

I'll be honest, I felt a little bit like my nephews when they're tired and cranky and just *in a mood* when I sat down to write this week. I stared at my notes and the only thing that kept circling my head was Sebastian's voice in my head when he looks at my sister and huffs and goes, "No! I don't want to!" So, I mean if anything else, at least I could laugh at myself for feeling like a three year old on the brink of a tantrum, but that doesn't exactly help get the sermon writing juices going...except sometimes...it does.

We've all had those moments right? Those moments where there are things we just *know* that we *have to do*, and we simply don't want to. It doesn't matter whether you are three, thirty three, or ninety three, there are just times when we want to sit in the corner, fold our arms across our chests, and say, "No!" Sometimes it's something as simple as folding the laundry or loading the dishwasher, sometimes it's sitting down to pay bills or check the status of your student loans, sometimes it's honestly just like, making dinner, but sometimes, sometimes it's bigger than that. Sometimes we look out at the world around us, the amount of need that we see, the cries for help that we hear calling out to us and echoing in our hearts, and the sheer enormity of it all just makes us want to throw up our hands and say, "No. This is exhausting. It's too much. I can't with the world today. There's nothing I can do anyway to make much of a difference so nope, no. I don't wanna." Plain and simple. We look at the world and just give a hard, solid, nope, I am not going there today. I'm going to stare at my phone and scroll through Facebook, because today I am three years old and I don't want to.

I kind of imagine that somewhere in the midst of this gospel lesson this morning, there is at least one, if not more disciples with the same thoughts going through their head. I mean if you were them and Jesus laid out before you everything that he lays out before them, wouldn't there be a tiny part of your brain wanting to pack up your things, head for your corner, and get your pout on? Because it's not as though Jesus just gives them one task, he gives them multiple tasks, all of which feel monumental and come with a ton of stress and baggage.

First and foremost, Jesus realizes that the power of the gospel message is only going to reach so far if he's the only one out there preaching it. He's only one man, he can only be in one town at once, but he's got twelve men sitting in front of him who know what he stands for, what the message is, and he has the ability to send them out to help spread the message further and faster. So task number one: just go out there and preach. Plain and simple. Tell people, and not just any people, tell the people of Israel that the kingdom of God is near. So Jesus is giving them a little bit of a home field advantage to start off. He's not sending them out to Samaria or to the Gentiles where tension will be high to start with. He's just saying go talk to people just like you, tell them about the kingdom, about God's love, about what you've witnessed. That's step one.

But then, Jesus ups the game a bit. Ok, so it's not just going to be preaching. He also grants them the ability to work wonders for the people, to bring miracles. So task number two, go out and heal the sick, exorcise demons, cleanse the lepers, and ya know, raise the dead. And our instinct is to be like, well yeah, Jesus does that, so they should be ok with that. But Jesus is asking them to step into the shoes of doing the things that he and they both know just tick the authorities off to no end. Task number two is basically going out and flouting the Law left, right, and center. Be in the same room with people the Law says to avoid, touch the people the Law says are untouchable, do things the Law says just shouldn't be done. It's one thing to have witnessed Jesus doing those things, but to ask them to do it without him right there beside them? Those tasks are seeming a bit more daunting than when this conversation initially started.

And Jesus just doesn't stop. Ok, so you're going to go out, you're going to preach and heal and perform miracles, but here's task three...you're also going to do that without the benefit of like the bare necessities. Don't take any money or extra clothing, leave behind the spare sandals and don't go grocery shopping before you head out. Task three is basically saying go do this super hard thing of preaching and living the gospel *and* do it while depending on the kindness of strangers. Put yourself in the position of not

knowing where your next meal is going to come from or where you're going to sleep, and just go out and wander around a bit until you find a friendly place that will welcome you.

You want to be like ok, Jesus, that's enough tasks, but there is one more caveat here. Task four, be prepared for this to be hard and get kind of nasty and do it without really worrying about it. Admit that some towns are going to hate what you have to say and what you do, and be able to just walk away from it, no matter what they say to you. Recognize that you are going out into a mission field that might be dangerous and unwelcoming and harsh and might even tear your own families apart. But trust that even in the midst of that, you're going to be ok. Doesn't that just make you want to say, ok, Jesus, sign me up for that?! He warns them of arguments and floggings and trials before councils and betrayals within families, but is like you got this, because I got you. You can handle this, just try not to worry.

Y'all, I'm sorry but if Jesus laid this out before me, I think I would strongly be like, nope, I don't wanna. Not today, Jesus, the world is already hard enough without sending us out with what feels like a setup for utter disaster. Aren't there easier tasks? Something simpler? Or ya know can't I at least pack a couple sandwiches so I know I won't starve? But here's the thing, this isn't hypothetical really. Jesus *does* lay this out before not only me, but before all of us. The disciples' tasks are our tasks, and boy oh boy, even if we want to put on our three year old pants and say no, I'm not really sure that's an option, as much as we might like it to be.

The world that the disciples were sent out into while looking vastly different from ours, in some ways is deeply similar. It was a world fraught with division, oppression, and strife, with so many wondering where they could turn for truth, clarity, hope, any kind of answer. It was a world thirsty for justice, a world longing for equality, a world longing for those in power to see the world through the eyes of those they lead. It was a world desperate for the message that the kingdom of God which would turn things upside down and set things aright was breaking into the pain and the questions and the uncertainty. In so many ways, their world is our world,

and just let them, we are sent out, commissioned by Christ to take up these tasks that have been laid before us and strive to be disciples in this world that needs the gospel, that needs love so ardently.

There can be no doubt that the task in front of us is hard. I get it. There will be people who are so deeply uninterested in hearing anything about love, about grace, about hope. Who will tell us we are foolish, who will tell us that we're on our own, who will tell us that we're just like all of those who came before us, claiming we're here in the name of Christ, but simply using that name as a cover for political agendas and hatred. Who will tell us they want nothing to do with us. Who will adamantly show us the door and say we have no place there.

Yet...I have to wonder if we can't muster up the same courage that the disciples did? Because even though the tasks laid before them were hard, they went out and did it. They didn't pout, they didn't say no, they buckled their sandals and said bring it on, because deep down, they knew that the message of the gospel, the message of the kingdom of God was worth it. And I have to believe that we think, that we feel the same thing. Each of us, in our own ways, know how vital the kingdom of God is, how much the message that God loves us has changed our lives, so why are we so interested in hoarding that message for ourselves, rather than sharing it? So often we lament with loud voices that no one wants anything to do with the church anymore, and yet, when faced with the opportunity to be the kingdom in the world, we shake our heads and say no, no I don't wanna, that's too hard, that's too much, those tasks are too heavy...someone else can take that up. Thank you, Jesus, but I'm fine over here in my corner.

But if not us, then who? If the disciples didn't follow Jesus' commission because it was too hard then who was going to do it? I think far too often we just assume that the gospel will take care of itself, that other people will take care of living it out and putting it into practice. We think we can tuck our faith quietly away in our hearts and somehow the gospel will still do its gospel thing without any help. And I mean, yes, some way or another the gospel will spread its wings and seep the world in hope, but that

doesn't mean we're exempt from helping it out, from doing our part, from being the gospel people that we claim to be.

I know it's hard. Sometimes it's so hard it feels insurmountable and like the weight of the world is even too heavy for God's love to make a difference, but how will we know if we simply just decide not to try? Every little bit helps. Every hand extended in kindness, every person loved for who they are in all their unique, God-given wonder, every quiet word of hope passed on, every prayer offered, it all does it's gospel part and we are the people to do it. And maybe today you felt how I did on Thursday, like you just don't wanna, but maybe today you also feel something tugging deep within you that says you, the disciple *you* are is being called to something in this world, something only you can give. So maybe we listen to that tugging and we finally say, ok, Jesus, no more no's, we wanna do this. **AMEN!!!**