

WD July 18, 2022

“Messy People”

As I share this, I am nearing the end of my vacation time. I try to take vacation each July after VBS is over to get some things done around the house. I like to use this particular staycation to tidy up lots of little nagging projects that have been put off for months and longer. The pile of wood in the garage, the unfinished shed that needs to be repainted, putting in drainage, picking up the yard, and lots of little messes leftover. I hate to admit it but I have a messy life. My garage is not always organized. The garden isn't always weeded perfectly. The bathroom doesn't always get clean each week. And my firewood pile that fell over is still scattered about. Just mow around it for now. I am more naturally a messy person than a clean one. My office at church speaks for itself. And once a year I get to get some of it cleaned up.

Recently, I was reading a Readers Digest Article online titled, *The 6 Hidden Strengths of Being a Messy Person*. (Check it out-here is the link. <https://www.rd.com/list/messy-people/>) According to this article I'm a more creative person, a more flexible person, a person with his own organization techniques, and I don't sweat the small stuff. Yea, maybe. I may be used to my messy system of doing things but that doesn't mean my messiness doesn't bother me or that it is all a sign of hidden strengths. Sometimes things are just messy.

Unfortunately, messes aren't just about dirty bathrooms and hygiene. Almost anyone I meet has a messy life; a closet full of regret, a cabinet full of bad decisions making; a weedy pile of bad habits we just can't get cleaned up; or something else. Add to this a spirit that wants to clean things up and do better, but just never really gets around to it. So, the messes we make of our lives lingers.

What I say to you this week is not a new thought but a familiar one. If you are someone in this world you probably have a messy life. No one is perfect. Everyone sins. Sin makes messes of God's blessings. Adam and Eve were disobedient to God, blamed each other and God for the fall, and then tried to hide their sin from God. Abraham lied to Pharaoh to protect his own skin. Moses was a murderer. Rahab was a prostitute. David was an adulterer. Elijah and Jeremiah seemed to wrestle with depression. And the people of Israel complained, rebelled, and let bitterness ruin their trip to the Promised Land. And still God pursued them, fed them, gave them life, showed them compassion, and brought to the world a Savior through them. That brings me to the disciples in Luke 6

Consider Luke 6:12-19. ¹²“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

This is quite a list of men that Jesus chose and prayed all night for. I know that more than a few of us could use someone praying all night. Yet, it was such an important decision Jesus took His time talking it out with His Heavenly Father. And what an ordinary dysfunctional bunch he chose. Peter, we know well; a loud mouth and impulsive. A fisherman who cursed like a sailor. Denied Jesus three times. Later he would have to be publicly corrected by Paul for giving into the Jews who didn't like Gentiles like Cornelius going about without circumcision. And what about Matthew, a tax collector. Tax collectors were considered the worst kind of people because they often used their position to steal from people. He was likely a thief like the rest of the tax collectors. I could imagine Matthew feeling sympathetic toward Zacchaeus' tortured soul. Or how about his polar opposite of a tax collector, Simon the Zealot. Zealots were often known for violence against perceived enemies of God's people. Some were even known to carry little knives to enact that violence. Wouldn't that have been interesting to see a former tax collector at the communion table with a Zealot. And the James and John. These were called sons of thunder perhaps because of a short fuse. Of course, Thomas was stubborn and doubted Jesus' resurrection for a week. And then of course, Judas whom Luke calls a traitor, or betrayer. What a messy bunch of people. They often fought about being more important than the others. They were called 'dull' by Jesus, slow to get the point. These were not scholars or soldiers. They fell asleep when Jesus asked them to keep watch and then ran when Jesus was arrested. What a messy bunch of people!

So, what's my point. First, we are messy people. As Christians we are messy people like those disciples. We want to follow Jesus but often follow our impulses more often and we make messes. We may

call our life or situations ‘complicated’. No, my friend. You are a hot mess. And yes, there may be stuff in your life to clean up. Now is a good time.

Jesus calls messy people. We have met them in the Gospels. People like Martha, who was OCD about her kitchen and her service. Mary, a sinful woman, anointed Jesus after crying on his feet and drying them with her hair. Nicodemus had his Dr. degree and held high office in Israel but didn’t really know the scriptures and had to be schooled by Jesus on the most basic elements of Messiah. Joseph of Arimathea waited until Jesus was dead before revealing his faith to his peers who only hours earlier condemned Jesus to a cross. These were messy people too. And still Jesus came for them. He died for them and for us.

Make no mistake we are responsible for our messes and we are responsible for cleaning them up with repentance, forgiveness, and even some forms of penance. But it is also true that Jesus came for messy people with messy lives. Remember this most of all.

I am a messy person by nature. You are a messy person by nature. The sinful nature messes everything up for us. Yet, none of us is beyond Jesus, His cross, or His resurrection. Just ask the disciples who knew Him better than most.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30