



“Outpouring Love”

Fifth Sunday in Lent
8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Sunday, March 13, 2016
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

Grace and peace be to you from God Our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

You may know this already, but Jesus is always looking for a few good men or women. Jesus is always looking out for good disciples and sometimes to do that he needs to use an HR firm to help screen the candidates, and I've had this letter for quite some time of a recent group from the Jordan Management Consultants on their search for disciples for Jesus. Here's what it says.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant. The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation, and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities for leadership. The two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind,

and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely,
Jordan Management Consultants

It turned out not to be a good hire. Because you know you can't just look at a resume and get a complete sense of how a person is going to do in a certain position. Even just meeting them there might be some deep down stuff that is going to manifest itself when they finally join the team. So you never really know until you look deeper. Some of the more important things to look for in any candidate that you want to hire or that you think would be a good disciple is what kind of person are they really deep down? What kind of values do they hold? What kind of character are they? Do they exhibit loyalty? Do they have, especially to be a disciple of Jesus; do they have a servant's heart? Those are some of the values that you want to look for in a candidate to be a disciple of Jesus.

In the gospel reading we hear a story that really shows us two different types of leadership. Jesus is in Bethany, now just two chapters ago he raised Lazarus from the dead, now he's going back to Bethany for what sounds like a dinner hosted in his honor, probably in appreciation of Mary and Martha for the raising of their brother Lazarus from the dead. During the dinner Jesus is lounging around, well everybody lounged around during dinner time, that's how they had dinner. Pillows on the ground, usually leaning up arm on your head kind of thing, the plates put right in front of you and you kind of reach up and eat, and at some point during that meal Mary gets up, sits at Jesus feet, takes out some perfumed ointment and begins to rub Jesus' feet, whipping them with her hair. Now you have to understand for Mary to do this, it's pretty shameless. Women in those days, they wore their hair up or covered. So she has her hair down, you would only do that for your husband. So that was you know, pretty wild for her to do that, and also to take out something that was so expensive. It wasn't uncommon for people to take things that were costly like that, especially if they can be contained in small containers and use it almost like a savings account. You know you can always sell it later. But John tells us this was 300 denarii, that's almost a full year's salary for an average working person. So what would that be today, 28, 30, 32, \$34,000? That's a lot of expensive perfume. It probably represented her life savings.

But do you know what, that's exactly what Jesus needed. He needed a friend to be able to show how much she cared and how much she loved him, because he's in Bethany which is right outside of Jerusalem. And after this experience he is now going to begin his trek to Jerusalem where it will now begin in St. John's Gospel the long Passion narrative which will ultimately end up at the cross. And so Mary, love overflowing, love pouring out shows how much she cares about her savior by anointing him. After all, the word for Messiah is the "anointed one." So she is anointing him with this expensive ointment, this expensive perfume to show how much she loves him and it will

be a sign of what Jesus will shortly do for the disciples and for the world when he pours himself out for the sake of the world with his crucifixion on the cross.

When Jesus is killed, they are going to have to bury him quickly, and so in a way Mary is getting a start on the burial preparation because one of the uses of this expensive ointment would be to cover the body with it. This was an act of love from Mary for her savior. So different from Judas, isn't it?

See Judas, he understood how the world works. He understood finances and so he had a really sharp sense of financial values, but he didn't really understand human values.

What Mary does, she takes everything that she is and everything that she has and offers it to Jesus in worship. She outpours herself in love, and that was quite a risk. It was a risk with her relationship that she had with Martha, because I don't know if you notice, but Martha is stuck in the kitchen getting everything ready again while Mary is doing this. It was a risk for all of the males that might have been at this dinner wondering what is she doing taking her hair down and sitting at the feet of Jesus. And it was a risk, as we saw, with the sneer and the condensing that Judas shares with her because she had spent all of this money and was now using it to care for Jesus.

But brothers and sisters, what kind of disciple do you want to be? It is important for us to consider this because as we come closer and closer to the celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection, he's looking for disciples. Jesus is hiring and he's looking for people who are dedicated to loving God and loving fellow human beings.

So maybe today you do something unexpected. Maybe you do something out of love for God or love for neighbor. Go ahead, let your hair down. Choose to love Jesus with reckless abandon. Choose to love your neighbor. Choose to love God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your might. Serve him and prepare yourself to celebrate his death and resurrection.

And may all of us, all of us together be a church of sweet smells of loving service to Jesus and the world.

Amen

In the name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Copyright © 2016, Jack M. Horner. All rights reserved.



www.trinitycamphill.org