

Listen to Rhoda

Acts 12:1-17

July 10th, 2016

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Song

People are strange when you're a stranger
Faces look ugly when you're alone
Women seem wicked when you're unwanted
Streets are uneven when you're down

When you're strange
Faces come out of the rain
When you're strange
No one remembers your name ...

People are strange when you're a stranger
Faces look ugly when you're alone
Women seem wicked when you're unwanted
Streets are uneven when you're down ...

Message

Take just a minute and think about someone in your life that's just really strange. Maybe they're a co-worker, a family member... If you can't think of anyone, just look around this room... that should help.

Talk about strange. A few minutes ago, I heard pounding on the door downstairs. I opened the door, and there was this guy standing there. His eyes were like wild—crazy—and his hair was all disheveled like he'd been sleeping under a bridge or on the side of the road or something. And he said, "Come with me!"

And I said, "I'm sorry, I can't do that. I'm a pastor and I'm just about to preach a sermon on discipleship and how it's better to be safe than sorry." He said, "Peter, come with me." I said, "How do you know my name and where are you going?"

He said, "I'm going to a place where they throw wild parties for prodigal boys, and where beggars and servant girls eat dinner at the king's table. Come with me."

I looked at this homeless guy, who obviously had no place to lay his head, and I said, "Impossible! There's no such place." He said, "There is and I'll show ya... Peter, I'm going to a field that contains buried treasure worth more than all the money in the world. I'm going to that field and I want you to come with me and help me dig it up."

I said, "No way!" He said, "*Yah weh*." So, I shut the door... strangest thing... strangest man I ever met... and he had twelve other strange men with him...

Now I'm kidding, of course.

Prayer

Let's pray: Father, this world really is strange. There are strange people everywhere and we wonder, "Where are you Lord? So would you help us to see? Help us to hear? Help us to follow you wherever you may lead us. Cause us to preach. Amen.

About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belong to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of unleavened bread. [That's around the time of Easter.]

And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring them out to the people. [Like Pilate brought Jesus out to the people... on Passover] So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him. He did not know what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. [Peter doesn't know if this is real or not; he thinks he may be crazy]

When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the Iron Gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him.

When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." [In other words, "I'm not crazy."]

When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are out of your mind."

—Acts 12:1-15

The King James reads, "*Thou art mad.*" "*Maine*" is the word in Greek. It's where we get our word "maniac." They're saying, "You're insane, you're crazy!"

How do you know if someone is crazy?

Before I could be ordained, The Presbyterian Church USA, made me take a psychological test (the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) to see if I was fit for ministry or just plain crazy. It was about 1985 and life felt crazy.

I was going to seminary full-time and working in youth ministry at Bellaire Presbyterian Church, which was, effectively, also full-time. This young grad student in psychology gave me the test questionnaire (the MMPI) and said that I could fill it out at home, and then, mail it to her for analysis. I took it in a foul mood, late at night, right after finals and before we left in the morning to come back to Colorado on Christmas break.

There were questions like: "Do you hear voices?" I checked, "No." I remember this question: "Do you like fire?" And I'm like, "Yeah!" (I mean where would we be without fire?)

This was a question: "Do you think there are people out to get you?" And I checked, "Yes." ...I mean I could name them—they were competitive and wanted my job.

And this was a question, "Do you believe there is a devil who hates your soul?" I checked, "Yes." I remember finishing the test and thinking, "Dang, if anyone took these tests seriously, they'd think I was crazy." I mailed it in and went on vacation.

Upon return I met with this young grad student in the Psychology department that administered the test. I met with her, so she could interview me in person and then send her conclusions to the folks in the Presbytery, who would hopefully receive me for ordination.

I remember I was in a great mood. I had just worked out; I was relaxed, rested, and trusting. She started asking me all sorts of questions, and I remember thinking, "Wow! It is so cool to have someone caring for me."

And then she said, "Peter, do you do drugs?" I said, "No."

She said, "Are you addicted to alcohol?" And I said, "Well, I like beer, and maybe sometimes I've had too much, but no... I don't think so."

Then she said, "Do you beat your wife?" I said, "No I don't beat my wife!"

"Well you must have some way of expressing your anger," she said, "Do you like violent sports?"

I thought of backpacking and football with friends after church... and this is exactly what I said in response to her question: "Oh Yeah. In fact, the more cuts and bruises I get, the better I feel."

And at that she stopped, leaned forward and said, “Peter this’ll be hard for you to believe because you do not have any ‘presenting issues,’ but you must trust me, you have serious psychological problems... You have a **personality disorder**: paranoid or passive aggressive. I’m not sure which, but unless you submit to extensive psycho-therapy your ministry will be a disaster and your marriage will end within a year.”

I said, “Oh my gosh this is serious.”

She said, “See, you’re being paranoid.”

So I tried to relax, but then, I got a little agitated and said,
“But this is going to the Presbytery... and they ordain me or not...
and this is my life!!”

And she said, “See, you’re being passive aggressive.”

I was trapped. Trapped by the powers that be—certifiably insane.
I literally had a certificate—I was crazy.

How do we know who’s crazy and who’s not crazy?
Maybe she was crazy.

Now, there really are people who lose touch with reason. King Herod will do so in the next paragraph (and psych tests can be very helpful). There are people who lose touch with reason and logic, but who these people are, and what (or who) Logic is may not be so obvious. Pilot said to Jesus, “What is truth?” and Truth was standing right in front of him.

If you pay close attention, I think you’ll find that sanity is often defined as “the psychological state of those in power.” So the king is rarely considered insane (until he dies and another king replaces him).

King Herod thinks Peter, James, and the early church are insane. In Acts 26 the Roman Governor Festus, along with the Jewish King Herod Agrippa accuse the apostle Paul of being insane: *maine* (like Rhoda, the same word). In John 10, The Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of being insane: *maine* (a maniac like Rhoda).

In our country, we have a political system wherein the king is the person who gets the votes of the most people in the crowd. And so sanity is defined as the mental state of the majority...

In other words, sanity is defined as “normal”.

In our society, sanity is faith in the opinion of the crowd, and the person who holds the most sway over the crowd—the person the crowd idolizes. In other words, sanity is faith in the principalities and powers of this present age, OR as the Bible calls them, “*the principalities and powers of this present darkness.*”

So, often in our world we think:

The sane are the people who exercise power, and the insane are the weak.

The sane are the ruling caste, and the insane the outcast.

The sane are the first, and the insane are the last.
The sane are the normal and abnormal are insane. What is normal is insane?

Growing up, I had a cousin who people thought was a bit insane.
He wasn't like the rest of the family. I'll call him Gary. He had these wild eyes.
He heard voices, and wandered the streets of Denver when not at *Fort Logan Mental Health Center*. ...So when he spoke, people often didn't listen.

I have a friend I'll call Karen. She came to me years ago with the craziest stories. And while I would be talking to her, her personality would split. And I'd find myself talking to a different person. And years ago, some of the voices weren't just persons, but demons.

That was crazy and people often refused to listen.

For years now, another particular woman has approach me in awkward situations and said, "God wants you to read such and such a bible verse?" I'll ask, "What does it say?" She'll say, "I don't know." She isn't a Bible student, hasn't been to seminary, barely reads it herself and at times I've wondered if she's insane... she's definitely strange.

Well anyway, people in our society often don't listen to the strange and judge them insane. And sadly people in church aren't much different. King Herod thought Peter and the Gospel were insane. Then the Church leaders thought Rhoda and her Good News were insane.

"He [Peter] went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. [Remember they're praying earnestly for Peter to be released.] And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, 'You are out of your mind.'"
—Acts 12:12-15

You know, Grace will always sound a bit like Rhoda.

Because Grace is wonderfully good news that no one is qualified to hear.

- Seminary does not qualify you for Grace.
- Elected office does not qualify you for Grace.
- Passing the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory does not qualify you for Grace.

Rhoda is a servant girl and possibly a slave.

She hasn't been to seminary, never held electoral office, and we don't know how she'd do on the MMPI. She says to the leaders of the Early Church, "Peter is standing at the gate." And they say to Rhoda, "Rhoda, you're hearing voices!"

They're thinking, "Surely God would not 'hide this from the wise and reveal it to babes,' like the Rhoda. She probably can't even read. And on top of everything else, she's a woman—a girl. And we all know what they're like!" Amen?

They say, “Rhoda, dear, sweetheart, this is an idle tale.”

Does that sound familiar?

In Luke’s first volume he records that it was some women who first went to the tomb on Easter morning and reported that Jesus was no longer dead, no longer imprisoned in the tomb.

Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them.

—Luke 24:10

An idle tale... Foolish! Mary Magdalene formerly had seven demons—that’s crazy.

An idle tale... Foolish!

An idle tale... Until Jesus shows up and basically says, “Guys the strange women were right. Now, *“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news...* You know, just the way these foolish women proclaimed it to you.”

To preach the gospel you must be a fool... that is you must have faith in Grace. Knowledge of Grace is not like taking the knowledge of Good and Evil from a tree.

Knowledge of Grace is a gift, given to fools at a tree.

They say, “Rhoda, you’re out of your mind—foolish, nuts.”

“But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!”

—Acts 12:15

Did you get that? They’re ready to believe it’s Peter’s guardian angel, but not actually Peter, having been released by angels.

Why would they believe the first and not the second?

Well I suppose because they thought it up— and they decide what’s normal.

NOW, this whole time that they’re arguing with Rhoda, Peter keeps knocking. Peter must think, “Behold I stand at the door and knock.”

But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be a silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Tell these things to James and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place.

—Acts 12:16

He said, “I’m out of here... Now you guys deliver this message to the others the way Rhoda delivered it to you.”

In other words, if you want to preach the gospel,
You're going to look foolish...
 because Grace will not be dependent upon your qualifications.
You're going to look foolish...
 because the whole world is foolish, but thinks it's wise.

Grace is foolish to people that believe the lie that they have created themselves with their knowledge of good and evil.

But Grace is the very Logic of a world that is created out of nothing, by God; it's the very *Logos*—the very Logic

You're going to look foolish...
 because the Gospel is a joke—a joke upon this entire fallen world,
 and “the principalities, powers and world rulers of this present darkness.”

Rhoda is a joke, like the Gospel is a joke. Not because she's untrue, but because this whole world is untrue—not because she's insane, but all the world is insane.

And whenever the church buys into the ways of this world and seeks respect from “*the principalities and powers of this world*,” it becomes untrue and insane as well.

Easter is a joke upon the principalities and powers of this world.
It's a joke on Herod, the king.
It's even a joke on the church...
It's a joke at the expense of all self-righteous, arrogant, pomposity.

And who gets the joke? Who laughs at the joke?
 The poor, the weak, the disenfranchised, the powerless, the women, the slaves— “the last and the least”—these people get the joke.
They know the truth. *They* inherit the earth...*And* the Truth sets them free.

To get the joke, you can't take yourself or this world too seriously. But if you are king of the world, or king of your world, like Herod or most of us wealthy and powerful Americans, well, that's hard to do.

Years ago, Susan and I visited Henry VIII Hampton Court Palace in London. One of the guards explained to us that each king had a court jester—the joker. Now, the Joker lived off the scraps in the king's palace, but the Joker could say anything he liked even to the king and the king couldn't lift a finger against him.

The idea was that a Christian king should be able to “take a joke and take a fool.” And if the king couldn't take a fool, he became a fool. The idea was that a Christian king needed humility. He needed his suppositions questioned in order to be sane.

I heard Dan Allendar say that in medieval times they took people they deemed crazy or mad, put them out on a ship, and sailed the sea. That's the origin of

the term “ship of fools.” At every port they were welcomed and folks lined up to come aboard, for it was believed that the fools had insights into mysteries unknown—that they would challenge suppositions and make way for new insights.

Paul wrote:

“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no flesh might boast in the presence of God.”

—1Cor. 1:27-29

In other words, the Church of Jesus Christ is God’s ship of fools visiting the ports of this world. She is a ship of fools, *unless* she is seduced by the world, becoming like the world: a ship of fools trying to be a ship of kings.

We’re all tempted to make our self the king of everything—including truth, and that’s what it is to be insane. So it’s the grace of God to send to each one of us, a fool—a court jester.

So then:

Who is your *fool*, your *court jester*—whom God calls to enter your idolatrous throne room and tell jokes at your expense?

Who is it that questions your arrogant assumptions?

Who is it that questions your false belief that you are a self-made man or woman and reminds you that you are but(t) dust, infused with Grace?

Who’s your *court jester*—who is your Rhoda?

Maybe it’s that person you thought of at the start of the service—the person you judged as strange, a bit nuts or even last and least.

Now listen: I’m not saying that person is sane; they could be mostly insane. I’m not saying that person is entirely right. In fact, they’re probably mostly wrong—mostly dirt—mostly field.

Each of us is a field with buried treasure, dust that contains the breath of God, an earthen vessel that contains breath and can be entirely filled with the Spirit. But even so, there’s plenty of dirt, even in the most Spirit filled vessels.

You may remember Jesus looked at Peter and said, “Get behind me satan.” And even after he was filled with the Spirit. Paul rebuked Peter for the dirty way in which he treated Gentiles.

So, Rhoda spoke the Truth, but you know Rhoda wasn’t right about everything. She may have been rather cantankerous and unrefined.

Rhoda means *rose* in Greek, so she probably had some nasty thorns.

She was probably mostly wrong.

But you really ought to listen to Rhoda, because she contains the answer to your most *earnest* prayer...and God seems to have reasons for that.

So my point is, listen to Rhoda... because

Listen to Rhoda, because

#1 Grace looks like Rhoda.

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Listen to Rhoda, because

#1 Grace looks like Rhoda.

#2 it's how we learn, grow, and follow.

#2 Although it can be humiliating, listening to Rhoda is how we learn and grow.

If you think you've arrived, know the truth, and thus have all the answers, you don't need to grow and nothing is strange. A lot of so-called "Christians" think that's what being a Christian is: having arrived, when in reality it's beginning to travel.

We haven't arrived at truth. Truth just knocked on our door & said, "Follow me."
We haven't arrived at truth so much as just started to follow Truth.
We are disciples, followers, and learners.
We're going someplace we haven't been before and that always feels *strange*.

A few years ago in a freshman physics class at Duke University, a young male physics professor showed up in a red dress with matching purse and shoes. He looked like a fool. After lecturing for forty minutes, one student finally raised his hand and said, "Prof, what's with the dress?"

The professor said, "*Thank you!* At last somebody asked. I'm trying to make a point. You see for the last several decades there haven't been any new discoveries in physics. I think that's because we've been attracting the kind of students that think we have it all figured out, explained, and defined. So nothing

is strange... and people like that don't make new discoveries. We need people expecting the unexpected."

I think that's true in physics, and it's definitely true in theology and in life. We like to think we have all the answers, explanations, and definitions. So we don't expect the unexpected, and we do our best to ignore the strange. And in that way we build dungeons for our souls and never go anywhere.

A few weeks ago, I led the memorial service for our friend Dan Kruger who died in an accident on May 23rd. At the service we played a clip of a sermon that Dan preached here at The Sanctuary four years ago. In it he spoke about the way in which our old self constantly makes judgments. He called that self, the "Chatterbox," and this is what he said.

Clip from Dan Krueger's sermon "Chatterbox"

According to the chatterbox, goodness is determined by familiarity. Truthfulness is determined by whether or not you're comfortable with it—whether or not you've encountered it before. So, if it's new, it's suspicious. If it's not instantly understandable, it's probably wrong. See, here's the problem with that. What does that turn today into, if you and I are operating on automatic—if we're just being operated by the chatterbox?... An instantly understandable variation of yesterday. I've been thinking about this for years. If I'm being operated by my chatterbox then today is going to look about like yesterday. It's going to look about like the day before that. That's going to look about like the day before that. Tomorrow is going to look like today, and the day after today. The day after tomorrow is going to look about like tomorrow. My script is written. It doesn't want anything new. This is the hard part of the sermon for me—kind of getting my mind around that. See: If nothing new is going to happen what's the difference between that and being dead.

On May 23rd, Dan died... or I should say he died to death. He heard knocking at his door. And Truth was standing at his door. If Dan desired his own reality more than the Truth, he might have run from the Truth and hid in outer Darkness—an "instantly understandable variation of yesterday." But I'm convinced that Dan Loved the Truth, more than his own life, and so May 23rd was absolutely not an "instantly understandable variation of yesterday." But instead, on May 23rd Dan Kruger crossed the Jordan and *everything* is *new*!

Marissa is new; you are new; all creation is new... eternally new and all is Grace.

On May 23rd, Dan Kruger began to truly Live. Eternal Life is always NEW.

One day you will literally see the Truth standing at your door. And yet, every day, He is knocking at your door... in preparation for the day that you both step through that door together.

Everyday, he shows up in people like Rhoda, the people in this room, and even Dan Kruger... Dan used to say to me, "Peter everything is Grace! Everything really is Grace!" But you see that wasn't just Dan talking to me.

We're not just discovering truths, like in physics.
We are being discovered *by* the Truth, who is a person.

In other words, we only discover the Truth because He chooses to be discovered.

And get this: He chooses to be discovered—that is revealed—in and through people like Rhoda.

He chose *Rhoda* to go to the door.

He chose *Rhoda*, not the Emperor, not James, John, or Andrew, not the seminary president...He chose *Rhoda*.

Several years ago, I went to a family dinner and my crazy cousin Gary was there. In fact that's what he calls himself: my crazy cousin. And you know I'm the sane one; I'm not the crazy cousin because I have a Master of Divinity degree... and what could be crazy about that? Well out of all my cousins, he may be the craziest, but he's also the sweetest.

At dinner, while everyone was talking, he said, "Hey Pete, did I ever tell you what really changed me?" I said, "No." He told me how years ago he was standing down on Colfax in a fog. He said, "I thought I was going to die... I remember thinking about the survival of the fittest and I thought I'm least fit to survive—last and least.

So I just prayed, "*God if you're there, I just want to survive.*"

He said, "Pete I looked up and right in front of me was one of those storefront churches. I stumbled through the door and this guy introduced me to Jesus..." And then he got that wild look in his eye. His hair was disheveled like he'd been sleeping under a bridge or on the side of the road. He leaned forward like he wanted me to come with him, like he was telling me about buried treasure in some field somewhere. And he whispered, so that no one else would hear. He said, "Hey Pete. I still hear voices." I said, "You do?" He said, "Yeah. But now there are good. They say stuff like: "Trust Jesus, love Jesus, follow Jesus."

You see, I think my crazy cousin Gary was let out of prison by the Lord, and led around by angels. ... Or to you, does that sound like an *idle tale*?

I told you about my friend Karen (that's not her real name)—Karen who's got all the personalities... and no more demons as far as I can tell. She lives in another state, has a bunch of health problems, and gets angry really easily from damage done to her brain ... so people don't know what to do with her at times.

One evening about eight years ago when my world was totally falling apart, I was sitting up in my office at Lookout when I got a call. It was my friend Karen.

I hadn't talked to her for a long time. She said, "Peter what's been going on? God's been waking me up every night with a picture of you on a cross. What's going on?"

I told her, and then she prayed a prayer, the most cogent, beautiful, deep, and profound prayer that I may have received in all my life.

She's dealing with loads of dirt, and I expect dirt and so don't take everything she says to heart, but when she says, "Let's pray" I always say "yes." And it's like getting a phone call from Jesus.

I think I may have learned more about Jesus from my friend raised in the cult, who battled so many demons, than I have from almost anyone else in this world. She likes to be incognito... and for years she'd say to me, "I just want to be normal."

I understand that. But I've asked her: "Why do you want to be normal? You're the Bride of Christ."

I think I've learned the most about Jesus from the woman who gives me the Bible verses at awkward moments and in such a bizarre way. I think I'm married to Rhoda.

I started dating Susan 'cause I thought she was the hottest thing at Heritage High School... but she didn't go to church or refer to herself as a Christian. So, I considered her to be my disciple and was always concerned that she didn't have her "quite time" or know the Bible. I think that's why Jesus seems to get a kick out of revealing stuff to her that she's supposed to then pass on to me.

It happens about every eight months or so. She'll say:

"God wants you to read Job 23" for instance; I'll read it and say, "That was exactly what I needed. Be honest—How did you know that's what it said?" She'll say, "You know me. I don't read the Bible." Now that's not totally true, but true enough, that I know she didn't find the verse. She'll say, "I told you Peter. God just told me."

See? She's Rhoda.

It's very important that you don't simply believe everyone that tells you "God says," but also important that you don't disbelieve.

So are you getting my point? Listen to Rhoda.

If a person confesses, "Jesus is Lord" we know that God's Spirit is with that person even if they don't confess that, they are still the breath of God in dust.

And the *Word of God* loves to be spoken from the strangest of places.

- Daniel 4 was at least partly written by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who took Israel into captivity. He wrote a Hymn of praise in the Bible.
- In 2 Chronicles 35:22, God speaks prophetically to Josiah King of Judah through Neco, the Pharaoh of Egypt.
- In Numbers 22, God speaks through Balaam's ass

(referring to Balaam's *donkey*... but God can speak through any ass.)

- In John 11, God prophetically proclaims the Gospel, through Caiaphas the High priest, who then has Jesus delivered up for crucifixion.
- And most of the New Testament was written by a radicalized religious terrorist, from Syria, named Saul of Tarsus, who would've been the very last person to whom the first century church would've naturally listened.

So I'm saying pay attention to Rhoda.

Pay attention to that person that you think is strange or even a bit insane.

If you're a Baptist, pay attention to Catholics.

If you're a Catholic, pay attention to Baptists.

If you're the prophetic type, pay attention to the Bible scholar.

If you're a Bible scholar, pay attention to that weird prophetic type.

If you're a Republican, listened to a Democrat.

If you're a Democrat, listen to a Republican.

If you're a cop, listen to that scary black man.

If you're a black man, listen to that scary cop.

If you're Peter, listen to Rhoda.

If you're Rhoda, listen to Peter.

If you're a shrink, listen to a pastor.

If you're a pastor, listen to a shrink.

I can't remember the young lady's name who gave me the MMPI, but it wouldn't surprise me if her name was Rhoda. At the time, I thought people like her were nuts. And I still think she was mostly nuts, and yet God was speaking.

Friends paid for me to take all the tests over again, plus some additional ones. They decided the first one was a *misdiagnosis*. And yet, it was the perfect *prescription*. I was way too stressed out, and at least a little paranoid and passive aggressive. And Jesus wanted me to trust His judgment of me, rather than my own or the judgment of this world.

So listen to Rhoda... because:

Listen to Rhoda, because

#1 *Grace looks like Rhoda.*

#2 *it's how we learn, grow, and follow.*

#3 *it's fun.*

#1 Grace looks like Rhoda.

#2 It's how we learn, grow and follow. And...

#3 It's a lot more fun.

The Kingdom of God is a party, and if you go to a party where everyone is the same, that's actually not a party. At a good party everyone is a bit strange. And yet it's like Jim Morrison sang, "People are strange when you're a stranger." Choose not to be a stranger and strangers turn into the most fun of all friends.

And listen to Rhoda because...

Listen to Rhoda, because

- #1 Grace looks like Rhoda.*
- #2 it's how we learn, grow, and follow.*
- #3 it's fun.*
- #4 Rhoda is worth it.*

#4 Rhoda is worth it.

So even if Rhoda has nothing to say, or is thoroughly deluded, listen to Rhoda. Jesus chooses to dwell in crazy Rhoda, because He's crazy for Rhoda, and He wants you to be crazy for Rhoda, too.

So in the end, what Rhoda says doesn't matter as much as your willingness to listen to her. If you have "*all knowledge*" (and so, don't need to listen to the info. that Rhoda has) but you "*don't have love*" (and so, don't listen to Rhoda), you're "*nothing*." (1 Cor. 13:2)

Jesus said, "As you did it unto the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me."

So listen to Rhoda because...

Listen to Rhoda, because

- #1 Grace looks like Rhoda.*
- #2 it's how we learn, grow, and follow.*
- #3 it's fun.*
- #4 Rhoda is worth it.*
- #5 Jesus is worth it.*

#5 Jesus is worth it.

Jesus is the *Logos*. That means "reason" or "sanity." Jesus is sanity, but when Jesus walked this earth in a physical body, at some point everyone judged Him

insane and refused to listen. Well, He's still walking the earth in a body—His body, the Church. As of yet, it's not a very obedient body... but it's still His Body. There's a lot of dirt covering the treasure ... but there is still a treasure—kinda like, a lot of manger and not much baby... but still a Baby

—And if you're a wise-man you'll seek him

Communion

On the night He was betrayed, *The Truth* took bread, and He broke it saying, "This is my body, given to you. Take and eat." And in the same manner, after supper, He took the cup and said, "This cup is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you."

This is sanity

This is the truth.

This is the treasure.

This is the table of the king.

Now watch:

In just a moment, you will see a bunch of dirt bags make their way up to this table and take the King's treasure—the treasure that is the King, and bury it in their field.

If you believe the Gospel, you will listen to Rhoda.

Benediction

Do you realize that basically every church program is a strategic manipulation designed to get you to listen to Rhoda?_That's why we have *connect gatherings, life groups, classes, conferences* and *mission programs*. Sometimes we do it well. Sometimes we do it poorly._But, even if Christianity is outlawed, you could still listen to Rhoda... and that_would be what the Bible calls "church."

And one last thing—

If you're a cop and you're stressed out by scary young black men,
Rhoda is a black man.

If you're a black man and you're stressed out by scary cops,
Rhoda is a cop.

I'm not saying, She's always right. She's often very wrong.

I'm just saying, If you Believe the Gospel, you will listen.

Prayer

[Peter invited a police officer (white) and his son (black) to come up. The church prayed over this father and son as a representation of the larger group of police officers and black young men in America.]

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version¹⁵ of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.