

## “Two By Two”



The Rev. Ryan Wiksell

July 7, 2024 | 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God, Amen.

- Lots of moving parts in this morning's gospel
  - Jesus' hometown friends are impressed but skeptical
  - Jesus' own family is holding back
  - And he's actually prevented from ministering there
  - (This is a reminder that when Jesus says "your Faith has healed you, he means it. When he encounters cynical people who are closed off to him, the miracles don't flow)
  - It really is a collaborative effort. Jesus knocks on the door but won't force it open. He is looking for open doors, and willing spirits.
- I've been listening to a book called the Human Element.
  - Brilliant book, with insights all over the place.
  - One of the recent points I absorbed from it was the Familiarity Bias.
  - You've heard it said "familiarity breeds contempt" but that's not entirely true.

- When human beings are presented with two equally valid options, we consistently choose the one that feels more familiar.
- Voting: “Yikes I’ve never seen this name before. But oh, I saw this other name somewhere. I’m going to vote for this guy.”
- In our Scripture readings this morning we see that played out more than once.
  - The people approach David with an appeal to familiarity. “We are your flesh and bone!”
  - “Familiarity” really just means “like family”. It’s how we were raised. It’s our comfort zone.
  - And Jesus is thwarted in his home town, because it’s too familiar.
  - It takes a lot to overcome that familiarity, that comfort zone. And that’s exactly what Jesus is asking his disciples to do.
- Watching the Chosen, just finished Season 4 (out of 7?)
  - Love the depiction of Jesus, challenging too

- But maybe the most challenging thing is the watching the disciples
- A few season ago, a beautiful scene showing the disciples being sent out two by two, doing the same kind of works that they'd just seen Jesus doing.
- But it doesn't take long for them to run into trouble again.
  - They forget who he really is. Their agendas come roaring back. Or their fears. Or their hangups.
  - And every time this happens, we want to shout at the screen: "Just listen to him!" or "Just trust him!" You have a conundrum or you don't get it? Just ask him, here's right there!
  - You have the Messiah right there with you! Have you not seen him do enough to convince you to trust him?
  - I mean... don't you know you're a Bible character?
  - And everything you're doing is going to be read about in church for centuries, and be preached about and have thousands of papers written about it.

- So... are you going to act like his hometown friends, or his brothers and sisters? Are you going to poke and prod him, and demand an explanation for his authority?
  - Or are you going to *remember* who he has already shown himself to be?
  - As long as we remember who Jesus is... as long as we remember that we indeed have God with us... we can let all this cynicism go.
  - Yes, we will still have doubts and questions. Yes, we will still struggle with this situation and with that crisis.
  - But we can struggle from a foundation of trust. Otherwise known as faith.
  - We can step out on that faith, without bread, without a bag, without money in our belts, without a second tunic. We can step out with just a staff in our hands and sandals on our feet.
- When you see Jesus directing his disciples to do that, how do you think they're supposed to feel?

- Fine. Right? They're fine. Again, they're the *twelve!* And Jesus is standing in front of them, giving them instructions.
- That should be a slam-dunk
- But it wasn't a slam-dunk for them, just like it's not a slam-dunk for you and me.
- But we know that they could do it. Do we know that we can do it?
  - Do we realize why God put us here? Can we remember what Jesus has done through us up till now?
  - Can we trust that when we are sent forth to bring Healing and Hope to our city, that God will take care of us?
  - Do we realize that we don't have to overthink everything, and over-prepare everything? We don't have to take out an insurance policy on every aspect of our lives, and work up contingencies for every emergency.
  - It's always good to have a Plan B, but do we really need a Plan C, D, E, F, etc?
- I know, I sound crazy right now. None of this makes a ton of sense.

- Paul says something crazy in 2 Corinthians: “let me boast in my weaknesses”. It’s utter nonsense.
- But if we were obsessed with doing sensible things we wouldn’t be here at all, would we?
- So let’s lean in to that! We’re already crazy, might as well make the most of it.
- It’s like that bumper sticker: “I don’t suffer from insanity. I enjoy every minute of it.”
- I don’t know about you, but I’ve spent my whole life trying to avoid looking crazy.
  - It’s not working out.
  - Turns out there isn’t a sensible option. There is no such thing as “normal”
  - So I say we stop looking for it. Let’s shake that dust off our feet.
  - And if we’re going to be crazy anyway, let’s be crazy for a greater purpose. For the sake of healing, for reconciliation, for inner peace, for justice, mercy and kindness. Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on the  
**Sunday closest to July 6**

Proper 9  
Year B  
RCL

*Track 1*      or      *Track 2*

2 Samuel 5:1-5,  
9-10  
Psalm 48  
2 Corinthians  
12:2-10  
Mark 6:1-13

Ezekiel 2:1-5  
Psalm 123  
2 Corinthians  
12:2-10  
Mark 6:1-13

## **The Collect**

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **Old Testament**

### **2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10**

All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, “Look, we are your bone and flesh. For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.” So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a



covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inwards. And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.

## **The Psalm**

### **Psalm 48**

#### *Magnus Dominus*

- 1 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; \*  
in the city of our God is his holy hill.
- 2 Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion, \*  
the very center of the world and the city of the great King.
- 3 God is in her citadels; \*  
he is known to be her sure refuge.
- 4 Behold, the kings of the earth assembled \*  
and marched forward together.
- 5 They looked and were astounded; \*  
they retreated and fled in terror.
- 6 Trembling seized them there; \*  
they writhed like a woman in childbirth,  
like ships of the sea when the east wind shatters them.
- 7 As we have heard, so have we seen,  
in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God; \*  
God has established her for ever.

- 8 We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O God, \*  
in the midst of your temple.
- 9 Your praise, like your Name, O God, reaches to the world's end; \*  
your right hand is full of justice.
- 10 Let Mount Zion be glad  
and the cities of Judah rejoice, \*  
because of your judgments.
- 11 Make the circuit of Zion;  
walk round about her; \*  
count the number of her towers.
- 12 Consider well her bulwarks;  
examine her strongholds; \*  
that you may tell those who come after.
- 13 This God is our God for ever and ever; \*  
he shall be our guide for evermore.

## **The Epistle**

### **2 Corinthians 12:2-10**

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that

it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

## **The Gospel**

### **Mark 6:1-13**

Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.