

“Faith Work”

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UCC at The Villages
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Numbers 1:1-19

Mark 3:7-19

“¹⁶⁻¹⁷Moses and Aaron, together with these twelve tribal leaders,

¹⁸called together the people...”

Numbers 1:16-18a

Let us pray... O God,

Guide us as a congregation and as individuals, working together to do your will
and build up your beloved community. Amen

Our liturgist, Becky had a tough assignment today –

reading all those tongue-twister Biblical names

in that passage from the book of Hebrew scripture called Numbers.

Actually, this list also includes the names of the fathers
of those tribal leaders.

They were edited out so Becky only had to say the name of
each individual leader and the tribe they were from.

The twelve tribes take their names from the twelve sons of

Jacob who himself was called “Israel” – a name which roughly means
“One who struggles with God”.

Those twelve names are

Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim,

Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, and Naphtali.

These twelve sons provided the inspiration for how the Israelite people
initially organized themselves, socially and geographically,
before and after they entered that promised land.

By the way, the artist Marc Chagall created 12 beautiful, vibrant
stained glass windows created by to symbolize the character
of each of those sons of Jacob and so, the tribes they represent;
And they are on display at the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Jesus borrowed from this tradition to organize his followers

as a group of twelve disciples whom he called to be his co-workers:

Simon Peter, James, John, Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew,

Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus,

Thaddeus, Simon the Canaaneean, and Judas Iscariot.

Now, Simon Peter is generally known as the leader of the 12 disciples
whom Jesus called ‘The Rock’ – upon whom Jesus would build
his “ekklesia”, his congregation, his church.

Willard, p.2

And Jesus may have called him “Rocky” somewhat in jest, too,
because of Peter’s tendency to act before he thought things through –
because he could be kind of a “rock” at times...

Then there was James and John who were called “Bo-a-ner’-ges” –
“Sons of Thunder” – or as I called them, “Thunder and Lightning”.

Simon the Canaanean was also called Simon the Zealot –
Canaan is a reference to the original name of the Promised Land
and Zealots were a nationalistic group in Jesus’ day
who opposed the Roman occupation,
so, he might just as well have been called Simon the Patriot.

Then there’s Judas Iscariot whose name could refer to the tribe of Issachar,
or that he was from the Judean town of Kerioth,
but this could also mean he was a member of the Sicarii –
which refers to ‘the Daggers’, an ultranationalist group
that specialized in assassination.

Then there is Thomas – the Twin, also called ‘Doubting Thomas’ in tradition,
but not by Jesus or anywhere else in the New Testament.

If anything, he is portrayed as a bold disciple who is out and about
in the dangerous days after Jesus’ crucifixion.

From the vantage point of history and recent scholarship
about the early Christian communities called the Gnostics,
the Gospel of Thomas provides a refreshing alternative –
even as a ‘twin’ tradition, to the traditional Church.

Of this group of 12, Jesus also had an inner circle of three –
Peter, James, and John.

What this suggests to me is that they were Jesus’ principle lieutenants –
each responsible for a group of three of their fellow disciples.

There is a theory of leadership such that the optimum number of subordinates
for a leader with whom to effectively coordinate is no more than four.

So, Jesus appears to be using a sound principle of delegation and mentoring
as part of his management style.

This is good advice for us as a church as we enter our second full year
in our own building, as a maturing community of faith.

We must continually work *to build up our back up*,
nurture and disciple – mentor those who will follow us.

Next week, we will hold our Annual Meeting when we will commission
new officers for our church committees.

This will also be the occasion of bringing in new members and renewing
our commitment to one another in service to God through Christ.

Willard, p.3

We of the United Church of Christ at The Villages must have
the same determination as the people of God throughout history
to 'be the Church' in our time and place.

We must be clear about our message
as Christians who are 'open and affirming' and
we must find our voice to share this with our wider community.

Our congregation is already doing so much to make a difference
for the sake of our church and local community and even beyond,
through the United Church of Christ on into the wider world.
And there's more we can yet do.

We've got a full slate of church officers and committee members,
but we are always going to need helpers to supplement them.
Just like a wheel needs a hub with a full set of spokes,
a mission team or committee serves the church
as a 'hub' for their particular area,
while volunteers are needed to be the 'spokes' in the wheel
to keep us rolling along.

We need people to volunteer to be ushers, greeters, and liturgists
for every Sunday.

The Diaconate is responsible for ushers and liturgists each week,
as well as "Children of God" presenters for every third Sunday...
Without slipping into an Abbott and Costello routine of 'Who's on first...',
WHO is responsible for providing greeters...

Some tasks demand more intentional skills and commitment
for example:

The AV booth needs one person each Sunday
on a rotating basis as part of a team
to manage the Power Point presentation and video-taping.

Though we are close to hiring a new Church administrative assistant,
we will continue to need volunteers to help with the areas
of clerical duties, worship preparation, coordinating the calendar,
and pastoral assistance.

The Office Team with help from Admin is responsible for these areas...

We need volunteers to be 'Shepherds' in our Called to Care program
who will keep in touch with their assigned group of church members,
alerting the pastor about needs for assistance,
and who will just be a partner in prayer.

In time, we hope to have a 'Parish Nurse' program in place.

These activities are also part of the Diaconate's mission...

Willard, p.4

And there are ongoing programs by Mission, Education, Fun(d)raising,
and Justice & Peace for more opportunities of service.

As members of this congregation, this gathering of believers,
you are more than hired hands paid to just do a job –
you are here to do the work that only begins
with the 'service' of worship.

As a member of the United Church of Christ at The Villages,
you have an investment that calls for your commitment
to do the faith work of serving God through Christ.

Martin Luther King, Jr said,

"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve.

You don't have to have a college degree to serve.

You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.

You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

http://classiclit.about.com/od/kingmartinluther/a/aa_mkingjr.htm

Those Biblical people with the difficult names of long ago
have for the most part, dropped from view into the obscurity of history.
Yet without them playing their part in the events of the Exodus and the Gospel,
who could say there would even be a Judeo-Christian tradition today...

So, do your part and find something that you love to do
here at the United Church of Christ at The Villages.
Find a way to serve God here and that would be good enough.
That would be 'great'!

Amen

While they were in the desert, the Israelites had to become disciplined in order to survive.

Today's lesson from Numbers 1:1-19, tells about how God helped Moses to delegate.

¹The people of Israel had left Egypt and were living in the Sinai Desert. Then on the first day of the second month of the second year,

Moses was in the sacred tent when the LORD said:

²⁻³I want you and Aaron to find out how many people are in each of Israel's clans and families.

And make a list of all the men twenty years and older who are able to fight in battle.

⁴⁻¹⁵The following twelve family leaders, one from each tribe, will help you:

Elizur [el'-ee-zur] ... from Reuben,

Shelumiel [she-loo-me'-el] ... from Simeon,

Nahsho... from Judah,

Nethanel [ne-tan'-el]... from Issachar [is-sa-car],

Eliab... from Zebulun,

Elishama [elee-sha'-ma]... from Ephraim [ef-ra-him'],

Gamaliel [ga-ma-lee'-el]... from Manasseh [man-na'-sa],

Abidan... from Benjamin,

Ahiezer [a-hee'-eh-zer]... from Dan,

Pagiel [pa-gee'-el]... from Asher,

Eliasaph [eh-li'-a-saf]... from Gad,

and Ahira [a-hee'-ra]... from Naphtali [naf-ta'-lee].

¹⁶⁻¹⁷Moses and Aaron, together with these twelve tribal leaders,

¹⁸called together the people that same day.

They were counted according to their clans and families.

Then Moses and the others

listed the names of the men twenty years and older,

¹⁹just as the LORD had commanded.

Mark 3:7-19

- [7] Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea,
and a great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea
[8] and Jerusalem and Idume'a
and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon
a great multitude, hearing all that he did, came to him.
- [9] And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd,
lest they should crush him;
- [10] for he had healed many,
so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him.
- [11] And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him,
they fell down before him and cried out,
"You are the Son of God."
- [12] And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.
- [13] And he went up on the mountain,
and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him.
- [14] And he appointed twelve, to be with him,
and to be sent out to preach [15] and have authority to cast out demons:
- [16] Simon
whom he surnamed Peter;
- [17] James the son of Zeb'edee and John the brother of James,
whom he surnamed Bo-aner'ges, that is, sons of thunder;
- [18] Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew,
and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus,
and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean,
[19] and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Mark 3:7-19

7 Jesus led his disciples down to the shore of the lake. Large crowds followed him from Galilee, Judea, 8 and Jerusalem. People came from Idumea, as well as other places east of the Jordan River. They also came from the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. All of these crowds came because they had heard what Jesus was doing. 9 He even had to tell his disciples to get a boat ready to keep him from being crushed by the crowds.

10 After Jesus had healed many people, the other sick people begged him to let them touch him. 11 And whenever any evil spirits saw Jesus, they would fall to the ground and shout, "You are the Son of God!" 12 But Jesus warned the spirits not to tell who he was.

(Matthew 10.1-4; Luke 6.12-16)

13 Jesus decided to ask some of his disciples to go up on a mountain with him, and they went. 14 Then he chose twelve of them to be his apostles, so that they could be with him. He also wanted to send them out to preach 15 and to force out demons. 16 Simon was one of the twelve, and Jesus named him Peter. 17 There were also James and John, the two sons of Zebedee. Jesus called them Boanerges, which means "Thunderbolts." 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus were also apostles. The others were Simon, known as the Eager One, 19 and Judas Iscariot, [e] who later betrayed Jesus.

But the truth, as always, is more complicated than legend. Two new books -- Lewis' excellent memoir and David Halberstam's sweeping *The Children* -- remind us that the movement's success was in fact far from inevitable and that the forces behind it were, in the beginning, quite ordinary people. They were caught up in extraordinary times, of course, but the men and women who made the movement were not born saints and martyrs: They were, at first, just like anybody else. Halberstam understands this: "We are a bunch of children," muses Diane Nash, then 21, the evening before the Nashville lunch counter sit-ins began in early 1960. "We're nice children, bright and idealistic, but we are children and we are weak. We have no police force, no judges, no cops, no money." Years later, Nash made an even larger point in a conversation with historian David J. Garrow: "If people think that it was Martin Luther King's movement, then today they -- young people -- are more likely to say, 'Gosh, I wish we had a Martin Luther King here today to lead us.' ... If people knew how that movement started, then the question they would ask themselves is, 'What can I do?'"

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1316/is_n5_v30/ai_20588853/?tag=content;col1