

Joy Crawford

Sermon

6.18.17

Text: Matthew 9:35-10:8

Title: Do You Think This Was Fun?

Those who have heard me preach before may remember that the first thing I always like to do is to take a quick look at what we did the previous week in hopes of finding a good jumping off place. Last week was Trinity Sunday and with the help of a video by the priest and prolific author, Richard Rohr, Pastor Beth invited us to see ourselves as participants in the divine dance of the Holy Trinity. And using the Bible passage in Matthew 28 of the Great Commission, we were encouraged to “go and make disciples of all nations,” aware that we are not going alone. That we are, in fact, going as participants in a divine dance that keeps us in relationship and in step with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Actually, every moment of our lives can be seen as whirls and twirls, promenades and Dosey Does in that Divine Dance. If you think about this morning - what was the dance you did to get here? Mine was super easy. I got up, my sermon was written, I knew where I had to go and when I had to be there, and the Holy Trinity and I just trotted on out the door. Your Divine Dance may have been a little harder. Just take a minute to think - on a scale from one to ten, with one being the easiest and ten being the hardest, how difficult was the dance you had to do to get to worship this morning? Was it a lovely waltz? Or maybe more like a Tango - Yes, I’m going, no, I’m not. Yes, no. Maybe you

even got your toes stepped on. Ok - everyone got their number? Great - hold that thought.

So - most of you here know that one of my roles here at Welborne is to lead the youth ministry. And I'll tell you that when I first started, it had been a couple of years since I'd done any youth ministry and from time to time I'd come home from youth group and tell my husband, Keith, that I had forgotten how hard youth ministry was and that I was concerned the kids weren't having enough fun to make them want to come back. Well one night Keith told me a story about a man in a church he'd gone to a long long time ago. This man was a big, burly guy, a welder by trade, who came to church every Sunday wearing his overalls, with his long hair in a pony tail, and he sat right down front. Not only did this man love Jesus, but he could get a group of 60 raucous teenagers to stop talking, pay attention, and follow directions in 10 seconds flat and I thought wow, I wish I could make that miracle happen. So, one Sunday morning, Keith sees this man sitting down front in his overalls and his long hair and he has his daughter with him - about eleven years old or so - and when the service was over he must have told her to do something she didn't want to do because she was pouting and protesting saying, "that's no fun." And that guy lifts his big burly arms straight out from his sides like Jesus on the cross and says to her real gently, "do you think *this* was fun?"

pause

I know I was taken a back a bit by that. First because it was brilliant. And second because I could see that this guy was a tradesman - a welder who supported his family with his back and his hands, and he knew what hard work was and maybe that's why he loved Jesus so much. I think sometimes we get so focus on the pain and suffering that Jesus endured on the cross, and all that means for us, it can be easy to gloss over the extraordinarily hard work of his everyday ministry. You see our text for today begins at verse 35 of Matthew 9, but if we look at the 34 verses before that, we get a glimpse of what Jesus did all day, everyday. By the time he starts talking about the harvest, Jesus has healed a paralytic, which he took flack for, eaten with a tax collector, which he took flack for, explained to John the Baptist's disciples why his own disciples didn't fast on the Sabbath, which he took more flack for, and then been interrupted by a leader of the synagogue who runs in and begs him to go see his daughter who has just died and bring her back to life. So Jesus walks out into the midst of a huge crowd that is pushing and shoving to get near him and all of a sudden a woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years sneaks up behind him and touches the hem of his clothes, which heals her, but it also sucks enough power out of him that he stops and turns around to see who did it. He gets to the synagogue leaders house, and while the people outside are laughing at him, goes inside and raises that child from the dead, which really ought to have been enough to call it a day, or a week, or a year. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes on to all the cities and villages, teaching and proclaiming and curing every disease and every sickness, all the while the Pharisees are telling people that he was getting his power from Satan. All this and so much more - until finally, *finally* Jesus looks out at the throngs of people who are helpless and harassed, oppressed and suffering, and he

says to his disciples the iconic words, “the harvest is great, but the laborers are few.”

Well... yeah.

The end of our text for today tells us that the laborers Jesus sent out into the harvest were his disciples, most of them tradesmen but there were the exceptions - like

Matthew, the tax collector. They were people not so different from you and me.

Somebody’s son. Somebody’s brother. He sent them out into the Divine Dance to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons saying, “freely you

have received, freely give.” And if you peek just a little ahead in the 9th chapter of

Matthew, you see that Jesus also tells them, impresses upon them, how hard the dance

will be. He says, “Stay alert, because you’re going to get a lot more than your toes

stepped on. This is a dangerous dance - one of life and death. You’re going to be like

sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves by showing off

because some people are going to question your motives, others will smear your

reputation, and some may even try to kill you—just because you believe in me.”

It can be hard to keep up with the Divine Dance of Christianity, and just for a moment, I

want you to recall the number on that scale from one to ten, with one being the easiest

and ten being the hardest, that describes how difficult it was for you to get here this

morning. If you’re like me and it was down around a one because you’re healthy and in

good spirits and you were looking forward to maybe actually having fun, you are

blessed. Praise GOD, you are blessed. But I know that for some of you it might have

been a little harder. Some here this morning are sick or in pain, worried about a loved

one, or scared about their finances, grieving, or frustrated, depressed, or so stressed that it's hard to get out of bed. And if that's you - if you came down on the other end of the scale... praise God, because this morning you have done a little bit of the hard work of being a Christian. Good for you!! Everyone here needs to know that volunteering in the food pantry can also be hard work; that helping out with Vacation Bible School means prepping and planning and arranging your schedule so you can be here, and that makes you a laborer in the harvest. If extending a hand of warm friendship and hospitality to our Coptic brothers and sisters who worship here feels awkward, or even a little scary, but you do it anyway, you are quite literally casting out the demons of racism and intolerance. If you would like to make a miracle happen, some morning go find Lenny, the indigent man who limps up and down the median at the corner of Quiocassan and Parham. Pull up to the light and hand him 60 of your hard earned dollars, and that night he will take an hour long shower, watch TV, and sleep in a clean bed with a roof over his head. It may not be easy, but you will have just raised someone from the deadening effects of poverty and the humiliation of homelessness - you will have made a miracle happen in the time it took the traffic light to change. Friends, God's harvest is great, it's everywhere, and dancing the divine good news that 'The kingdom of heaven has come near' may not be super easy, but Jesus has gone before us and as His disciples we will surely find rest in the Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.