

Christ Church, Georgetown
Sunday, June 18, 2017
The Rev. Elizabeth Keeler

I would like to begin by reading a letter I found preparing to preach on today's Gospel, which tells of the calling and sending of the Apostles.

"To: Jesus, Son of Joseph, Carpenter Shop, Nazareth, Galilee.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests. We have not only run the results through our computer, but have also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychological consultant.

The profiles of all the tests are included. You will want to study each of them carefully. As part of our service, we also make the following general statements.

It is the staff's unanimous opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, educational and vocational aptitude for the kind of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue to search for persons with established experience and proven leadership capability.

Specifically: Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted from the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus have radical leanings and both registered high on manic-depressive scores.

Only one of the candidates shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness who meets people well and has a keen business mind. He has contacts in high places and is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely Yours,

Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem, Judea." *

Like many gospel stories we hear repeatedly, I wonder if today's narrative of the calling and sending of the apostles has become so familiar that we've forgotten the story's important details, perhaps even some of its important meaning. The clever parody I just read serves to remind us of at least one significant fact - the twelve were completely unqualified, untrained, and unprepared for their work.

To set the scene in context Jesus has been on a healing tear across Galilee "teaching, proclaiming the good news and curing every disease and sickness." Today's story opens with Jesus pausing to catch his breath and uttering: "the harvest is plentiful but the laborers

are few.” In other words, I am going to need some help! Without missing a beat, he calls, and sends twelve men, who I can’t help but imagine were perfectly content being followers.

Recall again, these were quite ordinary men - not brilliant or even very educated, not rich, nor well positioned in society. They were not renowned healers or teachers; they were common folk with common lives. The only thing that makes the Apostles qualified is that Jesus calls them and sends them. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers few.

Notice also that Jesus doesn’t offer the apostles any special training. Basic instructions are given but there’s no account of Jesus taking the twelve away for a crash course or basic training. Jesus simply starts calling their names - Peter, Andrew, James, John - I need you to go, go out and preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons. Now go, get going. The only thing that makes the Apostles ready is that Jesus calls them and sends them. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers few.

Finally, please notice this last detail of Jesus sending the Apostles out empty handed. They are to take nothing with them - no shoes, no money, not even a small backpack or walking stick.

Go, head out now, go into the world and do what I’m doing with just the clothes on your backs. The only thing that makes the Apostles prepared is that Jesus calls them and sends them. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers few.

The question that comes to mind is why? Why did Jesus call and send ill prepared, ill provisioned amateurs to help him bring about the Kingdom of God? The answer, brothers and sisters, is counter-intuitively simple, one any Christ Church child will correctly know, an answer that skips out of their tiny mouths before they even think. Those incompetent, inadequate, impoverished Apostles have everything they need, of course, because it is Jesus who calls and sends them. The authority they have is his – not theirs. Any power they have is his – not theirs. In short, Jesus is the one who meets the needs of the broken world through his newly commissioned Apostles.

Our situation today is so very similar. In all honesty we are not qualified, nor ready, nor prepared to be Jesus’ hands and feet in the world. How can we possibly imagine that we should be attempting to accomplish God’s mission in the world? The answer is the same for us that it was for the Apostles. We are not the ones meeting the needs of the world – God is through us.

But God does need us to go, and Jesus still sends us because the harvest is still plentiful and the laborers are still far too few. Yes, we are all ordinary amateurs, ill-equipped in and of ourselves, but the call and the send persist. You’ll hear it in about twenty minutes at the end of this and every service. It’s the very last thing we say together... “Go, Go forth into the world, Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, Go forth in the name of Christ, GO. Amen.

* Taken from “Synthesis” published June 15, 2008