
Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.

Text highlighted in this way will have a slide prepared to be on screen.

Text highlighted in this way is a reminder for Andrew during delivery.



Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about transitions and the endings in our lives.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because endings are a part of the reality of life and our faith offers us tools to help us cope.

What is the good news?

The good news is endings are not the end. The end of Jesus' life led to the resurrection, which brings hope for the endings in our lives.

What are the next action steps?

You are invited to engage endings, go after them, live into them.

Recognize the reality of loss.

Grieve.

Walk the path of transition so that you can experience renewal and resurrection.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the first sermon in a series focused on transitions. It is the final Sunday of worship in the sanctuary before renovation. It has been prepared with help from a series preached by Dustin Petz at Norfolk United Methodist Church in August of 2014.

What are other key takeaways?

For social media

- Our lives are made up of many transitions. Over and over, we experience periods of changes – in our bodies, in our relationships, in our work. In practically every aspect of our lives, we journey into change and go through the process of transition.
- Transitions happen when we experience loss, but they can also happen when we have new things that we are excited about.

- We can learn how to deal with the transitions of our lives, so that we might be free to be our best.
- Robert Frost describes the hope in endings in this way. That you would be: “lost enough to find yourself”
- If we don't engage our loss it will hold us back.
- Our faith is shaped by the truth of resurrection!
- Resurrection only comes as we lean into endings and let go of the previous life that is no more. It is then that we find new beginnings and new life.

Metadata

Topics

- Change Lives

Sermon Books of the Bible

- Ecclesiastes
- Mark

Tags

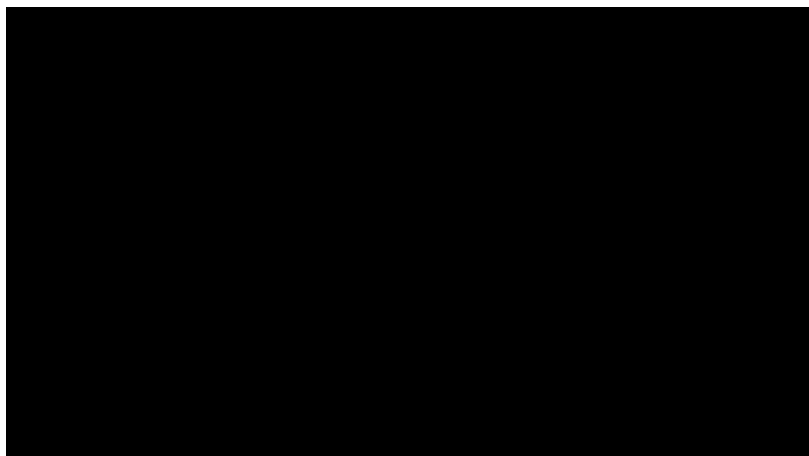
sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, transition, transitions, change, changes, ending, endings, end

Sermon Audio

9 a.m. Worship

11 a.m. Worship

Sermon Video



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Baptism of the Lord / 1st Sunday after the Epiphany
Making Sense of Life's Changes - Endings
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado

January 8, 2017
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,098

Jumping into the New

Staying in the Old

Engage Endings

Invitation

Closing Prayer

Introduction

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, CEB

¹There's a season for everything
and a time for every matter under the heavens:
²a time for giving birth and a time for dying,
a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted,
³a time for killing and a time for healing,
a time for tearing down and a time for building up,
⁴a time for crying and a time for laughing,
a time for mourning and a time for dancing,
⁵a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces,
⁶a time for searching and a time for losing,
a time for keeping and a time for throwing away,
⁷a time for tearing and a time for repairing,
a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking,
⁸a time for loving and a time for hating,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Response to Scripture

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

Transitions in Our Lives

Our lives are made up of many transitions.

Over and over, we experience periods of changes – in our bodies, in our relationships, in our work. In practically every aspect of our lives, we journey into change and go through the process of transition.

This was true for families this past week as children headed back to school.

This is true for our congregation, as we prepare for renovations to our sanctuary. Today is the final day of worship here before renovation. Next week, we will worship downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.

Every year our families, church and community experience times of transition in birth, in death and everywhere in between.

Series Introduction

During this worship series, we will consider the process of transition which is true for all of us: Endings, Neutral Zone and Beginnings. I hope you will be here each week.

Please also invite those family, friends, or coworkers who you think would be blessed by this series to join us for worship.

Transitions

We begin with endings and one of the most famous endings in the Bible.

Endings

Key Scripture: Mark 15:25, 33-37

"It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.
From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark.
At three, Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?"
After hearing him, some standing there said, "Look! He's calling Elijah!"
Someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink, saying, "Let's see if Elijah will come to take him down."
But Jesus let out a loud cry and died."¹

The disciples had come to Jerusalem expecting an amazing transformation of the world – that Jesus would become the new, the Romans would leave and the old world would come back under the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. But then, in almost the blink of an eye, it was all over. Jesus was nailed to the cross, and breathed his last.

.....
Pause
.....

Endings Come Fast

Sometimes an ending in our lives comes just that fast.
The end of a life,
ending of a relationship
ending of a career,
an ending of the way life was – it is there, and then it is not.
We had hoped, we had planned, we had expected something different in our lives, in our work, in our relationships, in our journey at this stage or that stage of life....but then it is over; it is done.
An ending has come.

.....
Pause
.....

¹ Mark 15:25, 3-37, CEB.

We Don't Like Endings

The issue is not really about the speed of an ending, but rather that as humans we experience endings throughout our lives. Although we have endings and transitions over and over again throughout our lives, we don't always deal with them well.

We don't like change and transitions.

We avoid ending and loss and the grief that comes with them.

But if we do not deal with our endings and our transitions, they will negatively impact our lives and relationships. We can learn how to deal with the transitions of our lives, so that we might be free to be our best.

Transitions in Our Lives

I want to pause for a moment and invite you to reflect on a transition in your life, maybe one that is more recent, or one you are still processing; perhaps one that you have dealt with and can learn from in your past.

Transitions happen when we experience loss, but they can also happen when we have new things that we are excited about.

New Baby

When a couple has a baby there is a new beginning, but there is also a loss – an end to the independence that had been a part of their lives before.

Life as a parent is completely different than life before.

Retirement

Consider retirement. People often look forward to this time for decades, yet this is a transition and there is an ending and loss that comes with it.

The end of a daily routine, source of income, social connections.

Invitation to Reflection

All of these situations and more are transitions that we journey through life. Think about one of them in your life. Take a moment to write it down.

Pause

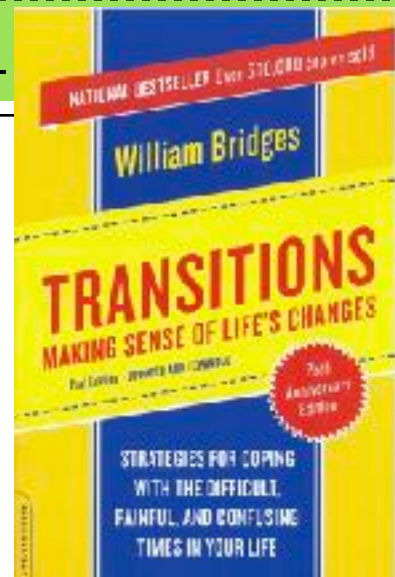
Aspects of Endings

Engagement with Transitions by William Bridges

One of my favorite books about change in our lives is *Transitions* by William Bridges.

[Show Image]

It addresses the transition process that each of us goes through – no matter what the loss or ending. I have not found a better book that talks about this change process we have over and over again in life. I read it after Nicole and I were married, when John was born, when Anne was born and we moved to El Dorado.



Introduction

Bridges says that when we come to an ending that we experience four aspects of our endings, and they all begin with “dis”:

Disengagement

Disidentification

Disenchantment

Disorientation

[Leave these up until the next quote from Robert Frost]

These are not a nice and tidy step by step process, but these are each aspects of the ending process that we go through in a change.

Pause

Disengagement

The first aspect of endings is disengagement. We find ourselves separating from community and the normal processes of life. At times this is reducing our communications, our connections or even finding time away to go and be by ourselves.

In many of Native cultures of our world – the tribal cultures – when a significant change happens, one will leave the village and travel in a pilgrimage into the woods for a time. This disengagement breaks up the old patterns and roles that used to sustain and shape in life.

This time away, those times of disengagement help us let go of who we were, so that we can journey into the transition.

Our Transitions

The way this might work in our lives today to take a time of vacation, or to be intentional to give yourself space in a change. You might say, “No” to requests from other people for a time.

We may not be able to set aside several days at a time, so we might rearrange our schedule to get that time each day for a season – maybe we go walking, or sit and journal, or something else that gives us space to grieve loss and enter transition.

Pause

Disidentification

A second aspect of endings is disidentification. All of a sudden we lose our ways of knowing who we are and how we understand ourselves. We lose our habitual roles and the prescribed behaviors, and there is a good chance we will come to a place of not knowing who we are.

We might even say, “My life is falling apart,” which is true – our old lives are literally falling apart in the ending and loss of change.

Key Example: End of a Relationship

Bridges tells the story of a woman who knew who she was through her husband. She was defined by their relationship and by the statements he would make about her. She said that when their relationship ended,
"She lost her mirror."
She didn't know who she was or what she was doing.

Pause

Disenchantment

A third aspect of endings is called disenchantment. This is when we feel in limbo between two worlds. What we knew to be true before of our lives and world is no longer so. The world that we had lived in is not here anymore...and we can't go back.
We often live our lives governed by "The way things are."
However, in an ending, all of sudden "The way things are" does not apply.
Life is different.
The world is different.
We are different.

Cultural Disenchantment

Consider times of change for our country: September 11th, Kennedy's assassination or Pearl Harbor. One day things make sense and we know what to expect. And the next day, we do not.
The same process happens when we lose a job, a loved one dies or leaves us, or any other ending – we can soon find ourselves disenchanting.
Our ways of making sense of the world no longer apply.

Pause

Disorientation

A fourth aspect of endings is disorientation. We used to know what is up, what is down, and we had an orienting sense about our lives about the past and the future.
However, when an ending comes, we find ourselves confused. There soon becomes a sense of emptiness. We used to have plans – plans for the future, but when an ending comes, we may have to let go of those plans, they don't make sense any more.

Key Example: Robert Frost

Robert Frost describes the hope in endings in this way. That you would be:
"lost enough to find yourself"

When we embrace endings, we will struggle, be confused, feel empty and have to deal with the nothingness.

Yet, if we embrace it, we will be able to grieve our loss, the ending and the change. This allows us to become fertile soil, out of which a new beginning will sprout.

Pause

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is endings are not the end. The end of Jesus' life led to the resurrection, which brings hope for the endings in our lives.

Call to Action

Avoiding Transition

Yet the challenge is that for many of our transitions, we don't want to go. I don't want to go down this path. I am afraid of the emptiness and pain of this ending. Maybe we are scared we won't find our way out of the transition. So what we more often do is we avoid it. We avoid our losses, our endings, our times of transition. There are at least two ways that we do this:

Jumping into the New

We can try to avoid endings by jumping quickly into something new and different and deny that there has been an ending at all. We don't deal with the transition and loss, and instead push it down deep inside of us. We ignore the feelings, the grief. We tell ourselves and others,

"There is no problem here. I am fine. Don't cry over spilled milk. I am moving on. I am going to outrun this loss."

Pause

But most often we cannot outrun our transitions. Instead, they will continue to shape our lives. We may not be able to embrace a beginning if we do not embrace the ending.

Pause

Staying in the Old

We can also try to avoid endings by trying to keep living in the old world. We keep doing things like we had always done, instead of venturing into the transition. This too is a means of denying the reality of an ending.

We stick our heads in the sand or pretend nothing has changed.
We keep acting the same, even when it doesn't really work anymore.
We get stuck in yesterday.
We don't change.
We don't adapt.

We fear the loss, the emptiness of the transition, and so we avoid it as much as we can. Yet the ending, the change, the transition won't go away.

If we don't engage our loss it will hold us back.

Engage Endings

So, don't avoid endings – engage them, go after them, live into them.

Recognize the reality of loss.

Grieve.

Walk the path of transition so that you can experience renewal and resurrection.

Invitation

Our faith is shaped by the truth of resurrection!

Resurrection only comes as we lean into endings and let go of the previous life that is no more. It is then that we find new beginnings and new life.

¹There's a season for everything

and a time for every matter under the heavens:

²a time for giving birth and

a time for dying,²

A time for endings.

A time for beginnings.

A time for grieving loss and a time for being transformed in resurrection.

Jesus knows this path.

He knows you.

He invites us to take his hand and walk into the endings we face, so that out of the ashes of our loss, new hope, new life, new beginnings may come.

Will you pray with me?

Closing Prayer

You do not have to pray out loud.

You can repeat after me, quietly under your breath.

Jesus, I want to walk with you.

I am sorry for the times I mess up and turn away.

And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.

Forgive me and make me new.

Thank you for your love.

Please fill me with your Spirit.

Help me to follow your path...

...in all the stages of life.

² Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a, CEB.

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In Jesus' name, Amen.