

Legacy of faith

Let us pray. God be with me as I speak and be with each person here that they might hear what you wish for them to hear, amen.

In today's gospel Mark says, "He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were astounded. They said, where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands? We know the answers to these questions - it is God who gave Jesus the wisdom. God gave him the power.

God is with us also. We sometimes do not listen to him, or hear what He has to say, but God is there with us anyway. God called us to be one of his children. He stays with us whether we remember or acknowledge that He is there or not.

Sometimes, many times perhaps, it is not easy to listen to what God has in store for you. I know I truly believe this. I am not comfortable speaking in front of people, yet here I am. I listened each time that Debbie Bang asked for someone to give the 3rd legacy of faith message and thought that surely someone else will step forward and agree to do this. Each time I read in the news letter that a person, hopefully a female member would agree to give this chat, I felt urged to pray about it and finally after much prayer agreed to give this message. Am I out of my comfort zone? Absolutely. Do

I believe that God called me to try this? Absolutely. It is in trying new things that we grow in our faith and in our commitment to the Lord. If you come away today with only one thought, I hope and pray that this is it - Try one new thing in our congregation - any one thing - I truly believe you will grow in your relationship to God.

There are many ways we can accomplish this goal. Help prepare a meal for Project Echo, Help with VBS or SNORK this summer. Come to the 2nd annual National Night Out, donate your blood, Teach Sunday school, Run for council, Come to a meeting in an area of ministry that you have thought about and see what contribution you can make. Join a bible study or start one - the possibilities are only limited by your thinking. Step outside of your comfort zone. See what the Lord has in mind for you.

There is a comforting thought in all of this. Remember when stepping out of your comfort zone, you do not travel alone. God is with you. Sometimes he sends you out in pairs, just like in the second part of the gospel reading for today. "He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two." Pair up with another member who you are comfortable with and see what area of ministry the two of you feel comfortable trying on. As an example this past winter Pat Hofmann and myself lead a bible study class. Pat asked if I would team up with her to facilitate the class. This was Pat's first time leading a bible study and she wanted someone she was comfortable with being there to help with the class if needed and to lead the class on Sunday's she knew she would not be

here. It was a wonderful arrangement and we both (plus the members in the class) all grew in our faith journey. Pat stepped out of her comfort zone - will you?

An important item to remember when contemplating stepping out of your comfort zone is what time commitment are you making. You need to have a balance in your life in order for life to go smoothly. Perhaps you are already over extended in giving your time. If possible cut back in another area and try something new at church. If now isn't the right time for you, summer is here, vacations are forthcoming, think about trying something new or different in the fall or over the winter when life is perhaps less busy. It's like Barbara Harris said in the newsletter - "It's a balancing act, you have to be charged up before you can pour out". Summer is often our chance to charge up, relax, take a break from the daily running that we all do. While recharging I ask that you think about one new thing to try. Just one. That one thing you try might just be the perfect fit. It also might be the wrong thing for you. Just remember you will never know what you are missing if you don't try something new.

Remember, That God gave us each time, talents and treasures. If time is truly not something you have any to spare, then perhaps a talent or your treasure is something you can think of sharing. Barbara Harris has a wonderful spiritual gifts survey that you can take if you are not sure where your talents might lie. If time and talents are not there to share, then perhaps you could

share more of your financial treasures with the church. We are continually behind in our giving as a church, perhaps you could see to give a little extra each week. The more you give the more you benefit personally. Tithing is a goal set by this church in it's giving of social ministry dollars back to others. Tithing is also mentioned in the bible as a way of life. You reap what you sow. The more you give, the more you will receive.

The legacy of Faith that I hope to leave not only with my family but also with my church family is that helping/sharing with others is truly a joy. Sometimes we do not realize how the smallest of things, a smile for instance, can really change a person's day, a person's attitude, a person's life. Helping and caring for others is what I feel called to do by God. You receive so much personal satisfaction when helping others that to not do so is truly depriving yourself of that joy.

I grew up Lutheran and have always attended a Lutheran church. My mother's parents eventually could not attend church on a regular basis so Ray, a man from their church, would come each week and play the tape of the previous Sunday's service. Whenever I was there and he came, you stopped what you were doing and listened to the service. It was both strange yet familiar. Strange because listening to the service in my grandparents living room was not a normal place to "attend" a church service, but familiar because I knew the words and many of the hymns.

In High School I worked at a bakery on the

weekends and so I became an Easter/Christmas member. I didn't realize how much I missed church until I started college. Each and every day when walking to classes at Shepherd College I would walk right past a Lutheran Church. My 2nd or 3rd Sunday at college I asked my roommate to attend church with me. I didn't go every Sunday, but did on most of them.

Skipping forward - I truly realized I had great faith in God when we were on vacation in Florida. Michael was 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ and had hit his head on a table earlier in the day. That night I awoke and realized something wasn't right with Michael. I literally saw the light go out of this eye he could not find me, although I was right in front of him. We called 911 and in the ambulance I prayed to God. I asked that he be with Michael and give me the strength I needed to get through whatever he intended for Michael. After that prayer, I can not explain the feeling of absolute peace that came over me. I still wasn't sure that Michael would be alright, but somehow I knew that God was in charge and would take care of things.

Now I did not tell you this story so that you think that bad things need to happen to us for us to know that God is there. But I do believe that it is during more difficult times that we should and can call on our faith to bring us through the difficult times. If you don't know difficult times, can you truly know what happiness is? I don't think so. We grow during happy times and during sad times. We grow when we reach out to others. We grow when we share our faith with others. We need to

grow in order to become the followers that God wants us to be. God has given us everything and everyone in our lives. Is it so much to ask that we do One new thing this year for Him? My prayer is that each one of you here today will say yes, I can do One new thing! Let it be so. Amen.