

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 27, 2024



DISCIPLE

on staying in school

by Drew Downs

A lot of what we see in the second half of the gospel of Mark is the disciples missing the point. But how we ought to take it for is how much that is how we are. Not that we are screw ups exactly, but that we aren't know-it-alls, heads of the class, or perfect students. But that we are, indeed, students.

There is a thing we so often do with this faith by calling ourselves Christians, we think we can outgrow the need to learn or grow.

That we graduate from Sunday School and are done. And yet, at the same time, that we know nothing, have to keep going to class, and never take initiative. In some parts of the church, we even seem reluctant to use the word disciple to describe ourselves.

Too often, discipleship is treated as something for someone else. And that a life of learning is à la carte, completable, or for others. It is not.

ORDINARY TIME

2024

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!

Decorating for Fall

About a month ago, a friend posted a picture he took outside his local supermarket. It was of a simple fall display and he captioned it with "It's decorative gourd season again." We, like many others, buy various gourds and pumpkins and, by mid-October, put them on the porch. And when we do, we say, "time to feed the squirrels." The squirrels in our neighborhood eat well.

I've come to enjoy the spectacle, taking stock of the smaller gourds as they make a seemingly random migration across the porch, their entrails spread across the walk like a crime scene. It manages to be at once macabre and delightful.

I suspect some take a militant stance, patrolling their yards of such violations of decorum, believing these decorations were somehow not food—or that their use as decorations must be preserved from such desecration. This, to me, seems straight out of *Looney Tunes*, which is to say, not so much ridiculous as an eternal battle one is consistently bound to lose.

I used to think decorating with gourds was a waste anyway. And maybe I could use this as further proof that I was right all along.

Or perhaps we recognize that our own expectations were always faulty, our assumptions naive, and our assessments grounded, not in reality, but in a reality that lacked vital information. Like neighborhood squirrel density. But I enjoy watching them; and watching the cats watch them. And chances are good we will buy more next week.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 25B

October 27, 2024

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 10:46-52

Jesus and his disciples came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

Finally arriving at the outskirts of Jerusalem, Jesus encounters a man who is blind, named Bartimaeus. There are some interesting things to note about this encounter, first of which is that the man is named. People healed by Jesus are almost never named in any of the gospels, but this one is. That should raise our awareness straight away. That this isn't just a normal healing story, really.

I love the subtle little bits of tension in the narrative, like how they approach Jericho and the man shouts—which evokes the famous story of the Hebrew people bringing the city's walls down. How the disciples' first response to a person shouting for Jesus's help is to shut him up—like they tried (and failed) to do with the exorcist and the people bringing children to him. And finally, when Jesus heals him, he tells the man to “go” and the man follows him.

It shouldn't surprise us that a story like this would invite us to think more deeply than the simple notion that Jesus heals people—that this represents the work he comes to do—and that we must think more deeply about it ourselves.

If we recall the challenge for the disciples through the last few chapters of Mark has been with listening to Jesus in the midst of struggle—that Jesus has been quite clear—that they are to keep doing what they've been doing from the beginning. And yet, things are getting in the way. Notably, how the world sees itself, how they should evaluate “success” for Jesus, and how they ought to support the mission. That the disciples keep thinking they know better than Jesus—and they keep failing.

Meanwhile, these other people, like Bartimaeus come along, hear the mission, and go *I'm going where you're going!* We are called to be more than followers—to be disciples. We also need to harness that eagerness, joy, and ability to listen, too.

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