

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Proper 14
Year A

1 Kings 19:9-18
Psalm 85:8-13
Romans 10:5-15
Matthew 14:22-33

Paul is calling the church in Rome, and the rest of us, to be out spreading the Good News of the gospel. For some reason, in the mind of many, that means going door to door or standing on the street corner telling everyone they must be saved. Where did we get that notion? Paul definitely does not say that here.

Evangelism is a subject Episcopalians have shied away from for many years. However, we are seeing a change to that attitude. We are starting to embrace the idea that sharing what God is doing is OK. We are not sure how to go about doing it.

There are many ways to go about spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. First, we must know and believe the message we have been given. That message is, "God is love." We don't need to "save" anyone. God has already done that. God is already in the midst of us, doing that work. We only need to do our part, which is to try to make a difference in the world around us. We need to live authentically into our faith. There is an old adage that says, "I can't hear what you are saying because of what you are doing." If our daily life does not agree with the message we are proclaiming, no one will listen to us. Therefore, we must live what we say.

Our focus needs to be on Christ, not on the people around us. Just as the disciples were told to begin in Jerusalem and work outward, so we need our focus to be on God, who is the center of our lives and build outward. Instead of looking at ourselves, we are to envision how we can expand the circle to include everyone. As we do on Wednesday night, we need to open our hearts and lives to all.

It is all a matter of our focus. In the Gospel reading, we see the disciples in the boat in the middle of a storm. They are terrified. To make matters worse, they see what appears to them to be a ghost moving across the water towards them. They are so focused on themselves that they cannot see that it is Jesus coming to them. Peter, perhaps in a show of courage, asked Jesus to call him to come to Jesus. As he focuses all of his attention on Jesus, Peter steps out of the boat and begins to walk across the sea. It is only when his focus changes, when he looks at the wind that is blowing on him, that he begins to sink into the water.

In the verses right before this incident, we have the feeding of the multitude we discussed last week. In that situation, the disciples brought a small amount of food to Jesus, not knowing what He could do with it in the face of such a great crowd. But, when Jesus had blessed it and had given portions of it to distribute to the crowd, they experienced the unending supply of bread in their hands. In today's story, as they returned their focus to Jesus, instead of the storm around them, they praised and worshipped Him. Here, in two situations, Jesus proved to them that

nothing was impossible for them to accomplish. They could feed thousands with a mere handful of loaves and Peter could walk across the sea as he was focused on Jesus.

If we focus on Jesus, instead of worrying about what others might say or do, we can do great works in Ozark. Instead of being focused on the budget, or the bank balance, if we focus on Jesus instead of the empty pews around us, we can do whatever we set our minds to. 2000 years ago, about 120 people gathered, locked in a room in fear. When the Holy Spirit got ahold of them, they went out and spread the Good News of Jesus to the people in Jerusalem. Look at the results.

With our full attention focused on Jesus and the blessing God has poured out on us, we can impact this town just as successfully. As we saw last week, Jesus did not hand out a huge quantity of food to the disciples. They saw the food multiply in their hands. God doesn't need to give us everything we need before we can begin. We just need to believe that God can do all things and take that first step. Then, God will increase the supply in our hands.