

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent  
March 27, 2022  
Scripture: John 3: 1-21

## **Sermon: Listen to Your Teacher**

Did you ever hear the story about the teacher who was helping one of her kindergarten students put on his boots?

She pulled while he pushed, and the boots still didn't want to go on. Finally, after the second boot was on, and she had worked up a sweat, the little boy said, "Teacher, they're on the wrong feet." She looked and sure enough, they were.

Getting the boots off wasn't any easier than getting them on. The teacher managed to keep her cool as together they put the boots on the right feet.

Once they were on, the little boy announced, "These aren't my boots." The teacher bit her tongue as she then took the boots back off. Once off, the little boy said, "The boots are my brother's boots. My mom made me wear them."

She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The teacher mustered up the grace and courage to wrestle the boots on his feet again. When she was finished, she said, "Now, where are your mitten?" The little boy said, "I stuffed them in the toes of my boots."

Teenage students can be hard work as well: Like the teacher who in the middle of a lecture, noticed one student sound asleep. "Billy, wake up your neighbor!" said the teacher. Billy replied, "You put him to sleep, you wake him up!"

Being a teacher can be very difficult and demanding but also very rewarding. I know, because when we lived overseas, I taught Kindergarten for two years and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade for half a year and also taught English as a Second Language. As a teacher it is so rewarding when you see your students excited about learning and when they really get what

you are teaching, and it becomes a part of them. It is also really important to know each individual student and who they are as a person and as a learner.

Teachers can truly make a difference in the life of a student. Do you remember that special teacher in your life that really understood you and helped you succeed and taught you more than just math and English? Two of my favorite teachers were my 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and my 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher.

Someone once said, “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

Our experiences growing up can really affect and influence us and shape us. Our childhood can influence how we view life as adults, what we become as adults and how we treat others.

Psychologist Alice Miller wrote an essay called, ***“The Ignorance or How we produce the Evil.”*** She wrote: “Children who are given love, respect, understanding, kindness, and warmth will naturally develop different characteristics from those who experience neglect, contempt, violence or abuse, and never have anyone they can turn to for kindness and affection. Such absence of trust and love is a common denominator in the formative years of all the dictators I have studied. The result is that these children will tend to glorify the violence inflicted upon them and later to take advantage of every possible opportunity to exercise such violence, possibly on a gigantic scale. Children learn by imitation. Their bodies do not learn what we try to instill in them by words but what they have experienced physically. Battered, injured children will learn to batter and injure others; sheltered, respected children will learn to respect and protect those weaker than themselves. Children have nothing else to go on but their own experiences.”

Vladimir Putin had a bad childhood. Putin was born in Leningrad in 1952. It was a city that lived under a nearly three-year-siege by the Nazis during WWII that wiped out most of the population of more than three million people. One million people starved to death. The siege has been termed a genocide and is described as world’s most destructive siege of a city. Putin’s father was badly injured in the war; his mother nearly died

of starvation. Before Putin was born his parents lost two children. One child died of diphtheria. Leningrad had not yet recovered, and life was extremely difficult. His parents had a room in a run-down apartment with two other families. They had no hot water, no bathtub, and probably at times, no heat. Both parents worked as much as they could. One report says they left him with another family.

But two experiences kept him from living on the streets. He probably had support from a coach, because he learned judo to defend himself, and after a rough time during his elementary school years, a sixth-grade teacher reportedly took interest in him. She encouraged him to excel in high school. He eventually got a law degree and joined the KGB. But obviously his childhood traumatized him to become the man that he is today.

Adolf Hitler was beaten mercilessly during his childhood by a father who was illegitimate and of Jewish descent, both of which brought him constant shame.

Stalin was also brutalized by his father when he was a child, as was China's Mao Zedong.

Childhood is such an important time in our lives. Having great role models, parents and teachers, as children and young teenagers, is very important to the development of our heart, mind, and soul.

Even the greatest teachers any of us have had don't compare to Jesus as our teacher. Jesus is not just a good teacher; he is a great teacher and role model for us.

The gospels call Jesus "teacher" 45 times and the word "disciple" means "learner."

From the very start of Jesus' ministry until today, those who have listened to Jesus and his teachings have been amazed, and their lives have been changed forever.

When Jesus spoke, he attracted large crowds of people who were captivated by his words. Jesus was able to hold the attention of the crowds without modern audio-visual aids, or power point presentations.

How did he do it? He taught by telling stories. He had a sense of humor and he made use of common objects around him for illustrations. Jesus taught as one with authority to offer others the truth. But Jesus is not just another teacher, or wise rabbi, or just another prophet; he opened their eyes to the fact that He was God in human form.

The world needs to appreciate the teachings of Jesus. The world needs to allow Jesus to be our teacher so that the teachings will make a profound difference in our lives and those around the world—one person at a time.

The person who follows the teachings of Jesus will be graceful, humble and a grateful person. They are a person who shows mercy and grace toward others and the central guiding characteristic of the person will be **LOVE**.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus will teach us if we will listen and learn. Jesus taught by speaking plainly. He knew how to teach people from all different walks of life. Jesus never avoided controversy.

Our scripture lesson from John 3 today gives us Jesus, the Teacher. Jesus came to the earth to teach us how to flee darkness and come into the light. Jesus taught others how to change their blindness to sight. Jesus taught how to flee death and enter into eternal life.

In John 3 Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee came to Jesus after dark and wanted to speak with him and try to understand something. Nicodemus came to Jesus and called him “Rabbi,” which means “teacher.” Nicodemus said, “We all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.”

Here Jesus gets the opportunity to teach a teacher and He does just that. Jesus is also using this passage to teach us also. We may be like Nicodemus or know someone like him. He was a well-respected man in the community. He had money, power and position and all the things that are considered the trappings of a successful life. Yet he lacked that one

thing that would guarantee him eternity. Jesus the Great Teacher explains salvation and being reborn or born again to Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was sincere in his search for truth. He wasn't at peace with his soul and wanted to talk with Jesus about what he didn't understand. What was he missing in his life? It was being "born again." It refers to things which come from God alone. That is the nature of the new birth. Man cannot accomplish it on his own. It is the work of God! Nicodemus thought that Jesus was referring to a return to his mother's womb, which would be impossible. Being born of the Spirit refers to the heart of the sinner. When the person turns to Jesus for new life, the Spirit of God baptizes the sinner into the body of Christ and gives him the everlasting life of God. The person becomes a "New Creation" in the Lord Jesus. Only Jesus can change the heart and life of a person.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that God's love for humanity was so great that He willingly gave up His only begotten Son to die that sinners might be saved. This is referring to Jesus dying on the cross for us.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that the key to receiving salvation is as simple as believing. How much simpler could God have made it? He has already done all the work. He has paid the price.

So, listen to your teacher, Jesus, the one who is the way, and the truth and the life.

Pray that you and those you love will believe in the teachings of Jesus.

Pray for our world and the leaders of our world to know Jesus as God with us, as a Friend to sinners, as a Compassionate Healer and as the Greatest Teacher that teaches us the way to eternal life.

Remember, listen to your teacher and he will teach and instruct you in the way you show go.