

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, May 5th, 2024, Easter VI
Acts 10:44-48, Psalm 98, 1 John 5:1-6, John 15:9-17

Surprise, surprise, a few questions come to mind the reading today. The timing is in question among other things. And who chooses whom? Do we choose God in Christ or does God in Christ choose us it seems to be that God asks first and waits for our yes or no. Can we hear about the question of baptize those who are already in the spirit here. To baptize than uncircumcised. Maybe this is our recognizing what God has already done. Some may have problems with this as they are not part of the group and the value and the draw belonging the strength of belonging and it can be misplaced. Who belongs and who doesn't who is in and who is not. This means the value of belonging is finding ways to support those who are different from us. And this also relates to Jesus saying you did not choose me I chose you. Jesus choosing us in others including those who are not like us.

What about the father will give you whatever you ask in his name? We often seem to take it out of context. We seemed to want God to answer our prayers whatever they are. But we forget the first part, don't we? Bearing of fruit that will last so that the father will give you whatever you ask in his name. So, God answers prayer with the idea of helping us to bear the fruit which will last. The implication, not so quick to answer prayers which are selfish and separating from God and each other.

This means a connection between prayer and action. It is not all or nothing. In other words, it's not just about us doing stuff and getting God to bless it or sitting back and waiting for God to answer our prayer.

It has been said that we are Co creators with God. Maybe that's part of what Jesus means when he says I call you no longer slaves, but friends and I have made known from the father. And the command to love one another and that is enough. That love is the bearing of fruit. So, the story makes sense even though it doesn't make sense. The story the man late one-night falls into a great big hole walking home and can't get up out of the hole. And he cries for help and another man comes along and jumps in the hole with the first man. The first man berates the second man for jumping down into the hole himself, so now there are the two of them stuck in the hole. The second man responds by saying, but now you are not alone.

And sometimes that is the answer. We are called friends, not slaves and because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father.
But Paul in Corinthians says: *Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.* 1 Corinthians 13:12.

We are less in control then we hope to be, but more in control than we think, it is

not about all or nothing. So therefore, a logical connection between prayer and action, action, and prayer.

And I have said God acts first. The major example Jesus going to the cross before expecting us to change, do anything different until after. But God does not always act first. This came to me about the passage of the feeding of the five thousand. This is started with the loaves and fish is being brought to Jesus. It wasn't enough to feed the five thousand but without it.

Although we can get ahead of God and go in a path or direction which is of our own hopes and expectations without God, we are also expected to trust in God in our actions for creativity and insight. And how do we really know if what we are planning is of God or not? The congregational development people all suggest strongly to try. This does not mean throwing a large amount of money at a significant project from the beginning, but to start small. Try the part which can be done first, or if there is a time element and a long term or permanent element, to begin with one or two times and see if this will work first before going forward committing to weeks or months to the project. And if it doesn't work, stop, and come up with another. In other words, not be afraid of failure. So don't stop coming up with ideas to try.

The Wayne Gretzky line: you fail and don't score with 100% of the shots you don't take.

And an interesting statistic, did you know that women who start businesses are less likely to declare bankruptcy than men? There is a reason for this. Because women are less likely to expand too quickly and run into cash flow or loan problems than men.

We can look toward what God is calling us as individuals and members of the community to be and start with a few loaves and fishes so to speak and see.

And I would be remiss if I didn't mention that we are not starting from nothing. We, toward the end of the service will have announcements. We will mention events which are happening, and which have happened. Those are all part of the bearing of fruit which will last. You may think these don't count or are not significant or important enough to rate, but who knows how God will bless our thoughts and actions of love and care for one another and the stranger who comes among us.

So, for us to bear fruit is to start then who knows what God will do after that.

Amen

The Lord bless *you* and watch over *you*,
the Lord make his face shine upon *you*
and be gracious to *you*,
the Lord look kindly on *you*
and give *you* peace;
and the blessing ...