

Can God change people's minds about how they act.

This is a question that's been on my mind this week as I've heard the news.

Maybe you've seen the news as well about concerning remarks reported to have been made by our president regarding immigrants these reported remarks are offensive and disgusting and offensive and harmful and racist. And

I keep asking myself over and over. Can God change the way people act. Can God's change people's mind about what they say. Thank God change people in the way that they treat others.

Of course take that particular example aside for a moment.

There's a number of other examples that you know in the news among our politics or popular society or in our community or in our family where you think to yourself Can God change the way that people act.

OK God changed the way that people treat one another. King God change what people say. Of course.

We're not off the hook in that either. So the question I've also been asking myself is is this. Can God.

Change the way that I act. Can God and God change the words that I say. Thank God changed the way that I treat other people.

Questions like this are difficult. It's not easy to answer them. And my hope during this series is to help remind us that questions for God. Questions for one another are OK they're good that they're to be encouraged and my hope is that by asking questions like this that we help create space to delve into deeper conversation to make space for one another to be able to really listen and to be able to hear one another not so that we give an answer so quickly.

But so that we can really value the question. And recognize that there are significant questions that many of us share so during this series we've been taking a look at some of these questions for God they've come to us from the voice of children that have been a part of the sermon series video and and and the question last week was why.

Is it that God chose for Jesus to be born into a poor family.

Next week the question will be this does God have a purpose for my life. But today we come to that question Can God change people's minds about how they act.

Or What They Say. Or how they treat other people.

Like many people I'm a person that have habits that make me comfortable. Maybe you know that about me I have a certain routine that I like in my life a certain way that I like my desk arranged like to serve a shop at particular places hanging around with familiar people. I like my routines. Maybe some of you also like your routines.

But of course things happen.

There are things that happen that push us out of our comfort zone. Our routines get disrupted. And we have to do something different in order to meet a particular challenge or to deal with. A crisis. Our plans don't always go how we think they should go or a picture for what our congregation or our community or our country might look like. May not always be the way that we want it to be. And when those things happen.

How do we respond. When our routines are are messed up when we are put on our heels or trying to find our balance. What happens then. Today I'd like to invite you to consider that there are times when it is God who calls us out of our comfortable routines so that we can be a voice so that we can take action. So that we can open ourselves.

To transformation today scripture lesson tells us about a particular man named John the Baptist.

He had a particular role in the story of the history of the Christian faith. He had a job to do. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ he was the one who came before he was to prepare the way of the Lord. He was the one that God sent ahead of Jesus. And in fact John the Baptist knew this very well. He knew what his job was to do. And he was living into it as best as he knew how when people came to him to be baptized in the Jordan River river. He would do it. He said hey listen I baptize you with water for the repentance of sins. But.

But that's not all. There's someone who's coming after me.

Who baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire and he was talking about Jesus of course but he knew what he was doing who he was and what he was doing.

And then Jesus came along and Jesus says John I need you to baptize me.

And John says Jesus I'm not going to do it. This isn't the way that things are supposed to go. This isn't the role that I have in mind for my life. Jesus invites John the Baptist to do something different than what he expected. To step out of his comfort zone to baptize the very Christ the messiah who he'd been preaching about.

How was he supposed to make sense of this.

John knew what he was supposed to do. He knew his purpose. He knew his mission. He

had the plan charred in the head he was going to be baptizing for the next couple of weeks and they knew it was going to take some time back in Jerusalem. Then he go to the wilderness again. And he had it all planned out and then and then Jesus came by.

Jesus called John. Out of his comfort zone to embrace something unexpected. And it was only then that his heart I believe was open for transformation to take place. It

was Jesus who persuaded John to drop his accustomed role. The plan that he had in mind to be able to do something different to take action to be able to go along with the spirit of the moment and be the instrument of God and baptized the Messiah. It

was Jesus who invited John to change. It was Jesus who invited John and asked him to step out of his comfort zone. What his plan was it was Jesus who reached towards John and challenged his presuppositions. And I wonder has Jesus ever challenged your.

Presuppositions.

Has God ever invited you to act in a way that you weren't planning on. To speak up when you'd rather be silent. To take action when you'd rather do nothing. Or perhaps to be quiet. And you'd rather speak. Or to not act. When you'd rather act.

As a god ever invited you to step into an uncomfortable place. You're uncertain what it will be like. And certainly it's outside of your plans.

This is what happened for John the Baptist.

Of course we focus on Jesus. His influence on John but I believe we also have to give John some credit here as well.

Because he was willing to embrace the change.

He was willing to do something different he changed. He took a leap of faith. He listened. He trusted God to lead him to respond in a new way. And when he did this when he opened himself up to where Jesus was leading him the heavens broke open the Holy Spirit came down like a dove. He heard the voice of God.

John had a chance. I believe this. Says say no to Jesus. I'm just not going to do it.

That's outside of my box. It's not my job I'm not supposed to be doing this you're supposed to be baptizing me.

But he didn't do that.

When Jesus invited John to step outside his comfort zone to do something different he stepped into it.

And incredible things resulted.

The world that we live in of course is very different than the world in which John the Baptist was living in and John say people traveled a couple miles an hour on foot paths today we go along I 35 and 254. None of you I know exceeding the speed limit.

But travel is different. Getting the news was different in those days as well mostly by word of mouth and Jesus Day if travelers were traveling from place to place then they might stop and share some news about family members or friends with the or the community just over. And Jesus day it took several days to travel 50 miles. Today 50 miles is a commute for some folks. Not certainly not unheard of a common thing perhaps while our times and our places are different today.

Than they were in the days of John the Baptist.

What has not changed is what Christ asks us to do. Jesus always and everywhere calls us to step out of our comfort zones to be open to hearing a challenge or to move in a new direction something we did not have in mind at all. And to be able to respond to each new situation that requires.

Our attention.

Jesus still invites us to take a step into an unknown place into a place that we may be uncertain of.

And yet we know that God is already there.

That Jesus has invited us and our opportunity just like John the Baptist has. As is to say yes. OK Jesus I don't know where you're leading me God. I have no idea where we're going to go in this. It's really makes me uncomfortable. But.

But but I'm willing to follow you.

Consider the examples of Jesus he was open because that was his way.

He was open to changing his plans open to changing his mind so that he could respond to the needs of the people that he met. He was able to respond to the circumstances in which he found himself. Consider the example of his encounter with the first disciples. Now they were Andrew and his brother Simon casting their fishing nets into the sea. Jesus comes walking by. And out there on their boats on the Sea of Galilee before they could even think he calls out to them calm and follow me and I will make you fishers of people.

Jesus was probably headed somewhere. I don't imagine on that day that he was out looking for disciples. Perhaps he was of course but I imagine that he was on the way somewhere else and when he saw these two he changed his plan as he went and spoke to them.

And they became one of the great bearers of the good news. He took time to notice them to speak to them to invite them into a relationship.

And then invite them to follow him and become fishers of people.

Or consider of course this story. When he was traveling along the road traveling to Capernaum but many times he knew his traveling throughout his life he would see someone who was there by the side of the road. Unable to walk perhaps or unable to see him. These people interrupted his plans and called out to him. Can

you help me Jesus. Can you help me Jesus.

He stopped whatever he was doing and he helped he's healed. Jesus changed his plans to do what was needed.

It's hard sometimes to stray from the path that we have in mind for our lives. I don't know about you but sometimes I feel like I just don't have enough time to do the things that I plan on doing. Much less. Things that I'm not planning on doing that. Jesus is inviting me to do.

And yet this is where we find ourselves as people that seek to follow after Jesus that the place that we make for our lives.

It's not really all about us. Well the plans that we do make for our lives are all about us at times and yet we're called to look beyond that.

We're called to listen for the voice of God would help us step into uncomfortable places to be willing to speak up to stand up to act in ways that we may find very uncomfortable but they may be necessary because of the moment because of the circumstances because of what we hear because of what we see because of the way the other people are treated. Can God change the way that people act.

Can God change the way that you and I can act when we allow ourselves to be open to God for we always have the choice to say no.

John the Baptist could have said Jesus I'm not going to do it.

But of course God always invites us to say yes. And when we do it's not a promise that it's going to be comfortable.

It's not a promise that it's going to be easy. This

way of following after Jesus but we can be certain that when we follow after God when we speak up when we at when we step in the uncomfortable places that God is already there with us.

And those are the very places where we might find our own lives transformed and the Kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven.

Well you pray with me oh god can you change people's minds about how they act. Can you change people's.

Minds about what they say or how they treat other people. Oh God we ask that you would change the way that we act that you would change what we say that you would change the way that we treat other people.

Help us to be willing to step into uncomfortable places.

Because of our faith. Because we're following you because you call us to love you and to love all of our neighbors. Oh god we offer our lives to you in Jesus name Amen.