seem to be convulsing as a society:

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'

At the bare minimum, being more like Jesus is not forgetting the one sheep dying in a ravine. When someone's house is on fire you would not say "all houses matter" (even though they do). No, you would leave your safe house and start spraying water on the burning house. OR, at least not criticize the fire department. God loves all of us equally, yet that love is *expressed* unequally toward those most in need.

Respect As we are coming out of the deep thaw of quarantine, we have all lost our d..n minds. We are not treating each other with respect. In the thick of quarantine, we had these moments of calm and connection. Remember those moments as we start to pick fights with our neighbors and each other. ***We need a time of sanctification which I will address later,*** but I first want to address respect. This failure happens regularly, but it is on technicolor display at the dumpster fire that is nextdoor. Facebook looks like a well-watered garden in comparison.

Respectless NextDoor One group judges small businesses desperate to re-open. It is almost beneath consideration to entertain an economic perspective because "they" are just greedy and reckless with public health. This judgy group is horrified at the state capital protests, and they chastise the social distance practices of these money crazed monsters. Some are even blithe in the face of the economic catastrophe facing our neighbors. Yet they have little public health concern with the current protests. There does not seem to be an organizing principle for figuring out best practice. We just distrust the people we reflexively distrust. Public health trumps all until it doesn't.

Others flatten and conflate this moment in time too. If you show any solidarity with Black Lives Matter, you are an anarcho-police-defunding-antifa-lunatic. If you are

trying to consciously consider this intersection of economics, generational legacy, racism and elder health, you are part of a conspiratorial cabal trying to get Trump out of office. You are anti-business, anti-faith, anti-common sense. Wearing a mask is socialist plot.

Would you like a troll? I don't think as a community we were brave for kneeling five minutes on Thursday, June 4. We could have done a whole lot more (and still can). If you don't know what I am talking about, we were working with other churches to express solidarity with the suffering. Unsurprisingly, it earned Kimberly a troll's rage. The trolls believed that she / we hate freedom. Because we knelt we are anti-business and want to defund the police. They suggested, helpfully, that police protection should be removed from Danville altogether so that we could see how anarchy and looting tastes... Huh?

Back to Sanctification In honor of the John the Baptist's day please entertain sanctification as way to healthy respect. John the Baptist was a Nazarite. He was a person set apart for holy work. There were three components of a nazarite vow.

1. Don't get a haircut. We had that covered already until the hair salons reopened.
2. Don't touch dead bodies. Most of us have that covered with little to no effort.
3. Don't drink wine - I know that's a bridge too far.

What could you accomplish if *you* took a vow? I am not suggesting teetotaling long haired vow, but a vow of respect. A vow to let God can sanctify you to accomplish the work of holiness. Remember the opening collect? *Following his (John's) example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake.*

What is one thing (small or big) that God could use you to accomplish? Maybe it's as huge as racial reconciliation, or as small as stepping out of your comfort zone to bless someone you know who needs emotional, spiritual, and/or financial help?

Step 1 Pray to *want* to make a vow (I know that seems like semantics, but I have to pray to want to pray when feeling spiritually dry)

Step 2 Take a very specific, action-oriented vow with a time limit. I.e. for the next two weeks, I will call five people. I will offer to help with x, y, z. I will resist the easy question, "Let me know if there is anything I can do?"

Step 3 Just do it.

Step 4 Stop. I know this sounds a little goofy, but we need a fence around commitments. Things like:

"I will always march with the vulnerable"

"I will never yell at my kids"

"I will stay on this diet for the rest of my life" are all guaranteed failures because they don't have achievable markers. Make a vow, make it temporary, do it, stop, and let it sink in. Have a great week, **Todd**

Nerd notes on Nazarenes

Two examples of nazirites in the Hebrew Bible are Samson (Judges 13:5) and Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11). They came from barren mothers and did not choose it. Hannah made an oath over Samuel and God said so (Samson). However, nazirite vows are most often time limited and voluntary.

A nazirite vow is an ambiguous idea in the New Testament. Paul cut off his hair because of a vow he had taken – maybe the end of nazirite vow? He was not exactly in strict compliance to the details of a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18.) Acts 21:23-24 talks more broadly of how Jewish Christians occasionally took vows. James, the brother of Jesus, Bishop of Jerusalem, was likely a nazirite. His prayer life was so rigorous that they said his knees were like that of a camel's (from copious amounts of time praying on his knees).

Nazarite vows that you might not expect Some Rastafari take very specific nazirite vows. Rastas have concluded that Samson had dreadlocks and they follow in his footsteps. They can even quote chapter and verse. Leviticus 21:5 Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies.



But a Nazarene is not necessarily a priest Nazarite vow is voluntary. But Old Testament priesthood *was not a choice*. If you were in the tribe of Levi, you were a priest, or you were a Levite case closed. The thought of choosing to become an Episcopal priest is so alien to the Old Testament. If born a Levite you served God as a priest or tabernacle assistant. *The end*