

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

JUNE 18, 2023



POWER

and the burden to act

by Drew Downs

"What would you do with a billion dollars?"

Every time I encounter this question, I freeze. Because I don't know.

Of course, the idea of it *sounds* good. But when someone asks *what* we'd use all of that money on, it feels like a lot of pressure. I can't just use it to protect myself and my family, for instance, or to blow it all on ridiculous stuff. I'd have to use it to make a difference.

So I say "End world hunger" or "send every kid to college."

It is extremely rare to have such an opportunity to expressly change lives for the better. To free people of their burdens, protect them from poverty, or bless them with opportunity. Be we do have smaller opportunities. And while we aren't obligated to spend every moment changing the world, the truth is we actually could.

ORDINARY TIME

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Summer

According to the calendar, summer officially starts June 21st. Unofficially after Memorial Day. For most of us, its really whenever the outside temperature starts to feel "hot".

Summer is also the time when kids are out of school, making it the one season that is fundamentally different than the others. We have *normal* routines and then summer ones.

In the church, however, we are again in Ordinary Time. This is the time between Trinity Sunday (last week) and Advent (the four Sundays before Christmas). For us, ordinary is about half of the year and covers summer and fall.

So yes, the church's ordinary time is the *least* ordinary time in our year. This is actually a useful paradox. Because it reminds us of the calendar that *should* govern our thoughts. And the fact that graduations and vacations are *not* our ordinary, we can use these as reminders of our ordinary Christian lives.

That, yes, these things are ordinary, after all. And the ordinary teachings of Jesus may always feel extraordinary.

Because we all need to remember the Sabbath. Love our neighbors. And serve others with generous hearts. Even on summer vacation.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 18, 2023

Collect

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment."

PENTECOST

Reflection

The crowds were "harassed and helpless" it says. That they were "like sheep without a shepherd."

I'm not sure I had noticed the word "harassed" before. Helpless? Yes. Sheep without a shepherd? Definitely. Harassed is something else.

We tend to talk passively in the church. We don't always like to say *who* does a thing so much as *what* has been done. Notice how frequently our prayers involve our being acted upon—either by God or by those around us.

Being harassed isn't a passive experience. It doesn't simply occur without an actor doing the acting. We don't wake up one day to a spontaneous act of harassment by no one in particular. We're harassed. By other people. They harass us. Or we them.

I know that some Christians consider themselves "harassed and helpless." By some nebulous pressure from the public and the courts to not discriminate against others. This is nothing like what we see in the gospel.

The harassment and helplessness they feel comes from political occupation and systematic oppression. So these *results* originate with Rome and the Temple authorities who are aligned with Rome.

When Jesus feels sympathy, he sees the people at the victim end of a relationship. It isn't simple confusion he's helping out. Because he isn't feeling sympathy for Roman officials who have their own struggles. Nor is he sympathetic to the religious elites who are persecuting their own.

Sometimes, when we speak only to our own struggle, we miss the wider context. Jesus provides power to people who have none.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG
