

On the surface, **today's Gospel**, is a

- Pretty **cut and dried** story
- Of Jesus asking **some folks** to **follow him**

But it's the **background details** that make it **so telling**.

After all, these are **THE disciples**

- We **are talking about**

Jesus has just been **anointed by God**

- To **change the world's foundation**
- And what **does he do?**

He **doesn't comb Israel** to **find** the **best of the best**

Instead, he **goes out** and **recruits**

- Some **exceedingly ordinary** people
- Some **"B-teamers,"**
- To **be his right-hand**.

These guys have **no training**,

- No **special qualifications** or **gifts**
- That would **merit being chosen**
- To **jumpstart** the **Kingdom of God**.

And **guess what?**

- As **Jesus' mission unfolds,**
- These **same disciples** show themselves
- To be **even more incompetent** than **first appeared.**

But despite their **constantly disappointing him,**

- Jesus not only **sticks with them**
- He **even insists** on doing his work **along with them.**

Is this **any way** to build **the Kingdom of God?**

Well...apparently so.

- For, **here we are two thousand years** later.

Part of a church built, in **large part,** upon **the efforts**

- Of these **apparently hapless disciples.**

What can **we learn** from this story?

- What **does it tell us** about
- The **character** of **these men,** called by Jesus
- Who **so changed** the world?

A **clergy acquaintance** tells a **good story.**

- That **sheds light** on this.

This **man** is an **acclaimed author** and **preacher**

- Who's **spoken to the minds**

- And **tugged at the heartstrings**
- Of **a lot of people** in his day.

For many years he also **served as the chaplain** of major university

- And **this story** comes from **that time** in his life

A fraternity had gotten into **some trouble**

- And as part of **their probation**
- They were **required** to have **the chaplain come talk.**
- The subject: "**Character**"

On the **night of his visit**

- I **imagine** him standing on the **front porch**
- Of **the frat house,**
- **Getting a whiff** of that
- That **wonderful scent** of **stale beer** and **cigarette smoke**

When **the door opened** though, he was **unprepared**

- To be **greeted** by a **young boy**
- Of no more than **nine or ten.**

Worse yet, the kid seemed **at home,** saying

- "**Follow me,**"
- As he **led him back** to the guys,

- **Waiting** to take their **lumps**.

For **thirty minutes** my friend **hammered on**

- About **character**

During **which time**

- The **little kid crawled up in the lap**
- Of one of **the frat brothers** and **fell asleep**.

As the **meeting broke up**,

- **One of the guys** said to the **young boy**
- "Go on and **get ready for bed**."
- I'll come **read you a story** in a minute.

That **same guy**

- Then **followed my friend** out of the house
- "**Thanks for coming**." he said.

Being a **responsible adult**, my friend **had to ask**

- "**What is that kid doing here?**"

"Oh, that's **Darrell**."

- "The **fraternity is part of Big Brother/Big Sisters-**
- We met him **that way**."

"His Mom's **messed up on crack**"

- And when **she's not taking care of him,**
He **stays with us** until **things get better.**

- We **take him to school,**
- Buy him **clothes and stuff."**

Hearing this, the **famous clergyman**

- Stood there **just gobsmacked**
- "That's **amazing.**" he said.
- "I **take back** all the stuff
- About y'all being **bad** and **irresponsible."**

"It's cool," the **frat guy** said.

- "But what's **really amazing** is that **God**
- Would **pick a guy like me**
- To do **something good** for **someone else.**
- **Go figure."**

A **truth dawns** from **a story like this one:**

When you speak **from the mind**

- You might **change someone's mind**

When you speak from **your heart**

- You **might change a heart.**

The **famous minister** knew all about

- Reaching **hearts and minds**

But if **you speak through your actions**

- Through **what you do with your life**
- You might **just change a life.**

Character, the subject of the chaplain's talk

Is a word that's **tossed around** a lot.

- You either **have it** or **don't have it.**

In **my mind, most people**

- Have **good intentions,**
- And some **internal sense of decency and justice**

Most Christians know **in their hearts too,**

- That from **Jesus' perspective,**
- Life's **most persistent** and **urgent question** is,
- **"What are you doing for others?"**

But ***if* most people**

- Have **good intentions** and
- Are ***thinking* correctly**

Why then would we **agree**

- That **most people cannot be** described

- As **being** of **high character**?

It's **because...**

- **Being of high character**
- Is **not about** what we **believe** or **think** or **intend**
- But **what we DO...**

In the **end,**

- **Character** is **differentiated from intent**
- By **one thing...**
- And **that is ...ACTION.**

Think on this:

- By the time the **60's** rolled around
- **Most people knew,** in their **hearts,**
- That **it was wrong** that **blacks couldn't vote**
- Or **drink** from some **water fountains**

But **despite feeling** the **way they felt**

- Many **decent** and **well meaning** people
- **Did little** or **nothing**
- To bring about **an abiding sense** of **equality**
- **Applicable** to **all of God's children**

About this, **MLK, Jr.,** would **famously** say:

History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.

In the **larger context**,

- King's **eloquent words**
- Are not **just an indictment** aimed
- At **Southern Whites**
- But speak **to a truth** about **everyone of us**

And **that is** that

- The **best intentions**
- Don't **amount to anything**
- If we **do not have** the **courage to act**

In his **limited time**

- **Didn't so** much try to **impress** upon **his followers**,
- A set of **correct thoughts** or **beliefs**
- But **a way of living**.

Do you see **why this**

- **Calling of the disciples**
- And their **response** to **that call**
- Is **so extraordinary?**

They **didn't** just **agree**

- In their **hearts and minds**
- That **yes**, Jesus is **the messiah**

They had **the courage** to **act**

- **To act** in a manner that **we are all capable**
- To **answer a call**
- And **to turn** and **follow a leader**

Like the guy **in the fraternity** and the **disciples**,

- God's **not really interested** in **our perceived limitations**;

Neither is God **shocked** by

- The various **messes** we've **made in our lives**.

I hate to break it to you....

- **God is calling you... me...us.**

This **calling of the disciples**

- **This is all of our story.**

And you know what **God says** to our **excuses**

- "I'm not **cut out** for **that kind of work.**"
- "I'm not **right enough with Jesus** to do **his work.**"

God says "**Hogwash!**"

So this day **may you**, in some way

- Turn **and** answer **Jesus' call**

- On ***your life.***

And in **turning to follow**

- May you **unexpectedly** find **yourself equipped**
- With **courage**

Courage, **not just to believe** in Jesus

- But to **live like Jesus lived-**
- To ***live* mercy**
- To ***live* justice**

And may **you find in yourself**

- That **character made manifest**
- **That character made of Love.**

Amen.