

Trust me when I say that I'm well aware that the last movie we chose for our Tapestry discussions was unorthodox at best. *Spider-Man: Into the Spideverse* doesn't exactly scream faith conversations, and I get that. I also know it wasn't everyone's jam, and that it's kind of a weird movie, but I will be the first to admit that this movie gets to me...*hard*. When you take a step back from the crazy comic book animation, the rap music, and cartoon pigs of all things, you realize that at it's heart, this is a movie about faith. It's a movie about what we believe we are capable of and finding that belief in ourselves even when we don't feel it all the time, how we sometimes rise above the expectations the world sets for us and how sometimes we choose to simply shatter those expectations because we're uninterested in living in whatever box the world has decided that we need to be confined within.

Miles isn't your typical, friendly, neighborhood Spider-Man. He's not an orphan, being raised by an aunt and uncle after losing his parents traumatically. He's not some nerdy, white kid with black frame glasses and a desire to be a photo journalist. He doesn't get bit by a radioactive spider in the middle of a science lab while he's too busy crushing on the redhead next to him. He's a biracial teenager being raised by his parents in Brooklyn. His home filled with the ebb and flow of English and Spanish, where his teenage angst fights against the controls of his cop dad. He's comfortable in

his hoodie and jeans and doesn't like the confines of the private school uniform he has to wear now that he's transferred schools. He knows everyone wants him to *be something* big and yet, he wants to be an artist. A graffiti artist. He gets bit by a radioactive spider in the middle of a hidden subway platform where he's hanging out with his uncle who has found him a safe and open spot to work on his art. He's just a regular kid, who gets the weight of multiple worlds put on his shoulders and he has to figure out what that means for him.

He feels the weight of those expectations unbelievably hard, wondering if he's good enough for this, capable enough for this, equipped and deserving of the role he has been given. He feels like he keeps messing up when he tries and so eventually he just feels like it's better to give up. In the midst of all of this, he's being mentored by Peter Parker, another universe's more traditional Spider-Man, and at one point, Miles asks him when he'll know he's ready, *if* he's ready, if he can do this, if he *should* do this. And Peter tells him that there's no specific moment, that sometimes, it's just a leap of faith. You have to take a risk and see what happens. Now, since we're dealing with web-slinging superheroes, the whole leap of faith thing works literally and metaphorically. Miles takes himself to the top of a building with Peter's words echoing in his head, it's a leap of faith, and...he

jumps, hoping that his webs will come to life, hoping that he can shatter the expectations he's put on himself, hoping he can fly. And he does... It was this moment that elicited one of the most profound statements of all of our Tapestry conversations. We were talking about this scene and Patricia McClelland simply said, "Sometimes faith is the miracle." And it was just this moment of...yeah...sometimes faith *is* the miracle.

It's almost the perfect subtitle for our first lesson this morning. The Call of Isaiah: Sometimes Faith is the Miracle. It's a wonder that Isaiah didn't just pass out from sheer terror and shock at the situation that presents itself to him completely out of nowhere. He is living in a time when the prevailing thought is still very much, no one has looked upon the face of God and lived, and here he is, in the midst of a vision of God so large, so grand that it fills the whole temple. He has to be thinking, "Am I going to make it out of here alive?!" And so he just kind of lays it all out there, he has his own Miles-esque moment of self-doubt and lamentation. He isn't deserving of this vision, of being in God's presence. He's living in a time and amongst a people that have completely cut themselves off from God and who is he to presume that he's any better than the rest of his siblings. Humanity and God have been on the brink of total separation for far too long, and Isaiah knows that he has fallen short plenty of times too. He's

lost, undone, confused, and feels unworthy of what stands before him.

Whatever God is here to ask of him, he's not capable of it, he's not equipped, not in the world he lives in, not in his current state of being.

But God has a way of dealing with our long list of reasons why we can't. God tends to ignore them. In Isaiah's case, God doesn't really *ignore* Isaiah's protests, God just kind of takes them off the table. You claim your lips are unclean? Here, let's purify them with fire! Have a hot coal. It sounds almost comical, but it works for Isaiah, because when God finally lays out the reason this vision is happening in the first place...God is looking for a prophet to go out amongst the people and proclaim God's word...Isaiah is ready. God asks who will go for us, and with newly clean lips and without hesitation, Isaiah says, "Here I am; send me." I mean, talk about a leap of faith, a shrugging off of doubt and expectation and fear. Isaiah just says, ok, let's do this. I will speak your word. I will go for you. I will move amongst these stubborn people and try to help them hear you.

This moment in and of itself is a massive leap of faith, but it actually becomes more impressive if you continue the story. After Isaiah says he will go, God then tells him, the whole thing is basically going to be pointless. The people aren't going to listen. They're going to remain stubborn. They're going to shut their ears and close their eyes and Isaiah is

going to be preaching to a brick wall. Not exactly a ringing endorsement for a job description. And yet...he continues to leap. He continues to say he will go. He continues to believe that what God has called him to do is what he is meant to do, and so he goes. He takes that leap of faith and it is nothing short of a miracle.

It probably also feels like nothing short of a miracle that we are where we are today. After fifteen months of complete chaos, we as a church family have a tiny glimpse of something close to normalcy today, and I know that we're still scattered, some of us are still online, some of us are in the building, some of us are on vacation, and yet...it is nothing short of a miracle that here on Trinity Sunday, we recommit and reaffirm one holy and absolute reality: we are a family of God who has held together through one of the longest and hardest times anyone has ever faced. And it hasn't been easy. It still isn't easy. It has been painful and stressful and downright awful at times, but we're still here.

There have probably been times throughout the last year plus where you have felt like Isaiah—disconnected, not equipped, not strong enough, uncertain, confused, separate. And in the midst of those times, it's hard to recognize the Holy Spirit at work. But here's the thing, we don't always get God and the Holy Spirit in visions of robes and tongues of fire. Sometimes,

it is a greater leap of faith to recognize God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity present in the smallest of things. The Trinity and us as Trinity have been present in the vast and various ways you all have found the right emojis to share the peace. The Trinity and us as Trinity have been present in the ability to still share jokes and have fun during children's chat. The Trinity and us as Trinity have been present in knowing that all around the Peninsula on Christmas Eve our homes were filled with the sound of Silent Night. The Trinity and us as Trinity have been present in ashes given through car windows and paper plates flying in gusts of wind during communion. The Trinity and us as Trinity have been present in the ever demanding presence of our pets during Zoom meetings (ok, maybe that's just me). So maybe also in those moments when your spouse or your kids peek into the camera and wave and then scamper off. The Trinity, us as Trinity have been here the whole time...it just takes a leap of faith to believe that.

It takes an even greater leap of faith to trust that the Trinity and that us as Trinity are present *now*, in the midst of transition and changes and our gradual physical coming back together. Maybe you're frustrated today. Frustrated that things are how they are. Maybe you're exuberant today. Exuberant that we have finally reached this point. Maybe you're content today. Content to be wherever you are, worshipping. Wherever you are and

however you're feeling...it's a leap of faith to say, the Trinity and *my* Trinity is here with me, in this holiest of moments, holy because it's happening, holy because I'm breathing, holy because God and my siblings love me. Dare to take that leap with me today. Dare to take the leap that the Trinity and us as Trinity are going to be present today and in the months ahead of us.

Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present on the Noland Trail when it's hot and sweaty or when it finally starts to rain and everything outdoors gets cancelled. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present in canned goods built into meals for our neighbors. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present in a gymnasium filled with yard sale goods and our crazy youth group kids. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present at Tradition when Theology on Tap resumes. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present in spoken word and in song. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present in the peel of our carillon throughout our neighborhood. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present when you're on vacation, on your back porch, on your couch, or in your pew. Dare to leap and believe Trinity will be present in every last moment that we decide that we are church together no matter where we are. Sometimes faith *is* the miracle. So let's leap...together. The Holy Trinity and us, Trinity, together. **AMEN!!!**