

I kind of put myself in a predicament here. Becca chose to talk about sunsets and marshes, and I choose to explain why Jesus calls someone Satan. She's shown us the wonderful ways God loves us – I chose to talk about this challenging and scary passage, because I think it points the way for how we should show that love for one another.

And I *do* feel bad for Peter, who remember, is not some random guy, but one of Jesus' most trusted disciples. Just before this reading, Jesus has just told Peter how much he trusts him to help him build up their little group, so you can imagine Peter feeling excited and hopeful. He's probably proud about how much Jesus trusts him, looking forward to receiving more responsibility – and now, suddenly, Jesus out and says that he intends to make so much of a scene in front of powerful people that he'll be *killed*. I think Peter's reaction makes a lot of sense! As advice goes, "Don't get yourself killed" seems like it should be pretty uncontroversial! You can imagine Peter saying "Think of all the good you could do - why would you throw away your life like that?" So why does Jesus get so mad?

Well, what Peter does here reminds me of myself in high school. I was still deep in the closet. And the people I despised the most in the whole world were the people I saw in gay pride parades, all those half naked dudes flaunting their eyeliner and feather boas. "Why do they have to *make such a scene?*", I thought. "Don't they realize that they're making it worse for the rest of us?" I thought, like Peter, that the safest thing, the most sensible thing for all of us, would be if everyone just kept their heads down and stopped being so *weird* for no reason.

And that's what Peter is telling Jesus to do here - be *sensible*. Do the *safe* thing. And that's exactly why Jesus get so mad. Because Jesus knows that Peter means well, that he wants the best for the movement. And that's exactly why what Peter said was so insidious. The world is *full* of ways to do good with minimum risk. But Jesus doesn't care about that.

Because Jesus wasn't put on the world to lead a movement. He was put on this world show us how to love – by loving so recklessly that he dies for it. And learning how to imitate that is the enormous challenge we're set.

Because that's not our instinct! When we love, we want acceptance and approval for ourselves and for others. When I told myself that I just wanted gay people to be accepted, I was just revealing my own fear that the gay rights movement was worthless unless straight people approved of it. I would have turned expressions of love into soulless tactics of appeasement! How much it shocked me to learn that, after I came out, even if I wasn't wearing eyeliner, people would still call me slurs behind my back. Wasn't I doing the *acceptable* thing? But I had just totally missed the point! Nobody wears a sequined speedo because they think it'll *convince people*. Queer people act this way because they know who they are, and will be who they are no matter what the world says.

And that's why this is the single time when Jesus calls another human being Satan. Jesus doesn't have time for appeasement. He doesn't have time for prudes like me and Peter who are afraid to see men in dresses or men on crosses. And that's why he states, plain and simple, that "whoever wishes to save [their] life will lose it." That's the point of this passage – that's why Jesus is so *scary* here. Because totally saw through Peter, seeing that what Peter framed as concern for safety, what seems so sensible on the surface, was really just fear and shame. Execution was for criminals, how could *Jesus* be associated with *them*? Peter imagines that Jesus can be the messiah and still be respectable in polite company, in the same way that I imagined that I could be queer and still please the people around me.

And so Jesus is terrifying here, because he is telling us a terrifying truth – that when you love like he does, when you love out of your identity, *it does not gain you respect*. This is why Jesus calls us to task! We can call ourselves, Christian - that's not the hard part. That

doesn't lose us any respect. But Jesus calls us all to love the refugee and the beggar and the genderqueer. This world needs to hear that, and we all need to say it until they do. But if that is the sort of love that makes you feel safe, if that's the sort of love your friends approve of, then you have another call. Because your next step is to also love the white nationalist and the CEO and the raving homophobe. And that's *hard* because we know they don't deserve love. The idea that we should love even ugly, awful people sounds dangerous and scary. But our God shocks and appalls Peter and us by becoming a convicted criminal, to remind us that following God *should* be weird and embarrassing. Because that feeling is how it feels to look at Jesus on the cross.

But that feeling of disgust, that feeling of fear, is exactly what Jesus frees us from. And we are freed because Jesus calls us to love in a queer way: not to gain respect from it, not even because you expect it to do any good, but because that is who you are made to be. Because when you are freed from the constraints of loving only those who you're supposed to, you have exactly what it takes to realize the weird, stupid joy that every person you meet on the street on your way home today will be worth loving enough to lay down your life for them – because that's what Jesus has done for every one of us. Because once you know that Jesus calls you to love even the worst, even the undeserving, even the most awful people, and once you know that God loves you in exactly the same way – then you can swing your feather boa around in the greatest pride parade the world has ever known.