

“We can do hard things.” It’s kind of the rallying cry of blogger, activist, and just generally all-around amazing woman, Glennon Doyle. I’ve talked about her before, but honestly, Glennon never ceases to amaze me. Sometimes I look at her life and I have no idea how one person has been able to not only withstand, but *thrive* in the midst of so much. I mean Glennon *knows* about hard things. She has battled addiction, she struggles with keeping her mental health on an even keel, on top of only in the last few years fully claiming and owning her own identity, after living for years not truly knowing who she was. So, yeah, when Glennon tells people that we can do hard things, they know she means it because Glennon has done some hardcore hard things in her life, and she’s come out the other side of it, happy, contented, healthy and living a true, authentic life.

But here’s the thing that astounds me about Glennon, instead of using the hard things of her own life as an excuse or as a reason to hunker into herself and focus solely on her own needs or desires, she has used that drive to turn herself and her heart outwards. She gets out there and she just *does* things. She fights for others and speaks up when the world is silent and she uses her platform to try and make any tiny ounce of change she possibly can manage happen. She refuses to give into the call to complacency, she refuses to sink into the mentality that her life has been hard enough so now

she can stop fighting. She recognizes that because she has done hard things, she can help others do the same, so she speaks out about racism and sexism and misogyny and homophobia and immigration...and just keeps fighting every hard fight that comes her way, encouraging anyone else who is listening to do the same, because at the end of the day, the world needs people willing to do hard things.

I feel like in some ways, Glennon's rallying cry also needed to be Jesus' as he closes out this speech to the disciples. For three straight weeks, we've been hearing how Jesus is preparing the disciples to go out into the world and preach the gospel. He's laid out for them how difficult it's going to be, that the message they're going out to preach isn't one that everyone is going to accept. He's pretty much flat out told them that it's going to bring division and hardship and it's going to tick people off, and they're frankly just going to have to leave some towns kicking the dust off their shoes because there's just no hope for them there. If that wasn't bad enough he's told them that they have to do this all without the benefit of extra food or clothes and without a hotel reservation, so yahoo, let's get ready to go out and take on the world discipleship style, right? I mean, you absolutely feel like Jesus should end this speech like a coach on the day of the big game, pumping them all up, like yeah, go out there and do this! It's going to be

hard and it's going to be a fight, but you've got this!! You can do hard things!! It feels like this whole speech should be a build up to some dramatic send off where the disciples want to yell and chest bump and be like alright, discipleship!!! Ready, break!

And yet...Jesus kind of does the exact opposite. All of this build up and Jesus just kind of ends with a word of simplicity. There is no rallying cry, no marching orders, no shouts or exclamations, no final words of warning. Instead, Jesus actually takes all of that hard, and boils it down to a bit of easy. He says at the end of the day, sometimes discipleship is as simple and as small as offering a cup of cold water to someone. Sometimes, the only way they're going to see that the message of the kingdom of heaven got through to someone is if they leave hearing the disciples preach and maybe go give a cup of water to someone they might have otherwise ignored before. That is how Jesus ends this whole speech about how hard things are going to be for them, but getting them back to basics...at the end of the day, the kingdom of God is like giving someone you might have previously ignored a cup of cold water. Sometimes, it's as easy as that...

But the disciples know what Jesus knows, right? That sometimes even the act that appears that simply and easy isn't always so straightforward. For the people who will hear the message the disciples are

going out to proclaim, think about what it will look like to give a cup of cold water to one of these so called “little ones.” That could mean giving a cup of cold water to a Samaritan, someone that they’ve been taught their whole lives are the worst people imaginable. Someone that they’d rather cross to the other side of the street than walk next to. Someone they’ve been told is their polar opposite in every way possible. That could mean giving a cup of cold water to a leper, to someone who is sick, someone that every fiber of their being says to avoid, to ignore, to not touch. That could mean giving a cup of cold water to an actual little one, a kid, someone that in Jesus’ time was basically next to nothing because they couldn’t do anything productive or valuable. Someone that the world said was on the bottom of the totem pole. That could mean giving a cup of cold water even to a Roman soldier, the enemy, the person who stands for everything that they hate.

This Jesus tells them might sometimes have to be the barometer for whether or not their message got through. They might not see the world completely change, they might not see systems that they want to shatter break down before their very eyes, sometimes they might only see the tiniest crack break through hearts of stone, the tiniest glimmer of light shining through the darkness, one little cup of water given when it would have been hoarded prior to their arrival. Jesus wants them to realize that for as much as

he's sending them out amidst the hard and the difficult, they also have to be able to see the simple, to see the easy; they too have to be willing recognize that sometimes their call to discipleship is going to need the small, easy thing, because that small, easy, first step might just be the beginning of a whole new world, a whole new way of being. Jesus needs them to see that sometimes the way of the gospel starts with one tiny footstep, even if they feel like it should move mountains right from the start.

I think sometimes...we need this reminder possibly even more so than the disciples did, if I'm being honest. Because let's face it, the world we live in is full of nothing but problems that require us doing lots and lots of hard things. And we feel like we have to take all of those things on all at once and solve them in point two seconds, otherwise it isn't really worth it. Sometimes we gaze up at the giant mountain of issues this world has thrown at us, and feel like the easiest thing would be to shrug our shoulders and be like nope, too hard, I'm going to just keep walking and maybe this mountain will eventually fade into the distance. We look at that mountain and we see printed on it, coronavirus, racism, police brutality, riots, gun violence, political division, and we just want to be like, well I can't fix that. And ok, no maybe we can't, not on our own...but that doesn't mean we can't bring our own level of baby step, do the easy thing discipleship to it.

None of us are going to be the one who finds the vaccine for Covid. I think we can all own that, but baby step discipleship? Well that looks an awful lot like wearing a mask and maintaining social distance even when it feels annoying and like it's gone on forever. None of us are going to be the one that solves the systemic racism problem that this country has, but baby step discipleship? It looks like listening to our siblings of color when they speak about their experiences. It looks like deeply examining our own points of privilege and educating ourselves on how we can be a part of the solution not perpetuating the problem, even unconsciously. None of us are going to single handedly solve the deep political divide that exists in this country, but baby step discipleship? Sometimes that looks an awful lot like not engaging in the maddening, circular conversations that happen on Facebook, or just not yelling when someone has a different opinion than you do, even if it drives you nuts that they do. None of us are going to fix all the isms and phobias that plague our world—sexism, ableism, homophobia—but baby step discipleship? Sometimes that means speaking up when that one family member makes the snide passing comment you usually ignore, or providing people with safe spaces to speak their truths and believing them when they do. Honestly at the end of the day, you know what baby step discipleship looks like all the way around? Love. Love and the simple

acknowledgement from us to every single one of our fellow human beings that they are precious and wondrously made in the eyes of God, and God loves them for exactly who they are. I mean that's what Jesus is really saying here right? Sometimes discipleship looks like a cup of cold water. Sometimes the only tiny clue we're going to see of the kingdom of God breaking through is a cup of cold water. And that's ok...

You know why that's ok? Because a hundred baby steps make for a lot of ground covered. Because slowly and surely striving to do the easy things makes it easier and easier to imagine doing the hard things. Because every little building block we set, every tiny light that we shine, every tiny scrap of love we share is a step in the right direction towards the full on, all out kingdom of God breaking into this world. Jesus knew the disciples weren't going to be able to fix the whole problem and bring the kingdom in one fell swoop, but he knew they could do *something*, and so he sent them out to do it. We aren't going to be able to fix all our problems and change the world in a snap, but we can do *something*, and God sends us out to do it. Us in all of our totally unfit but ready for the job ways. The disciples did it and so can we. People of God, we can do hard things. We do them every day. But we can also do easy things...and sometimes...it is the easy things that make all the difference. **AMEN!!!**