

# Boo-Yah

June 26, 2022

## Introduction

Who remembers the “yays” and “boos” from the Children’s Moments and Luke’s Gospel last week? As a second grade teacher by day, I know that interactive reading is a great way to engage and involve everyone. Rev. Carol Reynolds, the guest preacher last week, had us say “yay” every time Jesus was mentioned in the GHospel and “boo” any time the “demons” possessing the man were discussed. We even did some “oinking” for the pigs.

Well, this week, as I considered the lectionary readings, it became apparent how the demon-possessed man in Luke 8 could connect to James and John trying to protect their authority in Luke 9. Last week, Rev. Reynolds went on to talk about how “monsters” like shame and fear can hold us back from being the people that God is creating us to be, not only as individuals, but as churches, states, and countries. In today’s Gospel reading, when Jesus’ disciples wanted to finger-point at others, he called them, and us, to order our priorities so our lives are radically free to follow him.

So, who’s ready to revisit those “yays” and “boos” from last week and see how they relate to the cycles of reactivity and triumphalism addressed in today’s Gospel? Are you ready for what in Wisconsin we call “boo-yah”?

## Cycles of Reactivity

Dr. Amy Oden is a Professor of Early Church History and Spirituality. In her commentary on our Gospel reading today, she writes: “We’ve all felt it. The rise in our gut when someone rejects our most cherished beliefs.” Like me, you may have felt it Friday, with the Supreme Court decision. Dr. Oden goes on to write, “We recognize the need to justify our views, prove we are right, defend our faith. But we don’t stop there. We also have the impulse to attack – to show how that person [or that group] is wrong, misguided, even unfaithful.”

So, in the passage from Luke today, when James and John see that the Samaritans did not receive Jesus, they ask Jesus if he wants them to command fire to come from heaven and consume the Samaritans. Their question wasn’t even without basis. In 2 Kings 1, Elijah asked for fire to come down from heaven and it did; however, just a few verses earlier, an argument arose among his disciples as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus’ response was to take a child and say to them whoever receives this child in his name receives him, as well as he who is least among you is the one who is great.

So, when James and John ask Jesus if he wanted them to command fire to come down from heaven, Jesus rebuked them. And, in many ways, myself included, we are often not so different from the disciples Jesus rebuked.

In fact, if you are familiar with the Fundamental Attribution Error, it is our tendency to explain our own behavior in situational terms (I was late because the car wouldn’t start or because of traffic), while we explain others’ behavior in terms of character deficits (they were late because they don’t plan ahead, or are careless or lazy).

## **Triumphalism**

This brings us to triumphalism and how this passage ties to Rev. Reynolds' interactive reading from Luke 8 last week. Dr. Oden, Professor of Early Church History and Spirituality that I quoted earlier, also writes, "Triumphalism is a powerful and dangerous drug, closely tied to self-righteousness. It feels so good to be right! To win! To know that God is on our side! Yay us! Boo everyone else! Endorphins pump through our bodies, creating a high we want to sustain."

So, after Jesus rebukes his disciples, he instructs them to continue with the work of the Gospel. He won't let James and John entrench themselves in the village where Jesus wasn't received. Instead, he tells them not to look back. He not only tells his disciples to not look back, but the rest of his followers. Instead of focusing on attacking others, or even other commitments in our lives, Jesus calls us all to order our priorities so that our lives are radically free to follow him fully. As Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians, "If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?"

## **Boo-Yah**

So, what does it look like to follow Jesus out of our cycles of reactivity and triumphalism? It looks like booyah. No, not the soup, although it does make for an interesting object lesson.

While the man possessed by demons in Luke 8 lived among the tombs, naked and homeless, Jesus asked him his name. It wasn't "Yay, look at my holiness," and "Boo, I reject you because of your demons." No, Jesus isn't afraid of him. Jesus isn't afraid of what makes us most vulnerable and alone.

In Galatians, Paul reminds us that trying to live a law-dominated existence results in erratic compulsions, particularly "the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival" Yet, booyah. Instead the traditional list of "fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

The Message version we heard Steve, Rev. Hartman, read earlier, goes like this: "God brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely." In short, we are free from cycles of reactivity and triumphalism. It's no longer "Yay us!" and "Boo everyone else!" We can see how ALL have a basic holiness which permeates all of creation.

## **Conclusion**

So how do we break these cycles of reactivity and triumphalism? With the same sense of booyah with which Jesus loved the man with the demons. Jesus wasn't afraid of him and treated him like a human being. When we can see that all have a basic holiness, it becomes a lot harder to depersonalize them and fall into "us vs. them" thinking.

We keep working for freedom for all. Issues of reproductive choice, poverty, race, gender, sexual orientation, and disabilities overlap. Working for freedom in any of these areas, often means working for freedom in all of these areas because we are interconnected, whole beings. Jesus realized this.

Keep everything in perspective. During the UCC virtual service on Friday evening, Rev. Traci Blackmon also reminded us: “No Supreme Court decision, no state law changes or supersedes divine law.”

Also, this past Wednesday, was the 50th anniversary of Title IX. Billie Jean King was the guest on Glennon Doyle’s “We Can Do Hard Things” podcast. She spoke about how part of the way she was able to achieve her historic win in the 1973 Battle of the Sexes was by visualizing “a reality that doesn’t yet exist, so you can be it, even when you don’t see it.”

Abby Wambach, soccer icon and Glennon’s wife and co-host, spoke about how Billie Jean King has fought for half a century Abby can have the life that she has now. In fact, Spain’s football federation just announced on June 15 that male and female players will receive equal pay, bonuses, travel, food, and accommodations. England, Ireland, Norway, and the United States are among other countries that have already reached equal pay agreements for men’s and women’s football teams.

And, it’s not just sports, it originally was about education. Before Title IX, only 3.8% of law school students were women; now it’s 54%. There were subjects that women were allowed to study and not allowed to study. So, when you feel like we’re moving backwards—and I agree, I have definitely felt like that, especially recently—remember boo-yah. We can break the cycles of reactivity, and instead triumph together when all of us are free.

Alleluia and Amen.

Shana Espinosa  
Union Congregational United Church of Christ  
Green Bay, Wisconsin  
**Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62**  
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