

## **Now It's Our Turn**

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

Genesis 24: 34-38 42-49, 58-67

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### *Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30*

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

### *Genesis 24: 34-38 42-49, 58-67*

*Intro:* Eliezer, the senior and trusted servant of Abraham was tasked to find a wife for Isaac. This passage tells that story.....

So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant. The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; but you shall go to my father’s house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.’

“I came today to the spring, and said, ‘O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, “Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,” and who will say to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also” — let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master’s son.’ “Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’ quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels. Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son. Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.”

And they called Rebekah, and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “I will.” So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.” Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, “Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

Here ends the reading of God’s Holy Word.....

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In Nov of 1517, monk, preacher and professor Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg Germany, and that is known as the first protest of the Protestant Reformation. Except that it is not. For centuries there had been various attempts to reform the (small c) catholic church of Christianity. Each of those attempts failed for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. Yet there was something different in the era of Martin Luther. *Something* happened in *his* attempt to reform the Christian church. He was successful after so many others had failed.

In the late 1960’s Joan Ganz, a TV producer, wanted to create a show that would give disadvantaged children a head start in learning to help break the cycles of poverty and illiteracy. She was repeatedly shot down by media moguls and child psychologists as TV was seen just as entertainment and as passive, not educational, and it had no power or potential to do otherwise. Children *could not learn* by something that was merely a talking box. But the producer persisted. Her idea that was repeatedly shot down has aired since 1969 and is our beloved *Sesame Street*.

On Oct 17, 2004, Dave Roberts pinch ran for Kevin Millar, stole second base, and from that moment on the Red Sox never looked back. They won the next four games to become the American League champions and then beat the Cardinals in four straight to finally break the Curse and the 86 year World Series Championship drought. This was hardly the first time that the Red Sox came within a breath of winning it all, but why was *this time* successful and joyful while all the other attempts were heartbreakers?

So what do Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, Joan Ganz and Big Bird as educational trendsetters, and a curse broken by the stealing of second base have to do with one another? Or with our Scripture reading from Genesis which tells of a servant choosing Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife, the daughter-in-law of Abraham and Sarah, because she watered his camels? Each of these were pivotal moments, a hinge, a doorway, a threshold, a tipping point from *what was*, to *what was next*.

In his book, *The Tipping Point*, author Malcolm Gladwell describes his study of those hinges that caught on, that transformed, and he discovered three distinct characteristics that they all share. “These three characteristics Gladwell writes,

”1- contagiousness;

2- the fact that little causes can have big effects; and

3- that change happens not gradually but *at one dramatic moment-*

are the same three principles that define how a cold moves through a grade school classroom or the flu attacks every winter. Of the three, the 3<sup>rd</sup> trait- the idea that epidemics can rise or fall in *one* dramatic movement- is the most important, because it is the principle that makes sense of the first two and that permits the greatest insight into why modern change happens the way it does. The name given to that one dramatic moment when everything can change all at once is the *Tipping Point.*”

For Martin Luther, the advent of the printing press 70 years earlier had made it much easier to spread his message. His ability to be articulate as an extremely well written and spoken man, meant that Luther was not only able to affirm his ideas and form them into his theses, he was also very eloquent in the defense of his ideas. This was a time when the excesses of some leaders of the Church gave this movement traction amongst the common people. By the time of Luther, the public was more receptive to the idea of reformation. Luther’s reformations coincided with needs that people saw but had not known how to address. When this eloquent monk came along, his actions and ideas that described the common people’s concerns became contagious. The nailing of the theses to the church door was a published declaration, one small act with big effects, and there was an instant, dramatic response from the Church. This was the first attempt at reforming the Church *that had a tipping point.*

Big Bird, his Muppet friends and the people who live in the *Sesame Street* neighborhood were an instant hit, so that the contagion factor, the little show for children in the big medium of TV, and its overnight success created a tipping point for much of children’s TV that followed it.

And Dave Roberts stealing second is one of the most iconic tipping points in all of baseball history, perhaps in all of sports history.

*The tipping point, that one dramatic moment when everything can change all at once.*

History often turns on very small hinges. Most of us never know the effect of seemingly small incidents on peoples' lives or even history. Our actions are like ripples on a pond caused by the toss of a pebble. When we trace back those moments that change the course of things, we must often look beyond the "great events" to the ordinary happenings which might look completely insignificant. The Bible is full of such stories.

Indeed the Bible writers are fascinated with the faithful and unfaithful lives of otherwise ordinary individuals whose actions changed the course of history. When we are willing to trust God, the smallest, most ordinary action can produce the most life-changing and history-changing results. These are the *biblical tipping points.*

‘O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, “Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,” and who will say to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also” —let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master’s son.’ “Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’ quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels.

Camels are the tipping point in a bible story that begins the second generation of God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah, that they would be the parents of a great nation with more descendants than there are stars in the sky. Maren Tirabassi calls the camels the tipping point because they "spit, bite, and are generally unpleasant....They go so long without drinking water, they can drink 53 gallons in three minutes." With this knowledge, the servant Eliezer seeks a kindred wife for Isaac who shows true hospitality, one who would not only freely offer water to a hot, tired, thirsty traveler, but to the parched animal as well. This is a woman, who by her actions, would be compassionate, caring, strong welcoming and generous. A seemingly simple act of hospitality became a generation of God's covenant.

The tipping point, something that can seem so small by itself, yet has profound life-changing meaning.

And now it is our turn from what was, to what is next. The Covid-19 pandemic, this cloud of illness, isolation, quarantine, the wake-up call to the truth of racial injustice, the healing of the earth and our prayerful, tentative steps into the new way of the future will offer some tipping points for us. What they will be, how we will recognize them as pivotal moments, how the future will take a leap forward by one small hinge will best be seen in retrospect. When we are willing to trust God, to be open to possibilities the smallest, most ordinary action can produce the most life-changing and history-changing results. What will we do with our turn? Amen.