

7 Easter B

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Psalm 1

1 John 5:9-13

John 17:6-19

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Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus.
Amen.

We have come to the end of our Easter celebrations, seven weeks of seven days, a holy celebration marking the resurrection of Christ. And while some people might look at the resurrection as a *culmination* of Jesus's ministry, its more accurately considered the *beginning*.

Our gospel reading this morning from John comes from a large section describing the night that Jesus was betrayed. Last week I said I thought that Jesus's words to his disciples that night were words of *love and encouragement and support*, that they would desperately need in the days to come. I portrayed Jesus's words as community building because, in the days to come, when their world would be shaken, they were going to need to each other; going solo was not an option.

This morning the text is a continuation of Jesus' encouragement, he gives them final instructions and commissions them for ministry. The whole idea being that the work Jesus has begun was not to end with his death. He completely relies on an eclectic group of everyday people, just like you or I, to continue the holy work that he began.

Now, that might seem like a very daunting task. Most of us are rather humble about the idea of doing holy work. I know sometimes in church people are reluctant to come up here to read or sometimes people feel that they are unworthy to help with sharing Holy Communion and lots of people feel like they would not know what to say should they be asked to visit someone. That's okay, we each have our gifts and we each have our levels of comfort and we are each on a path of growth and discipleship. But if there is one thing I have learned

since becoming a pastor, it is (and I'm not the first to say this) that *God qualifies the called, rather than calling the qualified.*

Thinking back to the disciples themselves we know that they were people just like us. They didn't have degrees or special skills but, what they did have was willing hearts.

When the disciples first chose to follow Jesus they had no idea what would happen from one day to the next, and they certainly had no idea what would happen that final Passover. And maybe it's just as well that they didn't know these things, or that that night they didn't understand he was bequeathing the assets of his estate. Jesus had no home or possessions to give away, but he is generous nonetheless: "*to you my followers I leave:*"

*the words given to me, I give to you
the protection given to me, I asked for you
the holiness given to me, I leave for you
and the commission given to me, I had over to you.*

Life would go on for his followers and Jesus wanted them to have the tools they would need in the days to come and that's what they received: God's Word, God's protection, God's sanctification (knowledge that you're holy) and a job description.

Last week I invited us all to see ourselves as part of God's community, that we each – in our uniqueness – are an important part of the family of God. The puzzle at the back has a few pieces in place and we can continue to sort and build it together. Community, after all, takes time to find its shape.

Today, I'd like to ask you to think like Jesus! We don't even really understand the many ways he gave of himself to build the Christian body into what it is today, but we know he did. In that spirit, as we hope to build and strengthen this community inside and outside these walls, how might we give of ourselves?

Let me give you one example (and it's a pretty easy one, but sometimes I don't think we realize the loving community we are

being when we do such things.) Friday at Holy Spirit we held a funeral service for one of our long-term members, George Campsall. And it was beautiful to see this congregation coming together to say farewell and of course to love and support Dorothea. This may not seem like a very big deal, but such actions are God's love coming alive as it is extended to one another, particularly in difficult times. When a community comes together, worships together, or when we are chatting over a cup of coffee, praying with one another, we are building a community founded on love as Jesus hoped we would.

The traditional Christian practices gathering, worshipping, praying, even singing together, may not seem like they are all that important on a day-to-day basis, but they may be more important than we could imagine tomorrow or the next day or the day after that. Because we, like Jesus' disciples, do not know the future. If we know and trust one another today, then we will know and trust one another in times of uncertainty.

So, how might we give of ourselves? What new thing might you feel inspired to try? What hopes for you or your family would you wish to share? What do you hear Jesus saying to us?

Amen.