

**Oct 14, 2018 Rev. Steve Wilson PUC “Something about Patriarchy”**

To get what feels- to me at least- like the obvious disclaimer out of the way early, let me just say that it feels a little odd to stand here, face a room filled with strong women and deliver a sermon on Patriarchy.

So, in all seriousness want you to know that I do with a little bit of trepidation and humility that I could somewhere along the journey get the tone of this wrong.

I could get the tone wrong because most those who choose to discuss this, come at this first personally, from a place of feeling and experience, even of hurt, if not trauma. I don't. I come at this big ominous single word topic at least initially from an intellectual place.

Of course, I do, I am a beneficiary of our Patriarchal system in ways I am aware and ways I know I cannot know. I have lived in no other world.

That doesn't make my perspective invalid, but it does mean that it's got a little distance to it.

However, even if I don't experience the rough edge of the systemic power men historically have had and continue to have over women, I do earnestly believe that Patriarchy undermines us as a society and a species. (pause)

And I believe predominantly male rule to be the result of a culture and cultures still recovering from a more barbaric time. A time when physicality quite literally mattered more than it does today. A time when we knew less.

The sad, bad news is, is that male dominance is hardly the only lingering legacy of the old days that we as a species are holding onto. Patriarchy stands alongside, racism, and an acceptance of the vast economic differences between us we might call classism, as norms that need to and that I believe over time will change.

However, having made that statement, which could sound quite noble, does not clarify exactly what I could talk about.

As the gaggle of people who were at one of our UU dinners at Vivian's house last night can attest, I have struggled as to exactly what to talk about up to the last minute.

Under the banner of a sermon on Patriarchy I could easily talk about the recent Supreme Court hearings.

It was after all my prompt for picking this topic.

And I guess I am sharing what was and should be that uneasy feeling of watching a group of people, mostly dark suited white guys my age and older, seated in a regal self-

important dark wooded room, trying to figure out whether someone who looks like a slightly younger peer of theirs should be a supreme court justice.

Wait, that's not exactly true. They were trying to figure out whether could politically afford to make this person one of the nine judges who guide our culture.

Now that cultural moment is not exclusively about Patriarchy, but it's something about Patriarchy.

It is also in all truth not exclusively about Patriarchy that our system granted this man a big say in whether women nationwide the right will have to decide if they will be forced to continue to bring the baby growing inside of them to term or not.

Which is also not exclusively about Patriarchy, but it's certainly something about Patriarchy

I could under the banner of a sermon titled Patriarchy talk about the fact that 7 in 10 women in this country have their own version of Dr. Ford's story of sexual assault. Seven in ten. (repeat for effect)

Meaning that while Mitch McConnell, Lindsey Graham, and a lot of people who look like them spent time railing against the injustice of digging through a high school yearbook, some percentage of those 7 in 10, were sitting there at home experiencing trauma again.

Which feels like a pretty high percentage of sexual assault also not exclusively about Patriarchy, but it certainly has something to do with Patriarchy

I could in a sermon about Patriarchy bring in how God in the middle east and west went in our pre-historical period from seemingly being depicted as a zaftig fertile mother image, to someone to about 7 or 8 thousand years ago who turned into someone who looks like Zeus.

As someone trained in theology, who has run his head through a lot of modern humanities studies, I know a little about how as civilizations grew and came into violent competition with one another for dominance turned God into a Powerful Man.

God becoming a boy is certainly not exclusively about Patriarchy, but unquestionably something about the way men came to rule.

What you think the divine is like matters.

And I know it matters because the guy you are listening too, who spent 6 years in Graduate school studying theology still unconsciously, reactively holds that the God he does not believe instinctively has he, him, and his pronouns.

There is lots to talk about that is something about Patriarchy in a Sermon titled, ...  
“Patriarchy

As Postmodern people, we are learning just how much who we are is affected by the sea we swim around in.

And because of Patriarchy, and the images and stories we tell ourselves have been limited to men, we must know that the real impact of that is that religiously billions of women have thought about themselves in more limited ways than is necessary, and billions of men have thought themselves somewhat entitled.

I don't think the only reason our congress is roughly 70 percent all the following white, male, rich, and over 50 years of age is over a matter of millennia did that to the images of power that lifted the feminine.

However, unless you believe that men have an exclusive access to reason and good decision making, it doesn't make any sense without understanding how Patriarchy works in your mental toolbox.

But of all those present political moments mentioned, and all the religious sexism built into our images of what is fundamental, the most important thing to say about the “P” word it is this, ...without being exposed to the perspective that it could be and has been another way, it is almost impossible to realize that this is just the way things are.

What is hard about racism, sexism, I guess we can now include genderism, is that those things are rarely exclusively all about those things.

And, essentially that almost always means that if you choose to talk about Patriarchy, you have identified its existence, named it, and are opposed to it.

And of course, that also almost means that the inverse is true; if one doesn't care to use that term, then almost by default it can be assumed that the present system of who and whose values hold the levers of power in society are ok, understandable, maybe even natural or essential.

If in your head is a lens that we as a nation of people all ages, all races, all versions of genders, and all levels of education and income should NOT be governed by a body of deciders who are 80 percent white, 80 percent male 92 % Christian and more than 80 percent over the age of 50 then you likely see through a lens that tells us the way we govern ourselves comes from an outdated place.

And, if you have that lens then you likely think the Kavanaugh hearings are one more example of the same old history of oppression that we must undo.

However, if you mostly think about the Kavanaugh hearings as a clumsy, unnecessary and embarrassing example of freely elected officials having to publicly evaluate someone

who has already made it through a gauntlet of challenging tests, then the Kavanaugh hearings were an unfair political witch hunt.

Without a concern for the power men systematically have over women, Kavanaugh's path of getting into and then through Yale law school and following that, through a series of successful court appointments, regardless of the indiscretions one has been accused of when they were a teenager IS appropriate enough vetting for being given the power to decide the nations laws.

The hard part is both perspectives has validity.  
And which one of the above makes you most want to hang your head in frustration or throw up your hands in anger is the truth you care about most isn't it.

The hard part is that two things can be true.  
What someone did at seventeen does not define their capacity to make decisions as an adult, and it is absurd and wrong that now our society is governed by people who are 70% all the following white, rich, over 45-year-old men.

The hearings were a litmus test for what matters most to you, and the hard part is we as a nation are in both those places. The tension between those two realities are real things that

Those who work to expose the race, class, and power issues alive in any culture know that oppression and inequality are much more alive and viral in what we don't talk about, than what we do.  
And, that is why we are here talking about Something about Patriarchy.

Why men have for the last roughly 7 thousand years across most of the globe dominated women is unclear, and why they didn't seem to before is unclear to the scholarly world.

And why we still 50 years after feminism, and 50 years after MLK look at a congress that is 70 percent white, male, rich and over 50 is a sad thing.

Sure, I and we live in a Patriarchy, it is the only world we have ever lived in, but it is not the only world I can envision.

Our job as religious liberals are two-fold. One, we must in the very Christian sense be God's hands in the world to build the kingdom, create justice, make moral progress. Lots of religious institutions can do that, and we all should. It is even more uniquely our job to look critically at the world with our free, and fresh eyes to create the potential for world's yet unseen.