

## **Getting Organized, a Cast of Millions, a Love Story**

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*Exodus 18:2-8a; 100;*

*Rom. 5: 1-8;*

*Matt. 9: 35-10:8*

My thoughts this morning are about getting organized; a cast of millions; and a love story. And I'm going to say something about each of these phrases.

### Getting Organized:

In the Exodus reading we are told of a meeting between Moses and God. At the meeting God speaks a summary of his saving love and action for the people he is forming and gives Moses a message for the people. Moses treks down the mountain to deliver the message. Upon hearing it the people answer in one voice, "Everything that the Lord has spoken, we will do." I am sure that in the moment they meant it. As it turns out it is very difficult for the people who will one day be Israel to do everything that the Lord has spoken. Our current image: herding cats comes to mind. Moses has a lot of work on his hands leading them and guiding them and forming them and molding them in the way God would have them go. Just a few days before this event Jethro, Moses' father-in-law has come to see him and found him exhausted, stretched and depleted from all he has to do. Jethro has told him, "Moses, you need to get some help; you need to get organized; you need to choose, and invite others, into serving and leading the people. Yes, you are still the chief bearer of the message of God's covenant love, but you can train others to carry the message under your guidance. You can train them to lead people and remind people of the great glory of the covenant love God bears them. There are functions that others among the people can assume, having learned from you, Moses. That's when Moses starts to get organized so that the work of bearing the faith to the people can expand.

Now, fast forward with me to first century Palestine and the mission of Jesus, God's Anointed. As Jesus began his ministry he began to call disciples. [Disciple means one who learns, one who is taught] Early on as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he spied Peter and Andrew – fishermen - and said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Walking on with the two of them, he saw two more fishermen, James and John, and he called them to be disciples. He continued to call people specifically to follow and learn as he walked the countryside and passed through the villages. As he was doing this, he spoke of the God of love who embraces all people; he was healing mentally and physically ill people – believed in that time to be unclean people; he was reaching out to and recognizing the integrity of people believed in that time to be out of favor with God. He was inviting people to recognize there is ample room in the kingdom of Heaven for all Israel, not just some of Israel.

Everywhere he went in those days he drew crowds, and from the crowds came his followers his disciples. Women and men who supported him accompanied him and very importantly, learned from him so that when he authorized them to go out and do the work themselves, they were prepared.

One day he looked around him, and saw ... more crowds, harassed and helpless the text reads. You know, one thing people wondered back then about Jesus was, "Is this the new Moses? And I wonder if Jesus, who knew the scriptures inside and out, backward and forward, recalled that Moses, the patriarch, had to get organized. There was just too much for one person to do in proclaiming the love of God.

So, this morning we have heard the Gospel the story of how Jesus began to spread the responsibility for broadcasting the good news of God's love and propagating the healing power of that love. His disciples have been learning from him up until this point. And now they are sent out, 12 of them, this first wave of evangelists, to fish for people. The net they cast is the net of God's love. Getting organized for holy work is important and often brings in a good catch.

A cast of millions:

From that time down to our day harassed and helpless crowds – a cast of millions have heard and seen and felt the love of God, because disciples have, first, learned the message and next organized to teach it, embody it and enact it: this message of the love of God. I'm not talking about clergy here. I'm saying we all have our respective functions in the body of Christ. My function and yours are different; yet all of us are disciples and responsible to our Lord to get the message out.

Last week I participated in a vestry meeting, a stewardship meeting, an anti-racism meeting and two staff meetings. Last Saturday and yesterday I participated in two ordinations, one each Saturday. In all of these meetings in terms of numbers the clergy were in the minority. In all of these meetings every single person in the room or sanctuary as the case may be, was equally the recipient of the love of God and equally responsible for taking up his and her place and function in the body of Christ. In this gathering for worship today, each of us is equally the recipient of the love of God. Each bears equal responsibility for taking up our function and place in Christ's body.

There is a cast of millions, many of them Christians already, who need to hear there is a place for them in the circle of God's love and meaningful, purposeful work for them. Work that brings joy, confronts pain and offers blessed alternatives to idolatry and evil; work that honors all people.

Every one of us has a function in carrying out that work. There's too much of it for just some of us. In this morning's gospel Jesus looks out on those crowds and says to his disciples, "... ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest." He's telling them to pray. And evidently the answer that comes back is, "You go, don't wait for someone else," because twelve of them go off. What they carry with them is a love story. The love story of all time.

A love story:

Recently there has floated up into my consciousness the memory of a woman I knew a long time ago. I doubt she is living in this life, she would be so old. She and her husband were devoted to one another, and one day she said to me, "We may be funny looking, but our story is a love story." They were no more funny looking than anyone else I could think of, so I don't know why she chose to say it that way, but she did, and her phrasing stuck in my memory.

Friends, you and I live in a love story. Our story is a love story. Whether we're funny looking or not. Whether we are cheaters and unsavories or what passes for pillars society; whether we are unclean, untouchables or the crème de la crème of our day. Whether we are unlettered or Ph.D.s; unsophisticated or worldly wise; whether we are ill or well, dying or just beginning life we are cherished. We're probably pretty funny looking, taken all together, but we are a great love story, thanks to Jesus.

The work of the Church is to organize to carry that news. I believe our Trinity:Next plan, so well prepared by 30-some of our fellow parishioners is Trinity's guide to how to organize ourselves in the next few years for the work God has given us to do. Wherever we go, whatever we do, our work is to carry the news of the love story God is writing with us and for us; carry it in a way that invites whomever we meet to take their place in the story. There's a mansion, a place for everyone. We need to let people know that.

So there they are: my thoughts on getting organized, a cast of millions, and a love story, THE love story.  
Amen.