

June 12, 2022
All of You
Philippians 2:1-7
Rev. Anna Hubbard

Good morning!

I am so excited to get to talk about both Encanto and God this morning. Full disclosure – when Kelley mentioned that Encanto would be part of our Summer at the Movies series I practically stole this sermon out from under her. There was no polite asking. I matter of factly declared I would be preaching Encanto. Now on the flip side she didn't have to ask me to preach so maybe it was a win-win.

Let's begin this morning with a refresh of the story of Encanto. It is probable that if you have littles in your house, you have seen this movie more times than you can count. But I am sure some of us today haven't seen the movie, so let's review a bit. Encanto is the tale of an extraordinary family, who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia, in a magical house, in a vibrant town, in a wondrous, charmed place. Let's take it from the very top of the script, when Abuela and Mirabel tell all of us what the candle and the Encanto are all about...Abuela is holding a young Mirabel on her lap as they look on at the family's candle and she tells the story:

This candle holds the *miracle* given to our family. Long ago, when my three babies had just been born, your Abuelo Pedro and I were forced to flee our home. And though many joined us, hoping to find a *new* home... we could not escape the dangers... and your Abuelo was lost. But in our darkest moment... we were given... a miracle.

The candle became a magical flame that could never go out and it blessed us with a refuge in which to live. A place of wonder... An Encanto. The miracle grew... and our house, our casita itself, came alive to shelter us. When my children came of age, the miracle blessed each with a magic gift to help us. And when *their* children came of age... They got magic too. And together our family's gifts have made our new *home*... a paradise. This candle will give you *your* gift, mi vida. Strengthen our community and strengthen our home.

If you've seen the film you know, it doesn't all go as planned. The Encanto does bless the children and grandchildren, in the family with unique gifts from super strength to the power to heal—every child except one, Mirabel. The story is all about Mirabel and her discovery that the magic surrounding the Encanto is in

danger, Mirabel decides that she, the only ordinary Madrigal, might just be her exceptional family's last hope.

For today, it will help us to also know the characters in the story – so as Mirabel says, let's do a grandkid roundup –

There is Abuela Alma who the Encanto began with. She as we discussed had triplets, Pepa, Bruno, and Julieta.

Pepa's mood affects the weather. When she's unhappy, well, the temperature gets weird.

Bruno — we don't talk about, but he can predict the future and they say one day he disappeared

Julieta –can heal you with a meal, her recipes are remedies for real.

Two guys fell in love with Family Madrigal. Félix married Pepa and Mirabel's dad Agustin married Julieta and That's how Abuela became an Abuela.

Pepa and Felix have Delores – who has supersonic hearing and can hear a pin drop, Camilo who can shapeshift, and Antonio, who can speak to animals.

Julieta and Augustin have Isabella who is the golden child of the family and who can conjure beautiful flowers with the sweep of her hand.

Her younger sister Luisa is super strong. So strong she can move churches – as Mirabel would say of her sisters – the beauty and the brawn can do no wrong.

Then there is Mirabel.

If you're already having trouble keeping up – well, I think that might be the point. Let's simplify - Lots of kids – lots of gifts. Beautiful family with a blessing.

As I watched Encanto over and over and over – we have indeed talked about Bruno at our house – what I kept coming back to is the beauty of the character development. Each character is complex. They remind me of the both/and of life. I know you know about the both/ and of life. Parenting is both beautiful and fun AND hard and stressful and overwhelming. Being a friend is both rewarding AND sometimes difficult and messy. Being a human is both exhilarating and joy filled, AND chaotic, frightening, and sometimes downright maddening. On the surface the Madrigals look like a happy functioning shiny family. The core of the community. But as the movie unfolds, we see a more human side to the characters.

Luisa is super strong AND feels like she needs to constantly work to be valued by the family. In her song “Surface Pressure”, she laments, “I'm pretty sure I'm worthless if I can't be of service” and “Who am I if I can't carry it all?”

Isabela has the gift of making gorgeous flowers appear and feels that beauty is all that is permitted. She feels that she always must be perfect and do

what is expected of her in the most beautiful way. But when Mirabel forces her to make a sharp cactus appear, the truth is revealed that she doesn't want to be perfect - she wants to be herself. I think it can be argued that Isabela didn't have any idea how powerful she was until she dropped her act and started being real.

Pepa's emotions create weather, so she forces herself not to feel things so as to not be a burden on others. Camilo, gifted with shapeshifting, is always pretending to be someone else, and is almost never his true self. Delores's gift of hearing makes her more focused on everyone else, and not on herself. And Mirabel, puts on a brave face and considers herself lucky to simply be in the family. But deep down she is harboring resentment and letting it fester.

All of these characters are so much more than just their gifts or their lack of gift. If I am honest, I have been all of these characters at one point or another. Just like in my life and yours there is tension that is being held. Encanto in catchy song and beautiful color brings this human reality to the forefront. And holding this tension is tough. "Pressure like a drip, drip, drip that'll never stop, whoa. Pressure that'll tip, tip, tip 'til you just go pop, whoa-oh oh." It's the tension we wish would go away. If we could just be the parts of ourselves, we love all the time. I recognize my tendency to fill the tense spaces in my life. *Often with queso and guacamole. Do you find yourself filling the tense spaces too?*

We fill silence with noise.

We fill time with busy-ness.

We fill 'having enough' with wanting more.

We fill vulnerability with shows of power.

We do all this filling so that we don't appear weak. So that we don't have to get honest about how we are really feeling or about what we are struggling with. We put on a brave face, and we push through. But, in the words of Isabela – "What could we do if we just knew life didn't need to be perfect? It just needed to be? We just let it be?"

That's the crux of the story. Each character discovers that it is going to take all of them. Their magic, their non-magic, their strength, their weakness to not lose the magic. The real Encanto, the real Miracle happens when we show up with all of who we are.

This is what today's text reminds us of as well. It was originally planned to be Philippians 2:1-4 but I am going to read to verse 7:

2If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one

mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

He emptied himself – and took on the human form. You know I always picture Jesus as dashing, and charismatic, and well liked. Sure, maybe he has dusty feet but so does everyone. However, if we read these words and so many others in the bible about the humanity of Jesus then to take on the human likeness probably meant he had doubt and was awkward from time to time. What is human likeness if not awkward? Instead of choosing power, Jesus chose the whole human experience. He chose the to live with and in the both/and tension of the world. When Jesus emptied himself, he didn't clear things out so he could fill himself up with power and might. He emptied himself and took the form of a slave. The world shows us how to be full of power and might and pride and posturing. Jesus shows us how empty space allows for humility, vulnerability, compassion, and love.

You know, the most memorable tracks on the Encanto Soundtrack are the catchy songs. But I would argue that the song *Dos Oruguitas*, is the best one. It happens during the scene in which Mirabel goes back to the spot of the original miracle. The spot in which they lost Abuelo. The lyrics explain how renewal and transformation can only happen through letting go, dare I say emptying ourselves, and showing up as our whole selves. As the family lost its house and gifts, they found grace at rock bottom. They had to lose what they had in order to see that they were more than their gifts. The word *oruguita* means caterpillar. Throughout the film we see references to butterflies, alluding to the real transformation that was to take place, not in the house or the candle, but in the hearts of the family. Abuela and Mirabel, who have no magical gifts, restore the family and the magic by being their true selves.

Before we go too much further, I want to confess that it's easy to stand here and SAY, we too need to transform in our hearts and hear the message that we are enough and that we need to show up in the community as our whole selves. It is easy to SAY we are going to quit showboating, that we are going to stop the hustle, that we are going to be real with the people closest to us in our lives. That we, like Jesus we are going to empty ourselves so that we might make space for generosity, and vulnerability, and love. But that work is hard. And I want

to name that. If I am honest the first time I read these verses when preparing the sermon, this part about being of the same mind and thinking of others first, I thought of at least 15 people who needed a reminder not to act from selfish ambition or conceit, and a few more who need some humility to regard others as better than their mean selves.

And then I thought, “*empty yourself,*”, and I took a deep breath. *Breathe in God’s mercy. Breathe out God’s love for the world.* And I remembered Jesus has yet to ask me to fix anyone else. I suspect he hasn’t asked you to fix other people either. And so, I read Paul’s words as if he meant me, he meant us, that we are supposed to be the one to have compassion and sympathy and humility and concern for the interests of others. We are supposed to empty ourselves. The work is mine to do, to be more authentic, and real. The work is mine to create more empty space, where I leave room in my soul for God to be at work in me. This is how we are invited to participate in the building of the kingdom of God. But for now, the work is going to begin with remembering to breathe in God’s mercy and breathe out God’s love for the world. When I notice I am not being authentic, I will breathe and try again. When I realize, I am trying to create an illusion of having it all together I will breathe in God’s mercy and our God’s love for the world. And that will be enough for today.

As the story concludes the whole town walks in to help rebuild the casita. “Lay down your load. ... We have no gifts, but we are many, and we’ll do anything for you.” The family and the townspeople rebuild as people who are just themselves, without any particular magical gifts. But even more than that they rebuild as their whole selves. They put the chips and queso down and choose to stand in the wholeness of who they are. The final scene presents the restored casita, and everyone celebrates (Luisa even gets to relax!). To me, it’s an image of the kingdom of God, of joy, celebration, and togetherness. “It’s a dream when we work as a team, You’re so strong...ya but sometimes I cry...so do I...” the sisters sing. The building of the casita depends on their authenticity, on their showing up. The building of the Kingdom of God depends on ours. We hold the kingdom of God within ourselves. And we build it by being our true selves. That is what strengthens the community. Mis vidas, “The miracle is not some magic that you’ve got. The miracle is *you.*”

Amen.