

I. On Jumping; Sunday, June 15, 2014 (Sunnyslope)

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be
pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

- A. "Good morning, church!"
- B. Sharalyn pointed out to me this morning that it seems like I use our airplane as an illustration for a lot of sermons lately
 - 1. I'm sorry about that
 - 2. But it seems today is no different
 - 3. Because you see, I believe God gave us a brilliant illustration yesterday in the late afternoon...
 - 4. ...and it'd be a shame to waste it
- C. Yesterday, in the late afternoon, I took my entire family for a quick flight
 - 1. Now as you remember, the airplane looks a little odd when it's on land
 - a) But that's because it can land on water
 - b) It's not like a normal float plane (that has floats)
 - c) Instead, it lands on its belly
 - d) So it sits low in the water
 - 2. Now, we were originally going to go to Lake Cushman in the Olympic Mountains
 - a) But there was something of ridge of rain showers coming in from that direction
 - b) So we turned east and landed on Long Lake
 - 3. We landed on the south end
 - a) Then we moved up north toward the park

- b) I cut the engine so we could enjoy the water
 - c) I climbed out onto the nose so the children could use my seat to see the water better
 - 4. People at the park saw us
 - a) They waved
 - b) So we waved back
 - 5. And then, as it turns out, some folks got scared, thought we had crashed, and that we were sinking, so they called 911
 - a) As we were getting ready to leave, SKFD arrived
 - b) Shari dropped off cookies later that evening
 - c) "This happens all the time"
- D. And so, of course, the topic of today's sermon is: Jumping to Conclusions
 - 1. "Jumping to conclusions" is "inference-observation confusion"
 - 2. It's a form of cognitive distortion
 - 3. Psychological term referring to a communication obstacle where one judges or decides something without having all the facts...
 - 4. ...and as a result can (but does not have to) reach unwarranted conclusions
 - 5. When we fail to distinguish between what we observed first hand and we have only inferred or assumed
 - 6. Think of the airplane on Long Lake as an example
 - a) Folks at the park didn't see a crash

b) They didn't see any sinking

c) They didn't see the any "frantic" waving

E. When it comes to jumping to conclusions, a person will make a negative assumption when it is actually not supported by any facts

1. This is often misinterpretation of what a person has seen or heard

2. This can often be because the same sign can have multiple meanings

F. Occam's Razor

1. A principle of parsimony, economy, or succinctness used in problem-solving devised by William of Ockham (c. 1287-1347)

2. It states that among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected

3. Other, more complicated solutions may ultimately prove correct, but—in the absence of certainty—the fewer assumptions that are made, the better

4. The razor states that one should proceed to simpler theories until simplicity can be traded for greater explanatory power

G. Questioning

1. Did I see the plane crash?

2. Do I see it actually sinking?

3. Is it a simpler explanation that there's a plane crash or a plane that lands on water?

H. Why?

1. Governed by fear

2. We let our fears override our thinking

3. We don't think all the way through

4. And once we make a jump:
 - a) We filter all evidence that disproves
 - b) And enhance any data that supports
5. We resist being shown that we're wrong
6. And even if it's proven to us, we get grumpy, and we try to convince ourselves that while we may have made a mistake, it was a reasonable mistake (and that we acted rationally)

II. Look at a Biblical example of jumping to a conclusion, from Joshua

- A. Let me introduce the passage we'll be looking at this morning by giving you a bit of history about what had happened earlier after the Jews conquered the land on the East side of the Jordan River
 1. Moses was going to abandon the land, because the Promised Land was on the other side of the river
 2. But the leaders of Gad, Rueben, and half of the tribe of Manassah had asked if they could stay in the land they had already conquered, because it was just what they needed for their flocks
 - a) The land was rich and fertile and there were fine valleys for grazing large flocks
 - b) In addition, the land had plenty of water as well
 - c) It seemed perfect
 3. Moses agreed on the condition that they had to go across the river with their fellow Jews and help conquer the land of Canaan
 4. After that task was completed they would be allowed to return to their own homes once more
- B. Now, we also need to remember that the Battle for Canaan had been going on for 5 years

- C. And now that the land is finally subdued, the soldiers from 2½ tribes have been given permission to return to their homes and families

Joshua 22:1-2

¹Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh ²and said to them, “You have done all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and you have obeyed me in everything I commanded.

Joshua 22:3-4

³For a long time now—to this very day—you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you. ⁴Now that the Lord your God has given them rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

- D. As the men of Rueben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh made their way east they passed landmarks that must have brought back memories of what God had done
- E. Happy as they were to be going home, it wasn't easy to say good-bye to their brothers and leave behind the nearness of the priesthood and the tabernacle containing the Ark of the Covenant
- F. They were leaving the land God had promised to bless
- G. They were going home; but somehow they began to feel isolated from the nation of Israel

Joshua 22:10

When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.

Joshua 22:11-12

¹¹And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side, ¹²the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

- H. The Israelites sent an assembly

1. Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest
2. Along with 10 of the chief men (1 from each tribe)

Joshua 22:16

The whole assembly of the Lord says: 'How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the Lord and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?

- I. Think about that: To build an altar is the same as breaking faith with God and rebellion against God
- J. Wait... Huh?
- K. God had instructed all the tribes of Israel in Deuteronomy 15 that everyone in any city that built an extra altar for sacrifice was to be put to death
 1. It didn't take long of course for word to filter through to the western tribes that the eastern tribes had set up a new altar
 2. While an altar may not seem all that significant to us, it raised an alarm with the Israelites because it was clearly forbidden in Deuteronomy 15
 3. In that passage they were told to have only one altar for sacrifices, lest multiple altars lead to a falling away from God's perfect plan for holy worship
 - a) Having only one altar and one place of sacrifice was a way to preserve the purity of the worship of Jehovah
 - b) It was a preventative measure to ensure that each tribe didn't do its own thing when it came to worshipping God
 - c) One altar spoke of one faith and one people
 - d) In fact the penalty for building another altar was that everyone in the city which built the altar was to be put to death

- L. The 9½ tribes of Israel jumped to a conclusion when they assumed that the alter the 2½ tribes built was an alter for sacrifices, a second place to worship
 - 1. And they were willing to go to war over it
 - 2. When the western tribes heard another altar had been built they immediately thought that the Eastern tribes had abandoned God before they even got home
- M. But that doesn't make sense
 - 1. Why would they fight so loyally for 5 years only to immediately rebel against God for no appreciable reason the moment they left?
 - 2. But the Israelites gave into their own fear
 - 3. And they jumped to a conclusion that was wrong
- N. Fortunately, they sent a delegation to find out what was really going on

Joshua 22:21-23

²¹Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel: ²²“The Mighty One, God, the Lord! The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the Lord, do not spare us this day. ²³If we have built our own altar to turn away from the Lord and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the Lord himself call us to account.

Joshua 22:24-25

²⁴“No! We did it for fear that some day your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to do with the LORD, the God of Israel?’ ²⁵ The LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have no share in the LORD.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the LORD.

Joshua 22:26-27

²⁶“That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’ ²⁷On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the Lord.’

- O. The 2½ tribes were building an altar as a monument, not as a place to worship
 - 1. It was to serve as a reminder that they had the right to worship at one altar set apart for the whole 12 tribes
 - 2. They were not rebelling from God at all
 - 3. Instead, and quite to the contrary, they were worried they might be unable in future generations to worship God in full accordance with the law

- P. At least on some level the Western tribes are to be commended for the zeal to look out for the honor of God and for the purity of His worship
 - 1. The fact that they were so stirred up by what they believed was spiritual infidelity shows that they were deeply committed to God. They had a real desire to maintain the purity of God’s worship
 - 2. Far too often God’s people gradually accept things that God doesn’t.

- Q. However, as proper as it is to stand up against what’s wrong, they were also wrong because they jumped to conclusions that were far off the mark
 - 1. It appeared that what their brothers were doing was wrong, but they would discover that there was another side to the story
 - 2. When they heard about the altar being built they had immediately assumed it had been set up in opposition to the altar in Shiloh

3. They jumped to the wrong conclusions

R. That's something all of us must guard against

1. The danger of judging people by their outward appearance

2. The danger of attributing bad motives to people's actions when the very same actions could in fact be explained in other honorable ways

III. So do we sometimes jump to conclusions?

A. Do we let our fears cloud our judgment sometimes?

1. Do we believe the worst of someone, prescribing to them negative motives before we know all the facts and before we think things through?

2. And do we then hold on to that error, refusing to consider the possibility that we may be wrong?

3. Do we ignore evidence that suggests we are wrong and instead latch on to anything that might suggest we're right?

B. I've been senior pastor here at this church for a while now

1. I was voted in after church in September, 2009 (5 years ago)

2. But I first preached at Bremerton in February, 2006 (8 years ago)

3. In that time, I've gotten to know you all very, very well

4. And I can say that yes, indeed, I've witnessed times when each and every one of us has stumbled because we jumped to a faulty conclusion

C. So how do we avoid jumping to conclusions?

1. Well, we can't avoid it 100% of the time

2. Because we're flawed humans
3. The key is three things:
 - a) Always assume we're jumping (because most of the time we are)
 - b) Assume positive or neutral motives from others rather than negative
 - c) Be willing to accept that we're wrong
 - d) Pray constantly to God for:
 - (1) Wisdom
 - (2) Fruits of the Spirit: Patience, Peace
- D. Let us continuously pray to God for wisdom and for all the fruits of the Spirit
- E. May God continue to spiritually strengthen us toward righteousness
- F. So that we may be wise, patient, and filled with that peace that surpasses all understanding
- G. Amen