

Sunday February 13, 2022
First Lesson: Psalm 1
Gospel Lesson: Luke 6: 17-26
Sermon Series: Volunteer Effect
Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are concluding our two-week sermon series, “Volunteer Effect”; a series designed to look at what it means to volunteer for the work of the Church.

- And so for a while I have been naming a particular scripture; to talk about what it means to both lead and volunteer within the Church.
- The scripture came from our earlier lectionary readings out of Luke 4 starting at verse 18:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the
prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

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to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

- And so why I am encouraging us all to retain and continue to reflect upon this scripture, is because it is this scripture in my eyes; that is going to answer the question that my husband raised earlier, while him and I were heading home one day, when I began the leadership series;
- And that is, “What is the difference between **effect** and **affect**?”
- My husband admitted to me that sometimes he gets these two words confused.
- Stephen also shared with me that he would bet that he is not alone in this;
- So I won't put anyone on the spot and ask you to raise your hand if this is sometimes true for you...unless you want to of course;

- However, I will go ahead and make the educated assumption and announce publicly to all of you in the sanctuary and all of you watching online, **that my husband is most likely right in his observation;**
- “There I said it and soak it up buddy, because it is unlikely I will ever formulate those words out of my mouth again...but yes Stephen, I think you are right...” “Oops I said it twice!”
- However, I do believe that most of us does tend to get the words **affect** and **effect** mixed up.
- So with that said, let’s look at the definitions of these two words “affect” and “effect”; to help bring this conversation into full circle shall we;
- So in thinking about and fleshing out the definition between the two, I learned that the basic difference between the two words **affect** and **effect**, is that both of these words are verbs and nouns and their meanings tend to overlap.

- **This can be confusing** to those whose first language is English.
- **It can be baffling** to those whose first language is **one other than** English.
- But for kicks and giggles, I would like to see if we can still go down this rabbit hole for just a little bit; because I believe it can bring life to our scriptures this morning.
- So let's start at the beginning; **a noun** is a word (other than a pronoun) used to identify any of a class of people, places, or things (*common noun*), or to name a particular one of these (*proper noun*).
- **A verb** is a word used to describe an action, state, or occurrence;
- **So as a noun**, an effect is "a change that results when something is done or happens," or "a particular feeling or mood created by something."

- Thereby making the word **affect**, when used as a verb, means "to act on or change someone or something."
- So in the case of our sermon series, "Volunteer Effect," this term or statement is to be read as a charge;
- As your spiritual leader, **I am asking you to volunteer;**
- As your spiritually invested leader, **I am asking you to volunteer** your prayers, presence, gifts service and witness; to help by way of the Holy Spirit; to transform our work within the church and beyond;
- So that our communities and world might be transformed into thy kin-dom come, thy will be done on Earth as is in heaven;
- So the verb **in this case is the word volunteer...to be read as "to volunteer" ... which becomes the affect.**

- For **when you and I volunteer...**we are **affecting** things;
- When **you and I volunteer**; we are acting on or changing someone or something;
- **When you and I volunteer**, we are acting on a need;
- **When you and I volunteer**, we are changing someone's life and situation.
- Thereby making the noun in this sermon series to be the word **Effect**;
- And this is because **it is the act of volunteering which is the verb** in this sermon series; that we are hoping will cause a certain **effect**;
- So hopefully I will not make this conversation even more complex by bringing in the scripture I named earlier;
- **But it is the act of the volunteer** who is invited to invest their prayers, presence, gifts, service

and witness by way of the Holy Spirit; to put into practice Luke 4 as I paraphrase some; to have the Spirit of the Lord upon said volunteer; to recognize the gift of the anointing spirit upon their life; that will aid and lead said volunteer; to proclaim good news to the poor.

- **It is the act of the volunteer** who will be equipped by the Church by way of the Holy Spirit; to help proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,
- **It is the act of the volunteer,** who when they become fully vested in utilizing their time, talents, gifts, service and witness for such work that as a result; they are able to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”
 - Causing the **effect** to be seen in both our first lesson and gospel this morning;

- And although the scriptures were beautifully read this morning, I may repeat them some, so that we might hear them in a newly inspired way;
- But Psalm 1 says;

Happy are those

*who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;*

2

*but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.*

3

*They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.*

In all that they do, they prosper.

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- So it is in this psalm that serves as a preface to all the psalms that follow, hence it appears first.
- One theologian by the last name of Charles Spurgeon, named this psalm emphasizes that life has but two ways: the way of righteousness which results in self-realization, and the way of sin which leads to personal frustration.
 - Along similar lines our gospel of Luke 6 this morning says; and I will jump down to verse 20b where it says;

*“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

21

*“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.*

*“Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.*

22 *“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you[a] on account of the Son of Man.*

- So the **effect** we are seeing in both passages of scripture that I am naming to be a **noun**; is a result of the action of the verb (to volunteer); that produces the **effect** of **happy** in the first lesson and **blessed** in our gospel lesson——that is therefore produced;
- For if we look at our first lesson this morning; I see this Psalm as addressing the question of “why should we consider the act of volunteering?”
- And the simple answer, if you got lost in my verb and noun logic is that, when you and I choose to volunteer our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness for the transformation of the world...**it makes us happy.**

- **For example**, when I think over when my dad died of pancreatic cancer, I was surprised that when he died on Sunday in the wee hours of the morning; the one place that I immediately sought out to seek comfort in my grief, was at none other than the Church.
- I was the Associate Pastor of Saint Mark UMC, serving with the late Rev. Junius Dotson; who gave me Sunday off; not to mention any other time I needed off for bereavement;
- However, I insisted on being at the church right away because that is where I found my comfort **and over time; that is where I became happy again; over time is where my spirit became at peace again.**
- **You see Church, I could not bear** being alone with my intrusive thoughts on how grueling my dad's death was towards the end;

- **I could not risk being swallowed up** in the wallows of my grief simply because— I still had daughters to mother **and they needed me;**
- So the Holy Spirit became like a force that surrounded me and urged me, to lead by way of my prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness in the midst of my grief..... until my tears one day turned into laughter again;
- Church, I served with every ounce of energy that I could muster up; sometimes it was only a mustard seed worth, yet I found it to be just enough; because what began to reign true within me over time, was what the psalmist declared in Psalm 30:5;

For his anger is but for a moment;

his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night,

but joy comes with the morning.

- I tell you what Church, it was in those moments that I became happy again!
- It was in those moments that my spirit felt enriched again, by the many blessings that my act of service yielded within me; that let me know my unique purpose in life was bigger than my grief!
- Furthermore this depth of happiness never vacated me....it never left me...in fact it carried me and informed over the years to where I am now.
- **Looking more closely at our gospel of Luke 6 again; I believe that this scripture speaks directly to what the act of volunteering as a verb produces; you and I are seeing the effect it brings to the kin-dom....**
- The effect becomes that **the kin-dom becomes blessed.**
- When you and I choose to volunteer our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness; the poor becomes blessed; the hungry becomes blessed;

those who are mourning becomes blessed; the oppressed becomes blessed;

- Thich Naht Hahn who was a was a Vietnamese **Thiền Buddhist** monk, **peace activist**, prolific author, poet, teacher, said it best; ***“Because you are alive, everything is possible.”***
- Now let me preface that I absolutely love everything that came out of this man’s mouth.
- Furthermore, the world is greater from my perspective, because of his ethos on how we ought to live and relate to one another.
- Another quote worth mentioning is where he said; ***“Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.”***
- (Thich Nhat Hanh, **Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life**)
- So the way I read into both of these statements is that in both instances, there is this awareness,

that you and I have a major impact on the world and community that surrounds us.

- For the old adage reigns true; that every action causes a reaction;
- Furthermore, every effort that we contribute to those who are poor in spirit, hungry, held in captivity and so on is not in vain;
- **For I am convinced** that how love prevails, is when we all come together in our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witnesses;
- **I am convinced** that when we come together as one body and one spirit;
- The kin-dom becomes restored;
- For it is not in these beatitudes that I have named from Jesus that *actually* poverty, sorrow and hunger itself are declared to be blessed; but the people who were once seen as outcasts in these sections of society becomes blessed;

- The people, who have been mistreated by society, becomes affirmed and repositioned in the kingdom; as the child of God— they always were;
- For I tell you what, if you have ever been treated like a second class citizen, trust me— it is one of the most debilitating places one can ever be in; to be seen through; to be looked over; to be essentially dismissed as if your thoughts don't matter; **as if your life doesn't matter;**
- So you see it is affirming and a blessing in itself to know that for God, the people— especially in these particular sections of society... **matter!**
- So perhaps the true blessing contained in these beatitude statements, is that Jesus as God, is speaking up to the world with a specific charge; for these unseen and forgotten sections of the world **to matter;**
- You see Church, finally someone with some REAL authority, is instilling a universal charge to the

world; to recognize these areas of suffering that is being named one by one; so that the people may become fully accountable to one another; to ensure that the kin-dom does not suffer in this way ever again.

- Where each and every one of us are able to see that because we are indeed alive, than by God's grace, everything is possible;
- **Which means conquering** hunger is possible;
- **Which means conquering** poverty is possible;
- **Which means conquering** and restoring the beatitudes within the heart of the people is possible;
- **Because our feet has kissed the Earth;**
- Our feet guided by the Holy Spirit, have kissed the faces of those who have been overlooked by the Lord's Prayer;
- Thereby making our paths as a society, as a community and as a world straight; for now the

kin-dom is more in line with the original Creator's vision captured In the Beginning;

- At the Genesis of it all;
- Where *now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*
- **3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.**
- And God saw that it was good!
- This is the essence and potential of what an active God, working within the beloved community can produce!
- This is how in my eyes, humanity becomes fruitful and multiplies, because now in this type of moral imagination I have theologically painted for us—now, we are working together in **one body and one Spirit;**

- Because we have learned how to allow the fruits of the Spirit— to take full root into our hearts and lives; ***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...***
- And so how we begin to then put this volunteer and leadership work into practice, begins with the C.L.A.S.S discipleship system that myself and Dr. Spilker and Angie Smith and others are coming together to help launch; a teaching series beginning on Sunday February 27 @2:30;
- C.L.A.S.S stands for Christian Life and Service Seminars, which is a 4 step process designed to lead people from the moment they sit into the church pews into active leadership and service and what it means to volunteer for the work of the Church.

- C.L.A.S.S. 101- focuses on membership and learning about the core values and history of the Church; CLASS 201 focuses on how we might get closer to God and begin to live more like Jesus and grow in our faith; CLASS 301 focuses on discovering our spiritual gifts and CLASS 401; teaches us how to live out our spiritual gifts and share them with the world and community that surrounds us; at the same time teaching others how to do the same.
- **For it is in this 4-step cyclical discipleship process**, that I believe that the Church will begin to identify and name our work together — in both an intentional and deliberate process; that will equip us all to become the hands and feet of Christ; throughout our communities and world.

- **It is in this 4- step cyclical discipleship process**, that I am encouraging both new prospective members and current members to attend when you can; for these classes will be offered in various times of our liturgical year;
- **Finally it is in this discipleship process**, that continues to confirm what I say week to week; which hopefully by now you all are beginning to see is not something being said in vain, but on the contrary, it is constantly being shaped and formed and breathed into life by the Holy Spirit that dwells among us;
- This idea that the best is indeed yet to come; within the life of this church community and beyond; both individually and collectively.
- Let the Entire Body of Christ say Amen and Hallelujah!