

Explorers  
Pastor Michael Blackwood  
United Church of Broomfield  
May 22, 2021

Proverbs 22:1-6

<sup>1</sup> A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,  
and favor is better than silver or gold.

<sup>2</sup> The rich and the poor have this in common:  
the Lord is the maker of them all.

<sup>3</sup> The clever see danger and hide,  
but the simple go on and suffer for it.

<sup>4</sup> The reward for humility and fear of the Lord  
is riches and honor and life.

<sup>5</sup> Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;  
the cautious will keep far from them.

<sup>6</sup> Train children in the right way,  
and when old, they will not stray.

\*\*\*\*

Today, we continue our study and sermon series, Trekking through the Bible, staying in the Deep Space Nine franchise. As with most Star Trek episodes there are the Main "A" plots and the minor "B" plots. Let us begin with today's Major "A" plot:

After a visit to the planet, Bajor, where he learned more about their history, Commander Sisko returns to the space station, obsessed with building a replica of an ancient Bajoran interstellar "light ship," pushed by light pressure from the sun. Bajoran legends say that they explored their region of space as far as Cardassia (5.25 light years away) in such ships 800 years ago. It seems physically impossible since solar pressure can't push anything faster than light-speed. Sisko wants to duplicate the voyage and travel as far as possible – "for the fun of it."

Sisko wants his son, Jake to help him in building the replica light ship and then accompany him on the journey. He sees it as an opportunity for them to spend time together and bond. When asked, Jake declines, telling his dad that he has plans to see his old girlfriend. Eventually, feeling guilty, Jake relents and agrees to join his dad for the adventure. During the voyage, he uses the opportunity to show his father one of his stories and reveal his interest in becoming a writer. Sisko says that the story "shows promise," but it's too obvious that Jake is writing about things he has never experienced. Jake gets a little offended and reveals that he has been offered a fellowship at a university on Earth, but he isn't sure whether he's ready to go.

As they're traveling, the ship experiences some mechanical trouble and Sisko is forced to jettison a sail, meaning they may not be able to get as far as they hoped. Jake reassures his dad that they should risk it and press on. <<>> Jake says that he's thinking of deferring his admission to the university for a year, as he's not comfortable leaving his father all alone. He encourages his father to start dating again to provide him some company while Jake is away and mentions that there is a freighter captain named Kasidy Yates with whom he wants to match him up. While they're talking, the ship suffers another calamity as they get caught in space winds that mysteriously and surprisingly propel the ship at warp speeds, which is unheard of. In the commotion, their compass gets destroyed, so they have no idea where they are. They attempt to contact the

station for help, but fail, so they're reduced to waiting around to get picked up by a random passerby. As they wait, Jake announces that he's committed to deferring his university, so he can gain more experiences to become a better writer, and what better place to pick up new experiences than on the station? Sisko affirms Jake's decision and agrees to being set up on a date with the freighter captain, Kasidy.

After some time passes, Jake and Sisko get hailed by three mysterious ships that suddenly approach. It turns out to be Cardassian ships welcoming them to Cardassian space. It seems their "leap of faith" and solar winds carried them farther than anyone had anticipated, right into Cardassia, proving that the ancient Bajoran stories were possible. They celebrate with fireworks.

>>>

And now for the minor, "B" plot:

The station's chief medical officer, Dr. Bashir learns that his old school rival, Dr. Elizabeth Lense, the one who took the valedictorian spot from him, will be docking on the space station in a few weeks. This re-ignites anxieties and insecurities in Dr. Bashir.

When Dr. Lense arrives, Dr. Bashir finds her at Quark's (the local watering hole), but he's too nervous to approach her. Chief O'Brien encourages him to go talk to her and eventually, Bashir starts to approach her, but she walks right by him without acknowledging that he exists. Bashir is stupefied.

Feeling defeated, Bashir drown his sorrows in drink with O'Brien over his feelings of disappointment. He admits that he has always felt a vague feeling of inadequacy about his failure to secure the top spot at school. As valedictorian, Dr. Lense had first choice of assignments, and even though Bashir nabbed his own dream assignment, he's not comfortable with the fact that Lense could have taken it from him if she'd wished.

Bashir finally builds up the nerve to force Lense to acknowledge him. When he introduces himself, she's shocked that *he's* Julian Bashir, as she's always been under the mistaken impression that her school rival was an Andorrian. They laugh about the misunderstanding and get to know each other. Lense gracefully admits that her valedictorian status would have been his if not for one error on his final exam. She's actually jealous of his exciting post on Deep Space Nine, since the highly sought-after post she took is actually pretty boring. She tells him that she has read up on his work on immunotherapy with Bajorans, and they go off to the infirmary to see his latest results.

\*\*\*\*

That's it.

In comparison to the themes, stories, and issues that we've been encountering in the last few weeks, this Star Trek episode is extremely tame, some might even say boring. Instead of focusing on extreme and divisive issues like religious extremism, terrorist acts, moral issues of good vs. evil, rape and societal stigmas, we get to enjoy watching what some might call the humdrum aspects of everyday life; online commentators put it at the extremes of either one of DS9's best episodes or one of its worst.

After we watched the episode, several of us questioned Pastor Andi as to WHY she chose this episode. She told us that she thought we needed a break and also to remember and reflect on everyday life and the things that we do for rest and fun. Wasn't that nice of her? I mean it. It's true – we HAVE been watching some heavy episodes with some intense topics. And...there has been a lot of tension in the world – a lot of hurt, pain and

anger. Also, most of us (most) don't live such intense and dramatic lives. When we have drama in our lives, it's often short and brief...and then we return to routine.

One of the comments made during our Monday night discussion was a recognition that, in this episode... The crew isn't working – which I'm told is completely different than almost every Star Trek episode (all franchises) that you see. The show is set around the working world of the ship or the space station. This episode isn't – it's about downtime, fun and the mundane aspects of everyday life.

\*\*\*\*

Commander Sisko learns about ancient space travels of the Bajoran people, and it sparks excitement in him. So much so that he feels compelled to replicate and experience those adventures. When he tells Officer O'Brien and Major Kira of his plans, they're a little concerned and skeptical. Is it possible to build such a ship, using old-fashioned tools? If successful, will it even fly? Why would you want to do such a thing, take such a risk? Sisko says, "for the fun of it." He wants to spend his free hours feeding a passionate learning within him and ...he wants to share that with his son. Although Jake isn't initially willing, which is an expected answer from a teen-ager, eventually Jake joins him, and they have a terrific time, in spite of some mechanical challenges. They get to experience the adventures of ancient Bajorans and get to have father-son bonding time, which is partially what Sisko wanted with this adventure.

It's a great reminder for us. How much time do we spend on stress and worry about the world around us and about things that aren't within our immediate control? Probably too much. When was the last time that you got excited about something and "went for it?" When was the last time you did something, took a risk, just for the fun of it?

I know that MY answer is, "far too long ago and not often enough." I'm going to guess that many of you may answer likewise. Our scripture today speaks to balance in life and focus on what is important. The rich and the poor – God is maker of them all. Being prudent is preferable to being simple-minded. Humility is a trait to be valued. Training children in the importance of the way, so that it will benefit them for their entire lives.

God spoke of the importance of rest – so much so that we are SUPPOSED to devote an entire day each week to it. In Genesis, after all the work that God had done with creation, God rested. It's unlikely that God was exhausted from creating EVERYTHING. God rested as an example for us – showing us a good, proper, honorable routine of life and living. God knows what's best for us. If we listen to God and follow God's ways, then on a regular, routine basis we are to stop working...rest... and have fun. Beside physical well-being, rest and enjoyment is part of our emotional and psychological well-being. It's about trust. Think about that. By allowing ourselves to rest and have fun, we demonstrate the belief that God will provide for the details of our lives, and we don't have to strive in every waking moment.

In their rest, fun and father-son-bonding time, Sisko and Jake are able to cut through some of the miscommunication of life or the lack of communication that they've experienced. They don't have to *strive* to hear one another. They feel comfortable opening up and being vulnerable with one another. Sisko thought Jake didn't want to come on the trip because he was being a stereotypical teenager – not wanting to spend time with their parent, but that wasn't the case. Jake shares with his dad that he's earned a writing scholarship to a prestigious school on Earth. He has reservations about not following in his dad's footsteps. He admits that he's thinking about not taking the scholarship or even postponing it. Sisko assumes that Jake will be homesick, but in reality, Jake's worried that his father will be alone. Sisko hasn't dated in over a year, so Jake wants to set him up on a date. It's funny and endearing – and it happens because they have a moment of rest, fun and non-work. They can enjoy the everyday, mundane stuff of life.

\*\*\*\*

Like Sisko experiencing ancient risks and explorations, Dr. Bashir is confronted with past rivalries and their associated stresses and anxieties. Dr. Bashir has always been passionate about his career and success. When Dr. Lense arrives, he must revisit his feelings and deal with them. Officer O'Brien tries to be of support to Dr. Bashir, talking to him about what happened, exploring his actions, words, and feelings. He encourages Dr. Bashir to take a risk – "go talk to her." When Dr. Bashir finally works up the courage to do it, he is met with complete surprise. The reality that he had "known" and experienced was based in assumptions and miscommunication.

When he took the risk to actually speak with Dr. Lense, he learned the truth about his own life. Despite getting the assignment that he wanted (on DS9) and loving it, he fell into the misconception of the proverb of "the grass is greener on the other side." The coveted position that Dr. Lense took as valedictorian is one she describes as boring and mundane, one in which she finds no passion or joy. Dr. Bashir's position on the space station, however, is thrilling to her. Once Dr. Bashir was willing to explore his feelings, he reconciled all of his self-doubt and he gained a new relationship with Dr. Lense.

Today's proverb would have served Dr. Bashir well. Also, Proverbs 14:30, "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

\*\*\*\*

Too often, we let the extremes of life beyond us take over. We are consumed by work and overwhelmed by "the world." We forget to rest. We don't prioritize enjoying life for "the fun of it." We allow assumptions, misunderstandings, and miscommunications to speak too loudly, to affect everything we do, and to lead us in defeating, non-affirming paths. It causes us not to flourish. AND God's plan for all of creation is to flourish.

When it comes to love for us, God is extravagant. God has given us everything we need for life and Godliness. That is why we can flourish – because He has given us everything we need. We can flourish and see growth and development in every area of our lives. In our workplaces, in our serving, in our relationships, in our parenting, in our ministry, in our relationship with God, in our creativity...and particularly in our rest, in our recreation and in our fun. Do not forget that Jesus came that we "might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

What assumptions have led you astray?

What have you explored recently?

What risk have you taken?

Take a moment to think about such things. Rest. Consider. Then, go and have fun.

May we live long and prosper.

AMEN.