

The image on our Bulletins this day, is from a Stained Glass Window in a church, immediately over the doors as you would leave to go out into the world. There is an Order to design of Sanctuaries, the most important being the image above the Preacher, and that above the doors going out into life because that was the last image you would see before entering the Secular World. That Sanctuary was created in the late 1800s, when the Hot Political issue was not Abortion or Homosexuality, or any of the many issues which divide churches today. The issue was Calvinism versus Arminianism! Calvinism referred to belief in GOD'S PLAN, that GOD does have a plan for Creation, for each of our lives, which ultimately leads to PreDestination. Arminianism emphasized FREE WILL, Manifest Destiny, Reason, and our God-given ability to choose for ourselves what we believe and will do. Up until the Civil War, the Quakers and Unitarians which were Arminianists; and the Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian and Reformed Churches which are Calvinists, often in North America were part of the same congregation, united on other issues of faith and practice except this one. What I love about this symbol, why I chose this for today is that there in the blue shield, a Script Letter A and a Script Letter C, with an ampersand symbol. Such that, YES, we do believe in GOD'S PLAN, yet also, each of us have been given by GOD FREEDON OF WILL to act as we choose; however, as we exercise our Free Will, we reveal a part of GOD'S PLAN which had never before been REVEALED! And that new element of GOD'S PLAN is what is called a new REVELATION.

As those who were in the Adult Bible Camp this week discovered, CHANGE HAPPENS. Everything in the Bible is not foreordained. Jeremiah the Prophet was at one point instructed to go to the Potter's Shed to watch as the Potter worked the clay. Jeremiah came to recognize that the Clay did not form itself into a bowl or plate, the Potter worked the clay and the Potter made of the Clay into what the Potter desired. AND ALSO that at times, the pot would be spoilt, at times the clay is not strong enough, at times the clay is not ready to be in tension with the Potter's hands... SO the Potter sets the clay aside, until a more opportune time. Just because we cannot accomplish what we want right now, does not mean that accomplishment can never occur! Sometimes, we are not ready, sometimes the world is not prepared to support us, and sometimes as hard as it is to admit we are not the right person to accomplish our desire.

King David was loved by God. When he was a young child, even when as a man he sinned with Bathsheba, GOD still loved David. After the years of war with the Philistines, the years of Civil War between King David and King Saul, after fighting to take possession of Jerusalem as the Royal City, The Holy City, the City of David. David suggested to the Prophet Nathan, that as King he had a beautiful Palace; so he would like to build a House for GOD, a Temple for the Ark of the Covenant; instead of the Tabernacle Tent carried through the Wilderness with Moses. After all it had been 300 years since Moses' 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and that hippo hide Tent was looking a little worse for wear. Before this conversation, there had never been mention of a Temple, this was a New REVELATION not part of GOD'S PLAN; however, considering the idea, Nathan told the King go and do what you believe is a holy and devoted act. The problem was that For 30 years of his life, David had no longer been a Shepherd boy. David had killed, and as Leader of a mercenary army, let alone King of Israel, he had killed hundreds of thousands. A leader with blood on his hands could never be the one to build a Holy Temple for God.

Suddenly, there is a plot twist, something new is REVEALED. In First Samuel, the people's desire to have a KING like other Nations, was seen as an insult to GOD. SAUL had been the first King, and had not been a Good King. David was chosen by GOD and GOD'S PLAN for him to serve as King was revealed to Samuel in the anointing. GOD here reveals a new and different part of GOD'S PLAN... David would not build a House for GOD, instead GOD would build a HOUSE of DAVID. From this time forward, there would be a Legacy, a Monarchy, an Inheritance, where there would always be a King in ancient Israel who was descended

from DAVID. Unfortunately, most of David's sons and all those Kings who came after Solomon, were corrupted by the inheritance of power and wealth without faith.

Those who select the passages for us in worship have done something strange this morning. Our Gospel reading is part of a long chapter in Mark, where Jesus Feeds the 5000 and where Jesus walks on Water, but those verses are left out! We will come back to those in future weeks. Instead, what remains is that when the Disciples turned Apostles return from Baptizing, Healing and working miracles, Jesus intended to take them to a quiet place for recreation, re-creation and renewal. Part of me believes that this chapter was carved up this way, to name that often in July and August: Elders, Deacons and Ministers go on VACATIONS!

There is a subtle narrative in the Gospel of Mark, to pay attention to. In Israel, there is only one fresh water lake, sometimes called The Sea of Galilee, sometimes Gennesaret, at times Lake Galilee and the Lake of Tiberias, a maximum depth of only 14 feet, about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. On one side of the lake were Jewish Cities, on the other side were Gentile/Non-Jewish settlements. Whenever Jesus "crosses to the other side" he is going from a Jewish audience to Gentile, or Gentile to Jewish.

So here Jesus had been in the Jewish town of Capernaum when the apostles returned and they got into a boat to get away from the crowd by going to a quiet place. Except the crowds see where they are going and follow them! While that had been JESUS' PLAN; seeing the large crowd following, Jesus had compassion on them and Jesus directs the Disciples to FEED THE 5000.

Traveling in Galilee, I came to recognize something different than I had ever understood. In other Gospels, this also becomes the setting for THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, and the SERMON FROM THE BOAT, because there is a hillside coming down to the water's edge that makes a natural bandshell to amplify sound. THEREFORE, Jesus did not preach from atop the Mountain down to the people, but from the shore UP the mountainside as people sat listening. And all of these could be parts of the same event.

As evening approached, Jesus sent the Disciples ahead, while he went up the mountain to pray. Then Jesus walked on WATER going to the Other side. I love the wording, that he was about to PASSBY but seeing him they thought he was a ghost and cried out in fear. Jesus had compassion on those who were afraid and went to them. When they crossed to the other side, they landed at GENESSARET, which is a Gentile City. Ironically, earlier in Mark, Jesus and the Disciples had visited this Village of the Gerasene's, where there was a man tormented by demons who called himself LEGION. When Jesus healed that man, the people were outraged and told Jesus to leave their community.

The wonderful part about that story, is that it is one of the only occasions, when after Jesus healed a man that he did not tell the man to go to the Priest, or to go on his own way, or even come and follow me. Instead, the man, who had been so possessed that the Village had chained him outside their community, to live in caves, Jesus specifically instructed to return to the people who abandoned him! Now, as Jesus and the Disciples land their boat, people recognized Jesus! Running through the whole region they bring their sick to wherever they heard he was, so that those in need could touch even the edge of his cloak to be healed. These unexpected Revelations of Jesus:

Healing the man called LEGION,

Sending out the Apostles by 2s,

Preaching the SERMON ON THE MOUNT,

FEEDING THE 5000 and

WALKING ON WATER,

let alone returning to GENESSARET,

never would have happened, if Jesus had been unwilling to CHANGE HIS PLAN revealing something NEW.