

**Pastor Troy E. Medlin  
7th Sunday after Pentecost  
7/11/2021**

**Nobody likes rejection....**

**I have a confession to make:**

**Sometimes I am still afraid.....of being rejected....I always have been at some level...afraid of being rejected because of where I'm from....or who my family is...or where I go to church....there were times when I was growing up when I was afraid of being rejected by peers....especially since I often felt like I did not quite fit in with my peer group....I mean when I was in middle school I was into politics, history, and the news.....and then there was the fact that my body just didn't quite fit into the mold that was considered normal...I wore braces and sort of walked funny.... And even though most everyone was kind....sometimes I was just afraid of being rejected...**

**As I was coming out....the fear that kept me in the closet for the longest time....was the fear that I would be rejected by those I loved the most.....**

**One thing that is true, though, is that, I confess...it was only one time...in high school....in a very minor way....that I felt like I was slightly rejected....for being a person of faith....**

**Yes....sometimes I'm still afraid of being rejected...usually for no particular reason...and not necessarily....because of my faith or witness in the world....**

**Maybe you have felt the sting of rejection before for some reason or another...or you are like me and you are just afraid of it.... I wonder if we are ever afraid of being rejected by certain people.....for proclaiming with your words and actions...that God is on the move and things are changing.....**

**The prophet Amos is rejected for just that.....speaking words about the coming reign of God....that destroys the high places....and brings justice to those who are oppressed..... And John the baptizer....is rejected...and killed...as political corruption and fear....prevail over truth and repentance.....Amos and John....both rejected by those in positions of power and privilege.... God was on the move...the reign of God was coming..... and things were changing....and that makes certain people nervous....**

**Amos and John Both....preparing the way for the one who is the reign of God...come in the flesh....who spends his life identifying with all of the rejected ones..even a friend of tax collectors and sinners....and is rejected himself...by the religious and political powers of the day....and is seen as a threat to the perennial rule of sin and evil....and in his death alongside common criminals....he becomes the rejected one Himself.....Yet in that rejection and death he undoes their power once and for all....and three days later....Jesus rises from the dead....proclaiming that things were changing.....not even**

death can thwart the reign of God.... bringing justice and mercy to all oppressed by this world's schemes....and bringing welcome to all the outsiders....and outcasts...and a home with God for all of those rejected by this fallen world's power brokers... .... God is on the move....and things are changing....especially for the rejected ones....

This move of God....has reached all the way down to you and I...this is our story.... that we....have been rejected and dead because of our own sin....once outsiders and outcasts....yet: In baptism.... Rejected no longer.... brought into the family of faith....as Paul preaches: we now are blessed, chosen, adopted, redeemed children of God....sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, and given the pledge of our inheritance....as God's own people....all as pure gift..all to the Praise of God's glorious grace...that God lavished and continues to lavish....on you and me for free....in those waters of promise....this is who you are.....and now....you and I....who in those same flowing waters.... Have been united in flesh and blood.....to the one who is the reign of God made flesh.....having been made one with Rejected One himself.....and coming to this table...to take his own body....into ours....we now have become his body on Earth....Things are changing....God is on the move...and now we are agents/signs of that reign of God in our own flesh....

we are now a part of that same family tree as Amos....and John....and our savior and brother....Jesus Christ...the ones who were rejected....and who bore witness to the day when justice and mercy will reign forever....and when all the rejected and oppressed are at home with God....just like we are now at home with God.....God is on the move....things are changing....and we are agents/signs of that reign of God....

Like I said, I still am afraid of being rejected even though I have not really felt that sting like others have.....especially from people with power and privilege....

And...I have another confession....I know that as an agent of the reign of God/sign of it....as someone once rejected myself because of sin....and as someone who has been baptized into the life of Jesus I am called to search out and speak up for those who have been rejected by the systems and structures of this world just like he did...those are supposed to be my people....bring them in, amplify their voice....and welcome them into my life.....so the rejected ones can become a part of my own world...and then those rejected ones...whoever they are....would know just a taste of the love that God has for them...and show them..that they too are at home with God....but too often....the lure of those same systems and structures...and the sin within my own heart....keep me from seeking out those rejected ones.....sometimes even because I'm afraid.....that by going

to where the rejected ones are....and welcoming them into my world....that I might experience some kind of rejection too....from others like me....with respectable positions and some kind of social pedigree....others like me...who live comfortably.....navigating the world with confidence....and if I'm honest....I'm afraid of that kind of rejection...But, thanks be to God...that in our baptisms we have been set free from that fear and we have died to the ways of this world that tell us that life is about keeping the rejected ones at arms length.....and we have risen to new life....resurrection life....where we are propelled to go wherever this God.....might call us to..... And engage whoever God might put along our path.....use our voices and our vocations, our hands and our feet to bear witness to this reign of God....that welcomes the rejected and the outsiders...and we do that all because we have been rejected and outsiders....and have found a home with God...

I have a neighbor named Chris....he is one of the world's rejected ones.... homelessness....and spends most of his days on the sidewalks of Oak Park....and some might say he is disruptive or a nuisance....and it would be easy for me to reject him too....by walking by.... trying my best to ignore him...and keep walking...looking straight ahead....but, I have another confession to make.....the reign of God is made manifest.....through people like my neighbor Chris.....and I know that....as an agent of that reign of God....I'm called to listen to him, notice him, get to know him, to serve him, and to ask questions about why he has been rejected by this world....and why he has experienced what he has in his life...and to ponder...why homelessness is prevalent...even here.....and I know...that as an agent of this reign of God....I will see fuller image of the reign of God...when I welcome him into my world like I've been welcomed in God's world....even though I don't know exactly what that looks like...I know that it will be worth it....the reign of God is on the move...and things are changing.....

I don't really know what it is like to be rejected by too many folks....even if I'm afraid of it at some level....and yet...I know that many do know that feeling...including Amos, John, Chris....even Jesus.....rejected ones who bear witness to the reign of God ....and then I remember that we are a part of that same family lineage....once rejected...now chosen....and home....

Let's be agents...of that reign....where no one is rejected any longer....and we all are home....