

July 5 2015

Scripture Lessons ~

Psalms 121, 122

Ezekiel 2:1-5

Mark 6:7-13, p. 917

Sermon **There Is No I in the Word Church**

In our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus faced a task which I have mentioned before, which was far too big for any one person to handle alone. People in Jesus' day obviously needed wise, compassionate, and faithful leaders in their midst and to answer this need, Jesus equipped the disciples with a sense of authority and he sent them to heal and to teach God's words. By the combined efforts of Jesus and his disciples they were able to reach many, many more than even Jesus, himself could have reached on his own. They found by sharing the task they were able to accomplish enormous things for God.

The task that stands before us as Jesus' followers today is perhaps is more imposing than in Jesus' day. Jesus sends us out not just to heal, not just to preach the Gospel, but also in some cases to motivate people who are pretty complacent, pretty distracted with the world around them, and to reach out to those who were alienated by the church, to bring fair treatment to people who have been disadvantaged, or marginalized in society, to share the world's resources, and to take good care of the good earth God has given us.

Today our territory isn't confined to just a few Middle Eastern villages but extends to around the entire globe. No wonder the task of working for God may seem pretty intimidating to each of us at times. When we examine the great needs around us, we may even despair of ever making a difference to any one of our own individual efforts. Our perspective changes when we understand that any individual work that we do is a part of the whole church's mission. What counts is not what I as one person can accomplish for God, but what all God's people can accomplish together under the direction of Jesus. Just as our early forefathers and foremothers brought individual talents and abilities to this country to do which ever project they tackled, so each of us brings specific talents to the common task of serving God.

One of the best examples of this is in First Corinthians 12 where Paul uses the images of all the individual parts of our bodies working together as a finely tuned whole to illustrate this point. Maybe somebody out there is able to lift something very heavy in the process of the task. Another one of you is a good pie maker. I know I am a good pie eater, so that is where I fit in. Someone else may be able to listen compassionately to others, and yet another person has the power to speak

God's forgiveness with a sense of conviction. Some of us have been deeply moved by the plight of poor folks around us and to challenge the church to address the need of the poor. Others have gifts of patience and deep faith and perseverance which can encourage the whole Christian community. For every willing worker in God's kingdom there is a task that needs to be done. The Holy Spirit gives to each of us the gift we need to that individual part. And let's face it, the job of serving God is way too big for any one of us to handle alone. I hear that as well as each one of you, so together we rely on God to guide us and to raise up helpers so that God's work can be done.

Similar the church is not a place for us to build up our own little kingdom here and there, to glorify our own needs, or to glorify our own desires. God, in fact, does not ask us to build the kingdom by ourselves, nor does God ask us to build a Kingdom just for ourselves. Far from it, God gives Jesus to each one of us and gives us to one another for partnerships in the Gospel. We work with a sense of community; we work with a sense of sacred purpose in the task for which we are called.

We know all too well that doing God's work can be pretty discouraging at times, especially when our efforts don't seem to produce immediate results in this our immediate result society. Those same early pioneers had, for example, the satisfaction of seeing perhaps, a barn completed at the end of a long day's work. But unfortunately God's work is not always as tangible as a structure. Much of what we do as Christians is kind of like planting little seeds with no guarantee that we will ever witness the harvest. My favorite case in point is the work that we do with children, the work that we do with youth, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, youth group, sending kids to camp. All of these are seeds that we plant in God's love in the lives of children, many of whom we may never see ever again during the course of their lives. We pray that those seeds will take root. Yet even if you or I may never see God's kingdom come to fullness in our lifetime we can be confident that, that God's own kingdom will be fulfilled in God's own good time.

Each act of mercy, every active love, and every forgiveness that we share with others will bear fruit at last. God doesn't call us to accomplish miracles all by ourselves. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto, and had Trigger (Silver), and had scouts, and had—bullets...What is wrong? Who does Trigger belong to? I'm sorry. I'm not that old.

But God calls us to be diligent workers doing our task creatively and willingly together as part of the universal church to the entire world. So as we respond together in faith, as we craft our work in a kind living celebration of God's grace. Discipleship then is not drudgery as we labor with God, as we labor for God, we laugh, we sing, we dream together. There is "no I in the word church," but there is

a U, you, and you, and you, and even me, as we flesh out the shape of God's kingdom together.

And the next time when I do this sermon, I will get the horses and the dog's names correct. Together we say AMEN.

Sharing Joys and Concerns for prayer

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray.

Silent prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Loving God, we call ourselves the gathered community, so we feel the ties that bind, we see each other faces, and we speak our words of greeting each other and often sense a unity of spirit.

What more would you have us experience as that gathered community of faith? Is there some way to apprehend a divine dimension in our being together? Is there an unseen presence for fulfilling your promise of being here when we are gathered here when your name? Is there more significance to our prayers as we gather than when as we part and go our separate ways? Is there a way for you to inspire our thoughts at a level beyond that we experience when we are not together? We confess we don't understand, God, the spiritual forces at work when we come to gather in your name. We sense it more than in church when we are here. So we thank you for the ways you come near in our midst. And you grant us growth and grace because we are with each other.

Within our community of faith we pray for special needs whether it is need for reconciliation. Through our worship together grant humanity for we need to offer and receive forgiveness. Whatever the differences of division we know you give us the power to patch up, to make up, and to become reconciled one with other; whether there is a need for guidance, through our time together, bring clarity of thinking to sort through alternatives and find solutions. So, dear God, grant us peace of mind as we think about choices before us.

And God where there are physical health needs we pray for those here and those who are in hospitals or in homes, confident in your presence to aid the healing process which you have made a part of your creation.

Thank you, dear God, for continuing to use our gathering as time to demonstrate your power to help and to heal, for we ask these things in the name of Jesus. And together we say AMEN.