

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish  
Newark, DE  
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – July 9, 2017/Year A  
Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Psalm 45:11-18; Romans 7:15-25; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30  
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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*May my words reveal the greater glory of God!*

AMEN

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*“O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor ... Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”*

I am spending much of my time these days with people who desire to be loving as God calls us to live love, yet wrestle mightily with this uncertain world and uncertain “neighbors” day in and day out. Their exhaustion and fear often are exacerbated by bearing these burdens **all by themselves**. This way of living is diametrically opposed to the Gospel today and to the way of living that is called **disciple to apostle = the Jesus Movement!**

**Lone Rangering** has never left this **DIY = do it yourself** culture that surrounds and subsumes many of us in daily living. It is alive and rampant all around, and it is not doing us justice as a people of God's love and Jesus teaching us how to live this love. So often I still find myself embroiled in a never-ending spiral of conversation with ministry leaders – **“We need new people for the ministry ... Who have you invited to share in this ministry ... SILENCE ... a few months later, “We need new people for the ministry ...”**

When we understand that **the Jesus Movement** can be so much more to our faith living than a cute bumper sticker, we can take off the “white hat” of our **Lone Rangering** when we understand the **two parts as one** – **“Disciples” learn of Jesus love ... “Apostles” live Jesus’ love, TOGETHER, into the world!**

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*“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest”*

The invitation is to everyone, not just some chosen few who have been tired or had a burden to bear. We all come bearing something – a sadness ... a worry ... an ache ... a brokenness. Sometimes the cracks of our life are obvious, while sometimes we are pretty good at hiding them. All of us are cracked in some way or other, and it is wise to remember the haunting words of Leonard Cohen's **Anthem**, **“There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets through.**

Today's Gospel has Jesus addressing those on the "sidelines" waiting to share their **terminally unique opinion** of the newest follower of Jesus. The response of "*this generation*" is of those passive critics, bystanders, and dilettantes who readily point out the shortcomings of those whom God has called to serve, certainly not the "right people" that any true Messiah would call as disciples.

Perhaps we hear our voice in these childish chants. We who claim to be the keepers of tradition, the repository of God's true revelation, the vanguards of more insight and cutting edge theological knowledge, often act out in life like spoiled children. We complain about the church because it is not like it used to be, or is not doing what I THINK it should be doing. We quibble over pronouns, wordsmith God to death, and accuse THOSE OTHER PEOPLE of heresy left and right. No matter what behavior is acted out, this parabolic mirror faces us to this day.

Jesus' call to the living **the Jesus Movement** bears no resemblance to the bystanders today's Gospel. Those who sit on the sidelines, claiming to KNOW GOD and the way things out to be, miss the presence of God in Jesus who comes **not as we want, but as we need**.

Most sad is the **deafening silence** of the faithful ones, drowned out beneath the marketplace babble. God's Word and wisdom cannot be heard by those who prefer to hear their own voice and wisdom alone. Only an ominous concluding word about the wisdom that will continue to speak to those with ears to hear long after "*this generation*" has been silenced.

For Jesus' call to living **the Jesus Movement**, the image of a "yoke" seems harsh, but good to remember Jesus used stories to speak to people **where they were living** in his time. When two cattle are yoked together, they SHARE the work to be done with lightness and ease. It is only when one pulls away in their own direction that it becomes painful and burdensome. We are thus brought from a solitary effort to a common effort.

Working in tandem, making a joint effort, this image is what connects us to God. Not only is God unafraid of our crackedness, God invites us to undertake with Jesus the great work of changing the world and to liberate together by bearing the burdens of others, especially the self-imposed burdens.

This task is not one that we can achieve by ourselves. We are called to divest ourselves of our own worries and to accept Christ's concerns in their place. To take upon ourselves a burden that, paradoxically, lightens our load.

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*“O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor ... Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”*

On this Sunday following our Independence Day remembrance and celebration, many seek the freedom we take often so lightly, to receive the rest of our nations democracy and the reassurance of being accepted in the love that God calls us to live in the Jesus Movement. These words echo our covenant promise in Holy Baptism – **“Will you seek and serve Christ in ALL persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?”** We have a story in our midst that invites us to live in this Jesus Movement now.

I was introduced to **Ali Eshaghi and his son Khash** as we entered the Lenten Season this year. The introduction came by way of the Reverend Nathan Speck-Ewer, chaplain at St. Stephen’s Episcopal School in Bradenton, Florida. Khash had been attending St. Stephen’s on scholarship the past three years, soon to graduate and come to Delaware prior to entering Neumann University in the fall. His father Ali had secured a visitor visa and moved to Newark. Khash had been studying the Christian faith with the chaplain, and Ali desired to understand what his son was experiencing in this Episcopal faith. On the Friday after Ash Wednesday, I first met Ali Eshaghi. On the First Sunday in Lent, he came to worship with us.

Ali and his son Khash live in Iran. Ali’s wife, Nasrin, stays behind unable to obtain a visiting visa with the changes of our immigration laws this past year. Ali is a university graduate in Materials Engineering, working in a foundry in Iran. While his English language was limited, he has grown in learning this language each Sunday through our words of liturgy, by being welcomed and aided by the Gilley’s, Giorgio Melloni, Jerry Schultz, and many others after worship, welcomed to our table of grace. Khash joined his father after graduation in early May, and they have been present with us ever since, every Sunday.

I share their story because next Sunday, both Ali and Khash will receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism in this place of God’s love, in witness by all of you as **disciples AND apostles of the Jesus Movement**. I pray you call your friends of St. Thomas’s, and all who will join in witness that by this action, **THIS** is what God’s love looks like ... **THIS** is God’s kingdom building work in action ... **THIS** is the Jesus Movement incarnated!

***AMEN***