

Making A Mark

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 7/7/19

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

Sometimes, things happen to us that force us to reconsider the way we look at things.

I will always remember an evening that Jane and I went to The Comedy Club on State Street with another couple. We got good seats. It was fun – until the moment the comedian noticed the argyle sweater I was wearing that night.

He couldn't let it go. I didn't know that there were so many argyle sweater jokes around. The whole thing about the sweater lasted five to ten minutes – but it seemed like about an hour.

Talk about a shift in perspectives! From one moment being a spectator to the next being a participant. At first I felt awfully uncomfortable. I felt foolish. The only consolation I had was that no one in the audience knew me and that they'd never see me again. *(Or that argyle sweater.)*

Today, Jesus calls for 70 disciples to make a shift in their perspective. Prior to today, they'd seen Jesus as their Master and their Rabbi; they were the disciples the followers.

But today, Jesus asks them to consider being a disciple from a different perspective. Today, Jesus transforms his followers from being receivers and spectators into active participants. Can you see this change that Jesus is expecting from those 70 followers? Can you imagine that they might have been just a little nervous about it?

Today's Gospel lesson helps me change the way I look at the ministry of Jesus. I often think of Jesus as having a three-year ministry to the people, then dying on the cross and rising from the dead for all humanity.

Sometimes I thought that it was too bad that Jesus didn't have more time to teach more than he did. Why didn't he clear up some of the tough questions people had? Maybe he could have touched the lives of more people – people who needed a presence and a touch that heals.

Maybe Luke is telling us that Jesus didn't come to teach the crowds so much as **he came to teach the disciples how to teach the crowds.**

So while the ministry of Jesus touched a lot of folk and we have the Gospels as an enduring record of this ministry, maybe his time was mostly a place for the apostles and the seventy, to be trained for continuing the ministry of Jesus and for getting out the Good News about God's new perspective in Christ.

Jesus offers the same challenge to you and me. He is calling for a change in his disciples – from being receivers and spectators to givers and participants and leaders.

He's not asking you to get up here and preach – though that's certainly possible. But I think Christ is calling each of us to work in the vineyard somewhere – to make that risky shift from being a spectator to a participant – from only receiving to finding a way to allow our worship together to minister to others.

Respect for Jehovah Witnesses & Mormons – In the wake of the fire at Notre Dame in Paris, French Catholics have taken a cue from their Muslim coworkers. Find ways of sharing their faith – not to say my faith is better than yours but to say, "This is what I experienced. This is how I found help in my need."

I believe that Christ is calling us to make that "leap of faith" in which we see being part of the church as receiving

A Navy chaplain shared his experience on the USS Midway, steaming off the coast of Japan. It was winter, and the water was so cold that a person could survive only for 15 to 20 minutes in that water. And wouldn't you know it, during the middle of the night came that dreaded signal, "*man overboard!*"

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The emergency crews got themselves ready in a hurry. The helicopter took off and put its lights on the water's surface. After ten minutes, they spotted the sailor in the icy water. A scuba diver jumped into the water, attached a harness around the sailor's chest, and the nearly frozen young man was pulled up into the helicopter.

Later, the chaplain was talking to the man who had fallen into the water. The chaplain asked him when it was that he was sure he would be saved. The young man answered, "When the diver was in the water with me."

Friends, in Christ, God jumped into the water with us. You know, drowning people don't need an audience. They don't need spectators to watch them. They need someone to get into the water with them. That is what God in Christ has done for us. And that's the example that the seventy that Jesus sent out give to us, even in the 21st century.

May we learn to do the same.