

“Automatic Authenticity”  
 Hosea 11:1-11; Luke 11:1-13  
 Rev. David Hutchinson  
 Sunday, August 4, 2019

Life is filled with things that happen automatically:

Like traffic lights - - brushing your teeth - - paying bills...

AND life is ALSO filled with times of great authenticity:

Like moments of great love - - sacrifice - - or pain.

And they seem like - - basically - - opposites.

Things that happen automatically - - aren't very authentic.

And truly authentic experiences - - aren't automatic.

But I've been wondering if it would ever be possible - -

for both to happen at once...

To experience something that is both automatic - - AND authentic.

Well maybe - - - and then again maybe not...

Let's try some examples:

Someone walks up and says, “How are you?”

I say, “Fine” - - and we both keep walking.

How are you?

O just fine, how are you?

Great.

It's automatic.

And it is often - - also - - NOT TRUE!

Not - - authentic.

People don't really WANT you to answer the greeting - - authentically.

Imagine a world - - where everyone answered that question - - authentically!!

Every time someone asked, "How are you" - -

the respondent - - TOLD them!

No one would get anywhere!

We'd STOP asking!

Because - - sometimes - - it's just easier - - to live on AUTO-PILOT.

There are all kinds of things we do on autopilot - - THANK GOD!

Things like tying our shoes - - breathing - -

Imagine - - having to think about EVERYTHING!

There are some things it's GOOD we do on autopilot.

Imagine having to have a MAP every time you go to the grocery store!

It would be horrible.

BUT - - the line between convenience - - and living with authenticity - - can be a fine line to draw. / AND - - in some parts of our lives - - auto pilot just doesn't cut it.

Saying "I love you" - - better be a little more than auto pilot - - don't you think?

But - - ever say it - - that way?

Kind of automatically...

"I love you"

"I love you too"

OR - - "I love you more"

But DO you?

SO what about our prayers - - and our spiritual life?

Automatic - - or authentic?

Do you think God can tell the difference?

And do you think God cares?

In this morning's scripture reading - - Jesus is deep in prayer.

It's an authentic - - heart-felt prayer - - from Jesus.

And the disciples - - interrupt him - - and ask him to teach THEM to pray.

And so Jesus - - teaches - - what we call the Lord's Prayer

Originally - - it was an authentic prayer - - full of power.

But think about how we sometimes pray THAT very prayer!

Have you ever prayed the Lord's Prayer - - on auto pilot?

“Our Father who art in heaven....”

When we pray, “give us this day our daily bread”...

Do we ever expect to end up knocking on someone's door asking for bread?

That's what Jesus did - - just after HE prayed those words.

When we pray, “lead us not into temptation”...

Are we honest about what tempts us?

When we pray, “forgive us our debts”...

Do we - - forgive our debtors?

How are you?

Oh I'm fine...

No really - - how ARE you?

The gospel reading tells me - - it's OK for the answer to NOT always be:

“I'm fine”

We all have needs - - and problems - -

In the gospel reading for this morning - - Jesus urges us to seek out what we  
NEED. / And to help others to find what they need...

Don't sleep through the knocking.

Get up - - find a loaf of bread.

Answer the door.

Imagine going to the doctor's office. / You have some pain - - and feel terrible.

In walks the doctor and asks: "How are you?"

Anyone going to say, "I'm fine Doc - - and you?"

Now - - Jesus walks in and asks, "How are you?"

When was the last time you prayed the Lord's Prayer and really meant it?

There's a story about a high school football team praying. / They would pray in  
the huddle before each game. / Amid the hubbub of pre-game setup, the Lord's prayer.

And then seconds after the prayer ended: "Let's go kill 'em"

Authentic?

The Old Testament reading this morning is from Hosea. / And it is God's lament  
over the problems in Jerusalem - - and an indication of God's amazing - - authentic - -  
LOVE for us and for Israel.

God prays, "Oh how can I give you up"

Hosea shows us God - - through the lens of love.

God deeply in love with - - people.

The images of human love are all through Hosea.

And they are - - in some cases - - of broken love...

And broken hearts.

In this chapter, our relationship with God is compared with a relationship between a parent and a child. / Earlier - - in chapter 2 of Hosea, our relationship with God is compared to the relationship between a husband and a wife.

Using examples from everyday life - - and human relationships - - to explain God and how God relates to us - - has its risks. / Namely - - the imperfection of human relationships.

But HOW ELSE - - are you going to do it?

God loves - - US.

Authentically.

Not some other - - better version - - of us.

In Robert Cole's book, "The Spiritual Lives of Children", he writes about an eleven year old girl named Anne. / Anne told Coles about her prayer life.

Her life was filled with trouble.

She was persistent.

She prayed and prayed - - as authentically as she could.

Even though - - sometimes it seemed like God didn't answer.

In one place in the book she said this, "When I start praying - - when Jesus DOES answer - - he tells me I should stop - - and take it easy - - and that's when I'm all better."

"Rain has been pouring - - on my whole life - - that's how I feel.

Heavy rain and I'm sinking and wet."

"Then I pray as hard as I can - - and I NEED to hear Jesus - - and I DO".

This girl's prayer - - indicates to me - - her authentic love for God.

Maybe we don't always get what we THOUGHT we needed.

But maybe we DO get what we REALLY need.

God promises our daily bread - - and more.

God's amazing and authentic and persistent love for us.

“How do I love thee - - Let me count the ways...

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height...

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight,

From the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee freely

I love thee purely

I love thee with a passion put to use

In my old griefs and with my childhood's faith

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

And if God choose...

I shall but love thee better after death.

May it be so - - for you and for me.

Amen