

**Jordan Station United Church**  
**Sunday, October 18, 2020**  
**Week/Chapter 8**  
**We Make the Road by Walking by Brian McLaren**  
**“Rivalry or Reconciliation?”**  
**Scripture: Genesis 32:22 – 33:11**

**Sermon: “Rivalry or Reconciliation?”**

Reading from chapter 8 of We Make the Road by Walking and I quote “If you had siblings, how did you get along?”

Well that first stopped me in my tracks. I didn’t get past the first line of the chapter this week. I am the youngest of four children with three older sisters. Hmm...how did we get along? Well, I suspect if you ask each of us the answer might be different. I remember moments of my childhood of peace and joy when we all got along brilliantly and I remember moments when we battled. As the youngest and smallest, I often wrestled to be heard and recognized. My Mom use to joke that I would lite my self on fire if it might I could be noticed. I always wanted to be included especially when my sisters moved into teenagehood and I was still a small child.

My most vivid memories about getting along have to do with my sister Marina. She is closest to me in age and for much of our lives we shared a room. I asked her last night if I could share some of those stories and she said “well that depends, how will it make me look?” A brilliant answer really for isn’t it true that we love to tell stories. Beautiful stories about love and joy but rarely do we want things said that reveal that we are anything less than perfect.

I adore my sister Marina, and I always have. She is creative and loving and silly. She is smart and deeply loyal. I watch her today with her children and grandchildren and she makes me want to put everyone in my life first just like her. Most of the time when we shared a room it really was one room and we were on top of each other laughing and sharing everything. We stayed up late at night and often fell asleep in the same bed. We shared clothes, make up and books. But in those moments when we were wrestling for control or domination or independence or privacy, the battle lines were drawn. I remember the times when she pulled out the green painters tape and made a physical line and barrier between what was “HER” space and what was mine! She would be on her side and I should stay on mine. There was a small walkway taped out which was the common area...just in case we wanted to be in the same space. Those times never lasted very long and often we would end up crowded together in the common space because we never stayed mad at each for long. It was no longer rivalry but reconciliation. It wasn’t one vs. the other but rather a third state of being “us!”

A colleague this week got our lectionary group thinking about the idea of dual thinking or rather NON dualism. Dual thinking as I understand it, is the idea that something has to be “either/or.” That it's either good or bad. Right or wrong.

Pastor and theologian Richard Rohr says “we’ve got to get out of this dualistic thinking. That is my most simple definition of what contemplation means: a mind that does not read

reality dualistically but is able to hold contradictions until there's a reconciling third, until there's a broader frame revealed. I think that's the law of three. You can't choose sides but you have to stay in the flow. I think we are so tired of our fighting. Maybe it's out of desperation that a lot of people are willing to hear this message." I wonder now if as small children my sister I innately knew that we thrived in the space between right and wrong. That our relationship worked best when we were huddled in the common are because we were tired of fighting.

The Book of Genesis is full of stories of brothers and sisters in competition and conflict. The story of Abraham's grandson Jacob is one in which he was caught up in a bitter sibling rivalry with his older twin brother Esau. At the heart of their conflict was the belief that God loved Jacob and hated Esau. Based on this belief that he was uniquely favoured, Jacob felt entitled to take advantage of everyone around him, especially his disfavoured brother, Esau. He seemed to get away with his trickery again and again, until, eventually Esau grew so angry at Jacob that Jacob had to flee for his life. For many years, the two brothers lived far apart, maturing, but still alienated from each other. During this time, Jacob married two sisters – a favoured one named Rachel and a disfavoured one named Leah. Leah became the mother of six of Jacob's twelve sons, so her story had a happier ending than anyone expected.

**Richard Roy asked this question, Why does it matter that Christians have a dynamic, flowing understanding of God?**

"A God who is just concerned with being right is inert, inaccessible: The law is the law is the law; there's no wiggle room. When you have God as relational, and if the basic definition of reality is relationality, then you've got an open system.

That's what the beautiful biblical metaphors were trying to get to when they had God talking to Moses; God talking to Abraham; Abraham able to change God's mind, as it were; Moses the same, knowing God face to face. This is good stuff! But we understood it in such a static way – that these were things that happened to really special people, like Abraham and Moses and Jesus. But we didn't understand that they were revealing the basic pattern of reality. That pattern of reality is this flow."

Brian McLaren caught my attention with this..."these stories in Genesis pulsate with some of the powerful and radical themes of the bible. Blessings, power or favour is not given for privilege over others, but for service for the benefit of others. The weaker brother or sister, the who is deemed ugly or dull or disfavoured or illegitimate, is always beloved by God. God keeps showing up, not in the victors who have defeated or exploited or rejected a weaker rival, but in the weaker ones who have been defeated or rejected. Life is full of rivalries and conflicts. We all experience wrongs, hurts and injustices through the actions of others – and we all inflict wrongs, hurts and injustices upon others.

If we want to reflect the image of God, we will choose grace over hostility, reconciliation over revenge and equality over rivalry." It is my hope that his week you will choose reconciliation in your life. That you will choose to live in the common space huddled together surrounded painters tape. Putting aside all that separates you from God and each other.

Thanks be to God. Amen