“Inside Out: Knowing Ourselves -Type 1 The Reformer”

Luke 3:1-22

Today as we begin a new year and a new sermon series, I invite you to use this time to look deeply within yourself and within all of life. Even though there is no way we could possibly get into the fullness and depths of the spiritual tools I am using during the sermons because of time limitations, I hope that you will be challenged to explore them more on your own. Knowing ourselves on a soul level takes some intentional work because our egos and personalities often get in the way. In traditional language, we talk about this as sin, not just the actions that separate us from God and from others, but also the motivations behind them which often separate us from our true selves. Our spiritual practices, our self-awareness, and our relationships are some of the ways God reaches out to us to form us into more wholesome human beings. Today we will be using the spiritual tool of the Enneagram to help us gain insights into a biblical character and into ourselves. As I mentioned earlier, the Enneagram is an ancient personality typology that is supposed to help us discover or become more fully aware of our methods of coping with life, which often hinder our full potential for growth and for life. These methods are our ways of handling difficult feelings in childhood but in adulthood end up hindering our ability to fully love or be loved. This is where the saying “yesterday’s solutions become today’s problems” holds so true. Our work during this sermon series is to become aware and to bring these methods out to the light of Christ. We cannot transform these patterns ourselves. What we can do is to bring them out of the shadows and expose them to the light, which lessens their power and grip over our lives. The light and love of Christ are the only forces strong and yet gentle enough to transform and heal us inside out. If you are in a good place in your life and feel that all is well with you, I hope that you can take this opportunity as a tool for greater compassion for and understanding of others. Some may wonder why we need to look inside when there seems to be more urgent work for healing and serving the world. My encouragement to you is to look at the way of Jesus which involved both action and contemplation: Inward and outward work.

There are nine types of personalities according to the Enneagram and today we will start with the Ones. Please note that we all have all nine types in us, but only one is more dominant. Also, most of us have wings and so depending on the situation, we may act as a different number.

Type 1 personalities are often known as the Perfectionist or the Reformer. They care about setting things right. Rules and justice matter so much to them. In childhood when the world around them seemed threatening or demanding, their natural coping mechanism or instinct was to follow the rules and to do things perfectly. At their best, ones are ethical, wise, honest and reliable. At their worst, ones are judgmental rigid and critical of others and of themselves. Ones have a fear of being bad, corrupt, evil, or defective. Their core desire is to have integrity and to act ethically. The core message they received in childhood is that it is not okay to make mistakes.

In their book *The Way Back to You,* Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile write this about ones, “From the time they get up to the time they lie down, Ones perceive a world rife with errors and feel a bounden duty to correct. There’s no shortage of work to be done. Someone squeezed the toothpaste tube from the middle, the school secretary misspelled two words in the PTA newsletter, one of the kids didn’t fold and hang their bath towel correctly, there’s a fresh scratch on the car door, and the neighbors left for work leaving their trashcans at the foot of the driveway with the lids on.” Therefore, the main feeling associated with ones is anger because life can never be perfect, and the fixing of people and things seems endless! Here are a couple of clips from the movie “Inside Out” about anger:

 <https://youtu.be/0qAeB51vqBE> and <https://youtu.be/eaJEWGSOD7s>

Now, let’s turn to a biblical character who was most likely a personality type 1: John the Baptist.

John saw a world rife with mistakes and corruption because people were not following God’s commands and rules. He was born into the household of a priest, yet he saw the Temple in Jerusalem as the epitome of evil and corruption because the leadership there was cooperating with the Roman Empire, the occupiers of the land at the time. As a result, John set out to fix the problems of the world. He joined a movement of reform in the wilderness. The wilderness had a special appeal to him because it was a place where people could go back to the original ways which God gave to the people of ancient Israel when they left Egypt. As a One, John set out to reform his religion and his country. He was harsh and austere in his way of life and his method of preaching and teaching. (Read Luke 3:1-9)

John confronted the powers and principalities of his day: the Roman Empire, the immoral rulers of his region, and the corrupt religious leadership of the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, his ministry was conducted outside the halls of power in the wilderness so that he could be detached from the values and corruption in his day. His words were not gentle because he wanted the people listening to him to pay attention to the grave situation in which they were living. What John was interested in was justice and equality, practically acted out.

The biggest impact John had was on his cousin, Jesus. He ended up baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River (Read Luke 3:21-22). He prepared for the ministry of Jesus and showed the way to many people so that they would follow Jesus after John was gone from their midst. John paid dearly for his commitments. He ended up being imprisoned and executed for his truth telling and criticism of those in power. But he left us a shining example of what an Enneagram type One personality could accomplish when they are spiritually transformed. Here are a few lessons for Ones and for all of us to learn from John.

1. **Prayer and Community:** John was a man of prayer. He belonged to a spiritual community in the wilderness who were very disciplined about their prayer lives. Prayer helped him stay hopeful and focused on God’s greater mission instead of becoming resentful of others. John also avoided the pitfall of many Ones who think that only their ideas are right because perfection for him came from God and not from his own ways. His need to see perfection and justice in the world was satisfied through his relationship with the creator of the universe and the quality of perfection that is present on a deep level in the universe. His sense of inner peace allowed him to be able to live and do well even when the world around him was chaotic or corrupt.
2. **Flexibility and Maturity:** Even though John had a large following, he did not put himself above Jesus. He was flexible enough to open to the leadership and ideas of someone else. Even though he had strong convictions, he did not put himself above others. When Jesus had a different approach to prayer and ministry, John was open to learning from him. This is essential for Ones because the temptation to think that they are always right is so powerful and alluring.
3. **Truth and Righteousness:** John helps us see the power and importance of upholding God’s vision for justice and peace in our world. When most of us are afraid to rock the boat or cause any problems, we can find strength and power in people like John the Baptist who are willing to sacrifice their own comfort and safety for the sake of God’s good news in the world.

In the spirit of Ones (including John the Baptist) who are committed to God’s vision for the world, I would like to invite you to meditate with me on God’s vision for the world as presented at the time of Jesus’ baptism and when he read in the synagogue about his mission. Let these words speak to you about grace, affirming you just as you are and inviting you to join Christ’s mission to heal the world. We will do this through the practice of Lectio Divina where we will listen to the scripture three times with silence in between. The first reading, I invite you to listen to a word or a phrase that speaks to you. The second time, I invite you to listen to a feeling associated with your word or phrase. The third time, I invite you to listen to a message. If you feel comfortable you may share.

Luke 3:22b “You are my child, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
    because he has anointed me
        to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
    and recovery of sight to the blind,
        to let the oppressed go free,
**19**to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Amen.