

2018-05-06 *Here I Am*

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May 6, 2018

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[Music Intro]

[Male voice] The following is a presentation of Artisan Church in Rochester, New York.

[Voice of Pastor Scott]

Well I was thinking earlier today about how blessed we are to be part of the church family that we're part of. You know any familial relationship comes with some good and some bad, and nobody's perfect. But this family of churches that we're part of, our denomination, the Evangelical Covenant Church has sent us, as of today, three wonderful guest preachers in the last couple of months. We had Dominique Gillard here earlier this year for the rethinking incarceration event). We had Reverend Judy Howard Peterson with us on Easter, and you're still coming up to me every week and saying how great that was. And today we have a third guest who comes from a Covenant Church in Minneapolis. Kristin Throckmorton was here with us yesterday with our staff leadership team and ministry team leaders and a couple of other people - maybe more than a couple other people - who registered to take an Enneagram workshop. Kristen is a certified Enneagram instructor and coach and so we brought her all the way from Minneapolis for that purpose, and which she agreed to preach on Sunday as part of that deal so we're so glad that she did. And Kristen was, until recently, on staff at Genesis Covenant Church in Minneapolis where she's from. Which is pastored by my friend Steve Wiens - one of many great colleagues I have in our denomination. But she recently stepped down from that position at Genesis so that she could make time for her growing business as an Enneagram coach and instructor. And so that's really wonderful, we're excited for her in the next phase of life where she takes this thing full time. Very cool! So, I'm so glad you're here with us, Kristen today. Would you welcome Kristin to Artisan Church? She's going to share from the word to you.

[Voice of Kristin Throckmorton]

Good morning Artisan! It is good to be with you and happy. As Scott said I am from Minneapolis. And I was here yesterday to share about the Enneagram and now today I get to preach and that is super fun!

So we are going to be talking about John fifteen which is from the lectionary reading for the week. And by the way, if you like to listen to the lectionary, and yet, I mean, if you like the lectionary but yet you don't really love to read it. I have somebody - I have a podcast for you - it is called [The Eighth Day](#) and just so happens that my husband's podcast asked that when he does he reads the lectionary texts to you every week so it's like a two minute deal. And sometimes that can be really great as you're driving to wherever you're going to. Anyway so we're going to be in John fifteen nine through seventeen and it reads like this:

9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants^[g] any longer, because the servant^[g] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Now, John fifteen - lets do a little bit of a backstory. Because we can hear these words and they can mean some things but really we need a backstory. So we are going to be actually talking today about what it's like to be abiding in God's love as we say yes to new beginnings in our life. And as we are working at this verse in John you might be wondering how on earth did we get there, Kristin? That seems funny. So let's do some back story. First, John fifteen it is Passover time in Jerusalem, and it is also right in the middle of the Last Supper. And so the disciples and Jesus are all partaking in this last supper, and a few verses back, few chapters back Jesus has just called out Judas and has said "You are the one who betrayed me and so now go and do what you gotta do." And so before we even get to John fifteen Judas has left the building and has gone to do what he was going to do which was betray Jesus. So by the way at Genesis we do these things called "All Plays" and it is meant to be audience participation. And so what that means is that It is meant to take the voice of the the choir and meld it with the voice of the solo, because we I feel like getting more voices in the room is really a positive thing. And good, so when there's an "All Play" please just feel free to yell out some answers. OK so here's your

first “All Play” question: You are the disciples unusual Judas leave you just saw Jesus point him out. Judas leaves. What are you feeling as the disciples?

[Indistinct Audience Response]

Say it again? Confused. Unsettled. Angry? Anger? Yes. I would be thinking: WHAT IS HAPPENING?! Why, all of the sudden, he just did that and now you just left? Now what's going to happen? Oh my goodness. So now Jesus has in John fifteen - now he needs to calm everyone down. He needs to do a little bit of reassurance here so that they can trust him again. Or so that they can just know that things are going to be OK. But what Jesus doesn't do is - Jesus doesn't say “Calm down it's going to be fine.” Instead, as we go throughout the gospels, we notice that Jesus says things and talks in ways which can be a little bit confusing to us if we don't know the context to it. And he effectively is “passage dropping,” as I like to say. Or he's name dropping, you know what he's doing is he's pointing back to passages in the Old Testament - in the Torah - that are there that these folks that he's around would have known. You know just like we say - what's the saying? Something like an apple doesn't fall far - far from the tree? And we hear that and you could say oh yeah Kristin - that's what it is! And so in the same way that's kind of what Jesus is doing. He is using these - old passages people would know - and he's pointing to himself. And that is what he's doing that all throughout the Gospels. And so here in John fifteen when he says as my father has loved me so I love you, now abide in my love. He is pointing back to - a specific time in scripture, which is Genesis twenty two. And we will go there in just a second but first we need to talk about love.

So what is love? This is your next “all play”. Say what? Baby don't hurt me? OK. What is love? Sacrifice. Trust. Forgiveness. Someone last service and “a whole bunch of complex emotions.” I thought that was pretty good. Yeah it's all of those. It's this warm attachment to someone. It's enthusiasm, a strong affection for another arising out of this kinship. It's a person's adoration of God. It's all of these things and much much more. When the disciples are hearing Jesus say as the father has loved me so now I love you now abide in my love, the disciples are being pushed back into the Torah and into Genesis twenty one to twenty two which is the very first time that that word love is used in the Bible. So we're going to turn there. It's on page fifteen if you're using a red bible and it reads. And it reads this. Which by the way, before we get there the reason I'm going back to the first use of the word is because when we're confused about a word or phrase or or anything like that in the Bible a good practice is to go back to the first sentence used because that's going to give us a really big clue as to what what it's supposed to mean. So we're in Chapter 22, verse one and says:

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

So the first way that love is used is in the Bible - and I'll look at to that other stuff in a minute further down- but with the first way that love is used is not between a man and woman. It's not between a master and servant. It's not between God and a human being, and it's not between a mother and a child. It's between a father and a son. Which is kind of interesting, and so let's think about the structure and science for a minute. Let's think about first, the fire. So Father Abraham has a son. Father Abraham has many sons, many sons has father Abraham. There's a song for that, maybe! But in Genesis twenty two he actually doesn't have many sons yet. He has one and so, the story of Abraham is interesting and one thing that we can glean from the story of Abraham as a whole is that Abraham really trusted God. We see that in Abraham when God brought Abraham out of his father's house. Earlier in Genesis what God says is go, leave your father's house and go to a land that I, God, will cause you to see. Now back in those days you didn't leave where you lived. You didn't leave your clan, because that was your security and that was your.... that was where your food came from. That was where you where you had all of your family, that's also where your inheritance came from. And all of the sudden God is asking Abraham - which is the first time anyone has ever been asked to leave anywhere - and that is asking Abraham to go. And Abraham has two choices. He could say why would I do that? Or he can say OK. And so he goes.

Also we know that he trusts God. God also gave Abraham this really cool thing and he promised, remember, that Abraham would be the descendant of millions, hundreds, many uncountable. As many as the stars, as in the grains of sand on a beach. And so Abraham is holding on to the promise that God has given him. Now also Abraham is fully human and has control issues just like we do. Probably some of us. And he likes to try to control situations. I don't know, I do at least! And he is getting a little bit tired of waiting for the blessing of these descendants to come to fruition and so he takes matters into his own hands. And that's the story of Hagar. So those are some things that happened up until Genesis twenty two. Also Abraham is a hundred years and so he's been waiting a long time for those for this promise of descendants to come about. And so in Genesis twenty two what's interesting is that he hears God call him and God says "Abraham," and Abraham says "Here I am." Now this little phrase here is actually really really really really important. It's easy to gloss over it sometimes. This little phrase "Here I am" is translated into the Hebrew as hineni, and this little word hineni is a huge arc in the Bible and we see people in pretty pivotal moments of their stories saying hineni to God and God guides them to their next step.

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It's an interesting story. So my friend, my pastor, Steve Wiens, we already said his name but he has a book, I have it with me it's called Whole. and this is what Steve writes about hineni.

Hineni is the response you give God when you want to tell him you're fully present and want to come out of hiding. You don't know where the journey will take you or even if that will or even what that will cost you but you want to say that you're fully present to God in a state of radical trust and vulnerability.

So Abraham says hineni to God. *Then* God says go offer your son as a sacrifice or as an offering to me. Here's your next "All Play" question. If you are Abraham and you just said hineni - here I am God, let's go! And then God says what he said now go offer your only son, the son you love up to me. What would you be thinking and feeling?

[Indistinct Audience Response]

That's not God! Never mind. Is there anybody else there?. Go find a new religion. Yeah Abraham has his choices now, two choices. He could say no - go find somebody else. I've been waiting for a hundred years-ish for these descendants and now I have one and now you want me to offer him up to you? Or he can say OK. And that's what he does. Abraham goes. Now the thing with hineni is that I don't think it's only for the Bible. In fact I think that the Bible is a living representation of us in some way, or representation of our lives in it. And since we are birthed and we're moving and living beings we have these options and these choices and I have to move into different ways of being too. And I think that could maybe it's actually if you can think, you know, actually that you can think of sometimes where you were going one way and all the sudden you felt this nudge to go another way and this pivot into this crazy vulnerability and this crazy trust and you either said yes or no. You there said here I am God let's go! Or you said, maybe not. But either way I am sure that you can think of some moments like that. I know that I can think of moments in my own life. And Abraham goes.

Now let's think about Isaac for a minute, because I always think he's very much a part of this too. Isaac is not a baby. Isaac is weaned, he's a little bit older. He is tall enough to walk up the mountain, he's old enough to have wood on his back because Abraham doesn't carry it on his. Also old enough to ask questions, and so he's asking questions on the way up the mountain. One of them being hey, Dad, where is the animal sacrifice? And Abraham has to say, probably with a really heavy heart, well, God will show us. And so here's your next "All play." Issaic's probably keying in a little bit here about what's perhaps going to happen. If you're Issac what are you thinking? What are you feeling? What are you going to do?

[Indistinct Audience Response]

Right. Who said that? I am going to trust my father. Those are the two choices. You can run back down the mountain and say this is not going to happen, or you can trust and stay here, that's great but really heavy. We will get there in a second, but what he decides to do is he decides to stay and trusts. Now that's a radical act and that's a radical vulnerability. One from Abraham to God. God saying, do this, and Abraham saying, OK here I go. Abraham is a walking with God for many many many many years and has formed this trust with him and in the same way has understood, has felt that love and that cared-for-ness feeling that God has been giving him. And he has decided to abide in that love, to keep to that love, to hold on to that love, to be patient with that love to know that that that's the essence, that's the stuff, right?. In the same way Isaac has been noticing and seeing his whole life how Abraham is reacting and in unity with God, and Isaac has been feeling his whole life the love that Abraham has for Isaac. And Isaac has been able to abide in that love, to keep to that love, to hold on to that love, be patient with it, and root down into it. And that's what it is to say hineni. It's to say OK here we go, I trust you.

I have a friend, her name is Sally. And Sally and I met in the baggage claim of the Minneapolis airport and she was straight from England and I had never met her before and we have a mutual friend. And so this mutual friend called me up and said hey Sally is coming in, I know you don't know her, it's fine, but her host for the weekend can't do it anymore so could you pick her up from the airport, oh and could you host her for the weekend? And so we said yes! Like you do. And what happened was she got into my car and immediately - and I not usually this forward - but immediately I was like so when are you going to move here? I don't know this person and yet... and she's here for a week, OK. And I here I am saying, ok Sally, so when are you going to move here? What I didn't know in that moment, is that a few years before she had a hineni moment where she said, OK God, here I am let's go. And what that meant is that she had to leave her home, and she had to get into this movement of God. And what happened was that it was so vulnerable and so trusting because she was trusting her finances, where she was going to live, where she's going to stay, I mean heck, who's going to pick her up from the airport? And she has just had the ability to say: hineni. And we gotta say it with our palms up to God and trusting that God is going to be the one providing in this radical way, this vulnerable way of being. And now Sally works in, she volunteers for, a nonprofit in Minneapolis that works with - it's called Source - and it works with women that are getting out of a life of prostitution, and it works to end human trafficking. And so all of these dreams that she had way back when that she didn't know how they were going to come about, she didn't understand what the road was going to be to get there... her saying hineni pivoted her into this path and now she's

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working out some of those dreams and she's seen some of those dreams happen in this new role, in this new life that she has in Minneapolis.

So let's go back to Jesus. What is Jesus talking about when he is saying: Abide in my love. Remember the disciples are freaking out, they're a little bit upset. Things are not kosher. The serene like painting of the Last Supper that you see where everybody is just kind of placid and really calm and I don't think that's really what was happening at this point. And so maybe what Jesus is saying at this point, as he's trying to reassure his people, his disciples, is: When you're questioning what is going on, like with Abraham and Isaac, when you're questioning, that maybe you should start rooting yourself down into the trust and love of the father. Or, when God is calling you into a new beginning that seems really scary and it's not all planned out and you can't see the end. Maybe you know where you've been, you can see where you are, and you can kind of see a little bit of your next step, but you definitely can't see the end of it. When that's when that's the case, keep to or abide in the love of the father. Root yourself down deep deep into that love. God was calling Abraham to abide in God's love, Abraham was asking Isaac to also abide in that love, and Jesus I think is asking the disciples at the very beginning of our passage here to also abide in his love. Because when things get tough that's the best way to do it - is to root yourself down. Even if things feel scary or vulnerable.

So where are you today? Maybe you're at this threshold of a new beginning and you can feel God's calling you into something that's super vulnerable, super scary. Maybe the palms of your hands are starting to sweat just thinking about it, I don't know, maybe that's just me. But you're finding that you need to, come out of hiding and come into this trust, into this vulnerability. Can you say hineni? And maybe you've already said hineni, maybe you've already said here I am. Maybe you are already walking in that trust, and in that vulnerability, and courageously going full into to what God has asked you to do. It's probably really scary and that's OK. And maybe you're ready for God to call you to something. Maybe you're feeling like that, just ready ready ready...but you're not yet there. But you want to be, you want to say hineni. So ask God for that and see what happens. And but no matter where you find yourself, may you abide in God's love. As you walk courageously into new beginnings and moments of saying hineni. Amen.

[Voice of Pastor Scott]

Thank you Krista so good to have you with us today. I want to invite all of us to take communion now. Artisan has an open table, which means you don't have to be a member of our church or of any church to partake of the sacrament. The requirement is really nothing more or less than being a follower of Jesus. And if you're following Jesus and seeking to walk in his way, this table is here for you. And we practice it by taking a piece of the bread,

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remembering Christ's body which is broken for you - we do have a gluten free option if you like - dipping it in one of the cups. There's both wine and juice - choose the one that's more appropriate for you and remember Christ's blood which is shed for the forgiveness of sins. You can take it all in one piece right there at the table, and may it be for you the real presence of the Body and Blood of the Savior. May it be food for your weary spiritual souls, and maybe an act of oneness and unity communion with each other, and with Christians around the world. It struck me earlier today that they're taking communion at Genesis, probably right now, and we get to share in that and be one with it in that way, and with other Christians around the world throughout time. It's really a beautiful thing. If you would like to receive prayer there will be a member of the prayer team at the back of the room who would be happy to pray with you. And your kids are probably ready for you to come get them as well. So let's continue to worship God in sacrament, in song, and in prayer.

[end of sermon]

[Male voice] For more information visit us at ArtisanChurch.com