

“Daring Disciples” (January 8, 2012)

Mark 1:4-11; Acts 19:1-7

The year was 1994 and my friend Doug Hogland and I were

In the Holy Land with our wives and our tour bus stopped

At the River Jordan for just a few minutes and

Doug and I just had to get in the water and splash

Around a little bit- we didn't come that far

Just to see the River Jordan.

We wanted to touch and feel the water in that same

River that John had baptized Jesus in so long ago.

And it was the same in just about every holy sight.

We didn't just want to see the birth place of Jesus,

we wanted to sing the songs of faith in that spot.

We didn't want to just see Mount Nebo,

we wanted to taste communion in that place.

When we went to Lazarus tomb at 6 am we didn't just

Look at the tomb from the outside.

We knocked on the door of the keeper of the gate- and surprisingly enough she came out with her two daughters to welcome us and we got to meet a modern day Martha and Mary.

Now Doug and I were fairly shy and invisible in seminary.

We turned in our assignments on time, played by the rules,

But something had happened to us in ministry

As we started living out our calling in the church.

We became bold, we pushed the limits, we didn't accept

"we've never done it that way before"

as a reason not to do anything,

And we saw our churches growing and

Changing by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You see, I believe in the Holy Spirit, as the Triune God at work in

Our lives and our churches and our leaders and our world.

I believe that we aren't just acting out a nice ritual

When we ordain our leaders and lay hands on them.

I believe that the Holy Spirit really does come upon us and change us

From fearful, shy, good meaning people into daring disciples

Who are willing to try new things, celebrate old successes,

Share leadership and take a chance on the God

Who took a chance on us in Jesus Christ.

Just look what happened to John the Baptist.

Now one probably wouldn't call him shy or fearful

But he was reluctant to baptize Jesus:

“The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me;

I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.”

How many times have you made that kind of excuse to God?

“I am not very powerful, God”. “I am not worthy.”

The word in Greek “*ikanos*” really means “competent”

John the Baptist who had baptized hundreds was saying that

He was not “competent” to baptize Jesus- and he wasn’t!!

And yet he was bold enough to do what God called him to.

And so God transformed him by the power of God’s Holy Spirit

from being simply a loud preacher in the wilderness

Into becoming a daring disciple of Jesus Christ.

He was there to see the Holy Spirit descend like a dove on Jesus.

He was there to hear the voice of God:

“You are my Beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

All because he was bold enough to get his hands wet,

To take the head of Jesus, and to baptize the one

Who no one was worthy to baptize. Talk about daring!

And that call is not just for John the Baptist.

That call is for each one of us to be bold in our faith.

Even the church at Ephesus, of whom Paul wrote:

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints. And for this reason, I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.” (Eph. 1:15-16)

He challenged this group who many say were his favorites

To be daring in their faith.

They had been baptized in the baptism of John but Paul could tell

That they weren't yet the bold and daring disciples that God desired.

They were operating out of fear and not faith

so Paul laid his hands on them, The Holy Spirit came upon them

and the text says that “They spoke in tongues and prophesied”.

Now don't get me wrong!

I am not talking about us starting to speak in tongues

Although I have known good Presbyterians who do.

I am talking about tapping into ALL the spiritual gifts

That God has given us.

These gifts are articulated in Paul's letter to the Corinthians 12:8-11:

“the utterance of wisdom...utterance of knowledge...faith...gifts of healing...working of miracles...prophecy...discernment of spirit... various kinds of tongues...interpretation of tongues.”

Paul goes on to say: *“All these are activated by one the same Spirit.”*

That's the key. The question is not whether you are gifted or not.

The question is about activating your gifts, using your gifts,

The gifts that God has given to each one of us.

It's like that present that you get on Christmas morning.

It really isn't complete until you put the batteries in,

It won't work until you get online and download

Whatever you need to activate the gift.

Notice that Paul doesn't just say "wisdom" but "utterance of it;

He doesn't just say "knowledge" but the utterance of knowledge

He doesn't just say "miracles" but the working of miracles!

What Paul is daring us to do is to share the gifts God has given us.

So that's what we're up to today: Activating the gifts of the Spirit.

We have a few brave souls who have been called to serve

As Elders and Deacons in Christ's Church here at First Pres.

As I look over the folks that God has called to those ministry positions

I see people who are wise, a vast wealth of knowledge & insight;

I see healers, miracle workers, gift discerners, and prophets

But they are not the only ones whose gifts

are being celebrated and activated today.

As we lay hands on these folks and anoint these folks for service,

We will be in the presence of the Holy Spirit... and the Holy Spirit

Does just go where we direct the Holy Spirit to go.

The Holy Spirit directs us as the HS directed Jesus

Into the wilderness after his baptism;

The Holy Spirit activates the gifts of the Spirit in us,

And when the Holy Spirit activates gifts

We can choose to try not to use those gifts

Or we can open ourselves up to the Spirit

And become the daring disciples that God calls us to be

“Come follow me”, Jesus said to Simon, Andrew, James and John,

“And immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

Into the adventure of their life.

Let's be those daring disciples today,

Who dare to follow Jesus, activated by the Holy Spirit.

Daring to share the love and care of God. Amen

