

Hallie Stotler's Sermon of 10-10-21 on Galatians 3:1-14

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

When I was reading this text, I found it made me think a lot about my queer journey. How many of us, queer people, have tried so desperately to follow the "law." These human laws, these societal expectations that we thought-- if we only fulfilled them in the right way, we would be accepted and loved. In high school I thought-- if only I could dress the right way, then maybe a boy would like me. Never mind that I was desperately obsessed with my female best friend. What that meant didn't even enter my mind until years later, because I had made a commitment to follow the works of the law-- in this case the law, the expectation of heterosexuality. The law told me that I needed to like boys, and that following this law would bring me happiness and fulfillment and most importantly a husband and a conventional life. I wanted this life desperately, I yearned for it. I have always been a rule follower, and I was all in to follow the works of the law that society set out for me, so I put away my tie die tshirts, and my zip off cargo pants, and my converse sneakers, and I put on dresses and make up and hoped that this performance of femininity would make me feel feminine, the way society told me I was supposed to feel.

What did I do, in my desperate efforts to follow the law? I aggressively ignored and suppressed my own spirit.

"After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"

For me, so much of my queer journey has been about rediscovering and reclaiming my childhood self. We begin in this world by means of the spirit. We are born with our souls unencumbered by the expectations and laws of human society. Because of this, kids are marvelously queer-- every last one of them. I should know-- I'm a kindergarten teacher. Kids live a full and queerly embodied life-- their expression is exuberant, fluid, and unselfconscious. But as we grow older, we learn the rules. We learn which parts of ourselves are acceptable, and which parts we need to hide.

And the thing is, we ALL do this. Not just queer people. And the queer movement is an invitation for all of us to throw off the yoke of these expectations and laws, and live our truth with abandon. Queer liberation is not just for queer people, it's liberation for all.

At St. Lydias right now, we are exploring what it means to be a queer church. For me, that means inviting all people into the liberation that is queerness. Queer is an

identifier of gender and sexuality, for sure. I am a queer identified person. But Queer is also a verb, queer is a life approach that anyone can take part in. Any choice or expression that goes against the laws of white heteronormativity, to me is queer. I have a friend who is straight, but has decided to be single for the rest of her life. This to me is a queer choice! Straight men wearing dresses-- queer! Single Parenting-- Queer! David Bowie-- Definitely queer. Any form of expression by any person that is considered outside of the norm or in opposition to white heteropatriarchy is queer. Queer is a community, and queer is also an invitation-- if you weren't following the works of the law, how would you exist in the world? If you were living by faith alone-- faith in who god calls you to be-- who would you be? If each of us shares that part of ourselves that feels a little scary to share, we make a little more space, we make it a little safer for others to do the same. This is the invitation and the challenge of queerness.

I invite you to respond either by sharing verbally, or drawing whatever has come to mind for you.