

Sermon Proper 22 Year C October 3, 2010

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

I learned something important last week during Bishop Curry's visit. One of the things the bishop asked to do is have lunch with the vestry and leaders in the church to have a conversation about how things are going. During that conversation, time and time again people shared how the years between Jackie's tenure and mine were some pretty lean years, but you kept going. You kept going because of the faith you had in one another. It was the web of relationships built over years that were worth investing in until a new day would come. It was also gratifying to realize that people were ready for that new day and the energy around this place is palpable. You kept your faith in St. James' and one another.

I shared with you before that bishop Douglas taught me that the church doesn't have a mission, God has a mission and our job is to participate in God's mission. Turn with me to page 855 of the prayer book. There are three questions at the top of the page. I'll ask the questions and you provide the answers.

The question I would like us to consider this morning is what happens when a church truly makes its purpose 'advancing God's mission instead

of its own?’ In your bulletin you’ll find a half-page handout that I’d like to go through.

Disciple

Apostle

Apostle

GOD’S MISSION

Who We Are	Whose We Are
Preservation	Transformation
Scarcity	Abundance
Worshipper	Follower/Disciple
Parishioners	Apostles
Episcopalians	Christians
Safe/Secure	Risk Takers
Careful	Prophetic
Resisters of Change	Agents of Change
“Always Done This Way”	“Called to Do it Now”

Next week in place of the sermon I want us to come together as a community through the lens of moving from the left column to the right to ask ourselves some questions as we just begin to prepare our budget for the coming year.

The traditional way of preparing budgets is to look at the problems and challenges facing us and to figure out ways to cover those costs. I think this is the wrong way to go about budget planning especially in a church. If you are obsessed with simply fixing problems and you go around looking for problems, guess what??? you find them.

Rather, what I'd like us to do is come next week prepared to talk about what is it that God is asking us to do to fulfill God's mission of restoration and reconciliation of the world?

Through a process of appreciative inquiry come prepared to answer some basic questions:

1. What is working at St. James and how do we build on that?
2. What is it that is working and brings you back to St. James' each Sunday...and how do we continue to feed that?
3. Where is new life emerging in the congregation and what is Christ asking us to do as a community to enhance that life?

During these past years of in between you have kept the faith. You have planted the mustard seed for a new day. Today is that day and now your faithfulness is beginning to bear new fruit. Let us continue this discernment of what God would have us do in the process of stewardship and beginning to plan our budget for next year. Amen