

### Ministry Begins with Prayer by Ordinary People Whose Willingness and Compassion Are Enabled by Grace and Authority Conferred by God

"Every sermon I've heard on this passage" in which Jesus calls twelve disciples "runs something like this," the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday. "The need is so great, and so few are involved. Won't you do something? Won't you respond to God's call to minister and serve?"

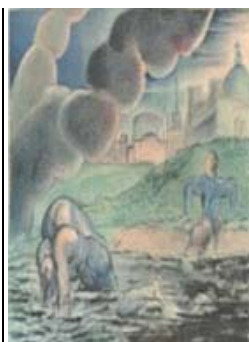
"Now the end result of such sermons," he continued, "can be two-fold, neither of which is healthy. At best, they can make persons who are already faithfully serving Christ and the Church feel guilty that they aren't doing enough or are not committed enough. At worst, they can motivate persons to become pastors or missionaries when that may not be God's perfect plan for them."

"But what does Jesus do in this text? . . . He says, 'The harvest is so great but the workers are few; so pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields.'"

"These words were a 'news flash' for me this week. They reminded me that the starting place for all ministry and mission is *prayer*. . . . And here's what I have decided to say to you: Brothers and sisters, the needs around us and within are so great. There is so much to be done, and we are small in number. In the face of these daunting challenges and needs I'm going to ask you to do something very impractical, something downright un-American. I'm going to ask you today to *pray that God would do something about it*. . . . The starting place for all ministry, including ours, is prayer.

"Now the prayer of course is for 'workers' . . . —not heroes, not all-stars, not super saints, not experts, but workers. Servants. Not necessarily innovators or visionaries who re-invent the wheel, but simply those who are willing to do what needs done. You see, fulfilling our mission in the world is not about becoming something we are not. *It's about being willing to do what needs done.*" Ministry is done by "ordinary people" who are "willing to do what needs to be done."

The "one essential quality" for ministry is "compassion: the ability to see and observe and to be moved." Ministry "proceeds along the assumption that from first to last we are dependent upon God, that we aren't on God's team because of our stellar qualifications but because Christ has conferred authority on us and given us grace to continue what he did. No amount of pulling ourselves up by the (p. 2→)



"Wherefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone, but he could not get out because of the burden that was on his back. But a man whose name was Help said, 'Give me thy hand.' So he drew him out, and set him upon sound ground."—*The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan (1628-1688). In Psalm 69 this Sunday, we'll hear, "Save me from the mire; do not let me sink; . . . do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me." The prophet Jeremiah was put into a pit, too (Jer. 38:6), but in the reading this Sunday he will be in stocks. (Is that why they refer to "stocks and bonds"?) All of the readings will speak to us of deliverance, however, as also expressed in the Collect for Sunday: "O Lord, . . . You never fail to help and govern those whom You have set upon the sure foundation of your loving-kindness . . ." Image credit: [www.divinity.duke.edu/programs/baptisthouse](http://www.divinity.duke.edu/programs/baptisthouse)

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Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

Sundays, 11:45 a.m.: Moderated post-service discussion

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

**For the poor:** Meat; fresh produce; canned fruits and vegetables; dairy products; peanut butter; cooking oil; pancake mix; syrup; spices; diapers; baby wipes; bathroom tissue; for personal care: soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream; new underwear (adults and children); cleaning supplies; bleach.

**Readings, 6/22:** Jer. 20:1-13; Ps. 69:1-18; Rom. 5:15-19; Mt. 10:24-33.  
**6/29:** Is. 2:10-17; Ps. 89:1-4, 15-18; Rom. 6:1-11; Mt. 10: 34-42.

**Prayer Emphases:** Poland; Primitive Methodist Churches; University Carillon United Methodist Church, Oviedo, FL, and the Rev. Joe McClaren; prison chaplains; parishioners on Northview Circle.

(Sermon, cont'd.) bootstraps of our own resolve can enable us to do this . . . It is a gift of grace, grace which we have freely received, and which we are to give freely. Where can we learn that? The Eucharist is a good starting place, for it is there that we freely receive, and it is also there where we become free to give in the same way that we have received. So come to the Table today with gratitude. Be happy that God doesn't ask you to be something you are not. God only asks you for a compassionate spirit, and for the willingness to do what needs to be done."

**This Fall: Study based on G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* (1908).**