
VULNERABILITY GOD & US

THE NEXT CHURCH CONFERENCE

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ROY W. HOWARD + SHELBY ETHERIDGE HARASTY

I want to start a global conversation
about vulnerability and shame.

Brené Brown

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

- What does vulnerability mean to you?
 - How do you experience vulnerability?
 - When have you experienced someone else being vulnerable with you?
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WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT

Scripture tells us in numerous stories that the living God became *vulnerable* for us.

Our contention is that our pastoral/personal practice of vulnerability flows from a theology of God's vulnerability.

VULNERABILITY

- Comes from the Latin word “to wound”
 - To be vulnerable is to be open to being wounded
 - Risking failure
 - Speaking truthfully
 - Staying in (rather than remaining on the sidelines)
 - Allowing for discomfort
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THE VULNERABLE GOD

- Incarnation - “*God With Us*” + “The Word Became Flesh”- Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-5
(To be vulnerable is to be all in)
 - Crucifixion - “*My God, my God ... why?*” Matthew 27:46
(To be vulnerable is to be open to being wounded and risking failure)
 - Engagement - “*Jesus wept*” - John 11:35
(To be vulnerable is to allow for emotional discomfort)
 - “Jesus emptied himself and became human” - Philippians 2:1-11
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THE VULNERABLE GOD

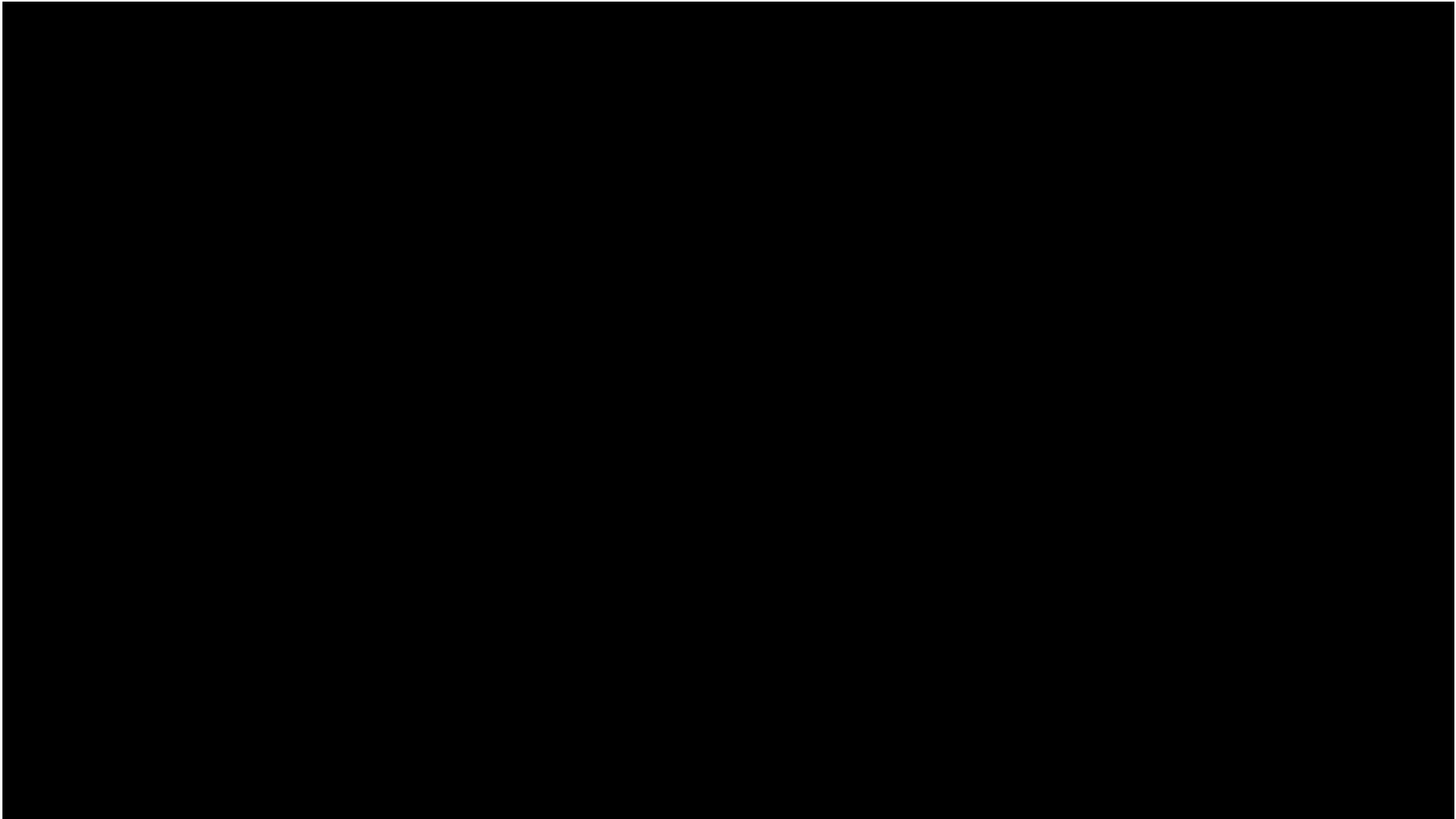
Incarnation and Crucifixion are twin pillars in scripture displaying the vulnerable God.

In between these pillars are numerous incidents but one most telling is Jesus weeping over his friend Lazarus.

THE VULNERABLE GOD

- *Jesus wept*: what do Jesus' tears say to you about God?
 - How does this understanding inform your theology of God?
 - How does this inform your view of power?
 - What do Jesus' tears say to you about your pastoral practice?
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Being Vulnerable



It is not the critic who counts;
not the man who point out how the strong man stumbles,
or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.
The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,
whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;
who strives valiantly; ...
who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement,
and who at the worst,
if he fails, at least fails while *daring greatly*.

Theodore Roosevelt
(Brené Brown)

VULNERABILITY

- Vulnerability is uncertainty, risk, emotional exposure.
 - Vulnerability is the source of hope, authenticity, joy, courage, empathy and the capacity to love
 - "Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage."
 - What keeps us from being vulnerable?
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SHAME

Shame is what keeps us from being vulnerable. It is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that you are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. It is universal.

- We all have the gremlins
 - Shame is: "I have failed" vs. "I am a failure."
 - What price do we pay, emotionally and spiritually, when we disengage and do not enter the arena?
 - Shame undermines every path to joy, freedom and peace. It keeps us from daring greatly.
 - The more we talk about shame the less power it has over our lives.
 - Cultivating shame resilience
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Courage is the answer to shame

Courage = Daring greatly

Courage = Being all in

VULNERABILITY + PASTORAL PRACTICE

God said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ;

for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

(II Corinthians 12:9-11)

VULNERABILITY + PASTORAL PRACTICE

How it has worked for us:

Lenten Bible Studies

Annual meeting with testimonies

Leadership Development (willingness to fail)

Preaching & Teaching

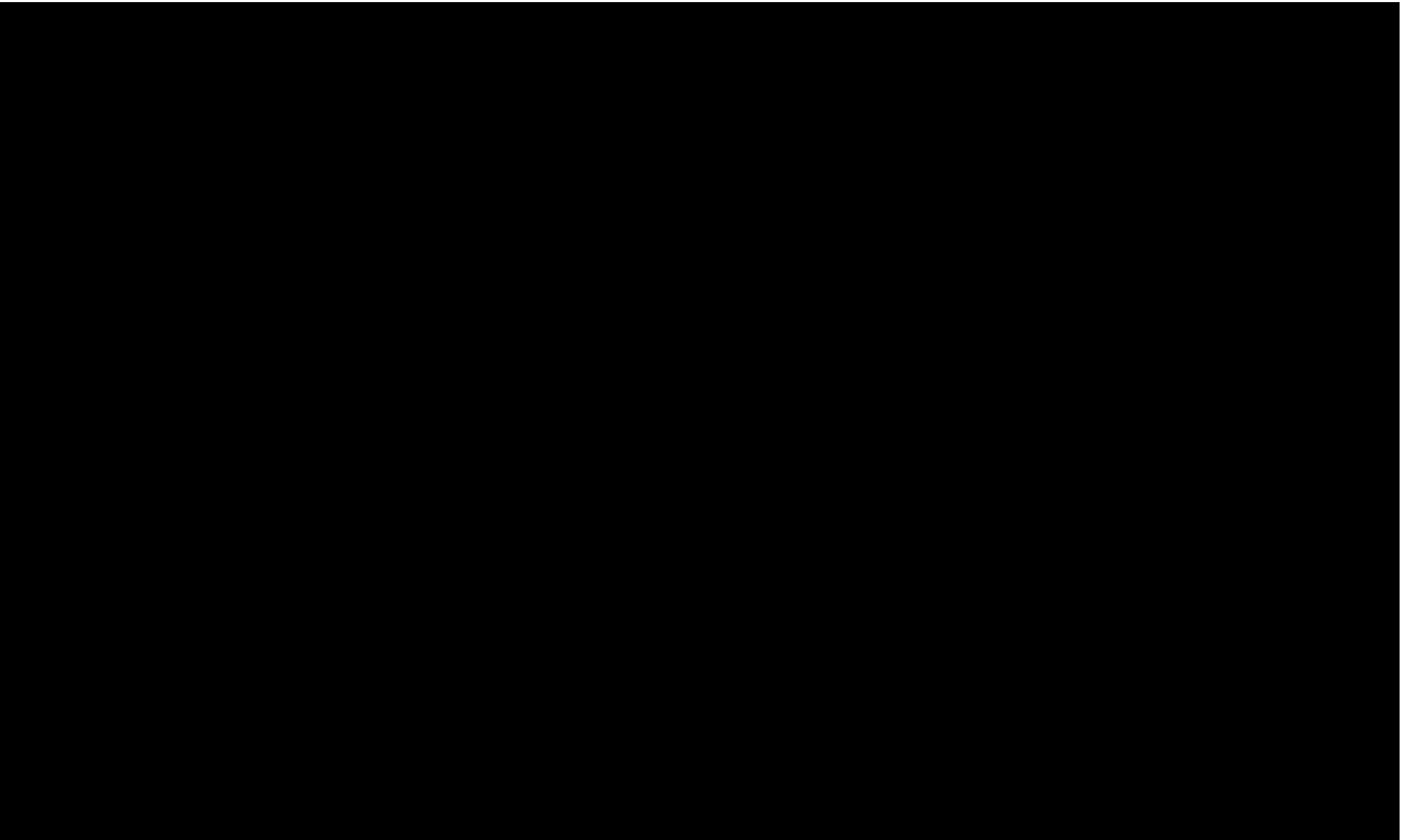
Sermons as most vulnerable moment ("a vulnerability hangover")

VULNERABILITY + PASTORAL PRACTICE

How might you go about your pastoral ministry from a place of vulnerability and courage?

“Vulnerability is uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.”

- truth-telling with congregation and leaders
 - engagement with conflict and emotional discomfort
 - pastoral care
 - risking failure
 - prayer
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VULNERABILITY + PASTORAL PRACTICE

The thing I would say is that if you feel safe in the area you are working in, you are not working in the right area. Always go a little further in the water than you think are capable of being in. Go a little bit out of your depth, and when you don't feel that your feet are quite touching the bottom, you are just about in the right place to do something really exciting.

David Bowie 2016

VULNERABILITY + PASTORAL PRACTICE

*Only when we are brave enough to explore
the darkness will we discover the infinite
power of light.*

Brené Brown

Resources

Daring Greatly - Brené Brown - 2012 - Gotham Books

Rising Strong - Brené Brown - 2015 - Spiegel & Grau Publishers

The Vulnerable Pastor - Mandy Smith - 2015 - IVP Press

Narratives of a Vulnerable God - William Placher - 1994 - WJK Press

Roy Howard: pastor@saintmarkpresby.org

Shelby Etheridge: associate@saintmarkpresby.org
