

An (extra)ordinary time - A Sermon for Proper 6
6/14/2020
St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Anchorage, KY

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Exodus 19:2-8a
Psalm 100
Matthew 9:35-10:8(9-23)

Collect for Proper 6: Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

In the name of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Today we celebrate the second Sunday after Pentecost, the Sunday after "Trinity Sunday." Pentecost comes at the end of Easter Season, and Trinity Sunday is always the first Sunday after Pentecost. We call this the season after Pentecost, but you may have heard another term from the Roman Catholic Tradition: Ordinary Time.

Ordinary Time. This time in the church calendar spans from late spring all the way until the end of November and the beginning of Advent. There are readings here for almost half of the church year, up to 29 weeks. This "ordinary time" is not marked by a major feast or event of the church; we wait until the end of October for another round of major feasts that most of us recognize; in all respects, this time is as "ordinary" as the church gets. We read stories of Jesus, parables, encounters of his with other disciples, and work our way through most of a gospel: this year, the Gospel of Matthew.

This morning in Mathew we read about Jesus going about ordinary things: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness." Jesus is doing the ordinary things we expect him to do. In fact, he notices that his new start-up ministry has large potential: he notes the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, he re-calls the twelve disciples, his co-workers, and gives them special training. He develops an action plan, gives them a directive, specific goals and tasks. Later in the passage, he even gives them a dress code, and sets a no-reimbursement policy for their travels. Business as usual for the corporate church, the well-oiled machine that is Christ Incorporated.

Except that Jesus is not a CEO, nor a founder of a start-up. Jesus is not the head of a corporation, despite our best efforts to mold the church into one. And finally, nothing about Jesus' actions then, nor our situation now, ring true to the description of "ordinary time."

The story of our faith is not an impersonal business plan. One of early Christianity's biggest challenges was organizing, for Jesus left few instructions on how to organize a church; the early "church" looked a lot more like a social movement or a gathering of friends with a common story than what we call the church today.

The story of our faith is very personal, rooted in story and a narrative of our savior, Jesus. One of the ways we know scripture to be personal is by scripture's use of names. Jesus doesn't name the plan he creates to heal and proclaim the kingdom. It isn't phase 1 or phase 2. Jesus calls individuals. Jesus calls us.

Simon.

Andrew.

James

John

Phillip and Bartholemew, you guys come too.

Allison.

Lisa.

Ira and Mitch.

And *you*.

Ordinary time. Our times are anything but ordinary, and our calling by God is not part of a business plan: it is part of God's plan. The *extraordinary* thing is that we are called to be Jesus' disciples: we are given different and unique gifts and roles within this body, the body of Christ. Some of us are leaders, some musicians, some are organizers, and others are faithful in their prayers. We offer our time, our talents, and our treasures. We all have gifts to offer the church.

This season after Pentecost is unique, because of the *extraordinary* time we are in. And I believe God is calling each of us to a re-examination of our faith, of Holy Scripture, and of ourselves. Where do we fall short of God's glory? What gifts are we not making use of? How are we called to live, in a time such as this? What does it mean to love our neighbor? If God knows each of us by name, does he not know each of them?

In our collect this morning, we will pray for God to keep the church in God's faith and love, to proclaim truth with boldness, and to minister justice with compassion. Today, we often find ourselves with more time on our hands, more freedom in our schedules; perhaps by choice or

perhaps with a sense of loss. Proclaiming the truth in boldness and ministering with justice and compassion looks different today than it did a week, a month, or three months ago. Yet “the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his faithfulness endures from age to age.” (Psalm 100:4) And that truth is extraordinary: God saves us through Christ, who calls us each by name. For it is through God’s grace, not our own merit, that we are able to proclaim that very same truth: to ourselves, to each other, and to all those who will listen.