

When I was 4 years old, Halloween was just around the corner, and my daycare had a costume project. The project was to create a Halloween costume that was also what you wanted to be when you grew up. My friend Daniel arrived that day as a tree, because, he said, “trees are outside and they are always growing.” Well, Daniel is now a top-level kayaking instructor in North Carolina where he gets to be outside every day and he helps people grow as they learn new skills on and off the water. What was my costume that day? What did I, at age 4, want to be when I grew up? A green light. Not a red light, which tells people to stop. Not a yellow light, which tells people to slow down. But a green light which says, Go! (True story.) And now, it is my job to support and encourage people in their faith; to not say Stop, or Slow Down, when it comes to their relationship with God but to say, “You got this! You can do it! Go!”

And that’s exactly what Jesus said to our dear friend Blind Bartimaeus in our Gospel today. “Go; your faith has made you well.” Which is PERFECT because today is part six in our sermon and discussion series on The Way of Love: Practices for Jesus-Centered Life and the practice we’re looking at today is Go.

The Way of Love is a practical tool, which people all over The Episcopal Church have been using in all sorts of cool ways. It’s a tool for helping us understand what it means to be a Christian and to lead a Jesus-Centered Life. By Turning, Learning, Praying, Worshipping, Blessing, Going, and Resting we follow Jesus on His Way of Love. The tagline for today’s step, Go, is “Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus.”

“Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus.” Hmmm. . . . Those three things sound a lot like what we prayed for earlier in the Collect of the Day, that God would “increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity.” Faith because it takes faith to get outside of ourselves and cross boundaries. Hope because when we listen deeply to someone we share strength and offer hope. And Charity because when we live like Jesus we can’t help but have charity, or love, for all humankind.

First Faith. It takes faith to Go out into the world and connect with people by crossing boundaries. By “cross boundaries” I don’t mean intruding on people’s personal space or violating someone’s safety. I mean getting over our own boundaries of fear. It is so much easier to live inside our own little bubbles of fear. Our political, religious, racial, socio-economic, sexual, or intellectual bubbles, just to name a few. In those bubbles, everything is simpler--we’re right and they’re wrong; we’re better and they’re worse; we’re this and they’re that. And of course, none of “those people” will ever change. Living like this is easy because it makes the world simple, known, and it doesn’t require any faith. But it’s not how Jesus lived and it’s not how we as his followers, should live.

Jesus crossed boundaries--like in today’s gospel when he didn’t ignore Bartimaeus, as some in the crowd did. Instead, he responded to the call of this blind beggar, asked him what *he* wanted Jesus to do for him, and then told him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Note that Jesus doesn’t do the healing himself in this case, but pronounces the fact that Bartimaeus’ faith has made him well. That’s what so cool here. Jesus crosses a boundary *and*

so does Bartimaeus. He has heard about this Jesus person and nothing is going to keep Blind Bart from receiving mercy from the Son of David. Bartimaeus' faith that Jesus would have mercy on him if he only asked is what healed him. And Bartimaeus' response? It was to follow Jesus on the way once his faith made him well.

Go. Cross Boundaries with Faith like Bartimaeus and Jesus. Then, listen deeply with Hope like Job. These are the final verses of Job and they conclude this long tale of Job's hope and trust in God in the face of unthinkable pain and suffering. What we have today is Job's response to God after God responds to Job's questioning of how God could let all these bad things happen to a righteous and faithful person like Job. God responds in the chapters before this by laying out all the great and awesome things that God has done and has created, which basically puts Job in his place... in a good way. Thus, Job says, "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know. Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." By listening deeply to God, Job's perspective shifts and he sees that, yes he has suffered without cause, but there is so much more to this world that God is doing and, after hearing, he sees that God's action in God's own wisdom may not make sense to us now, but ultimately "He's got the whole world in His hands."

Now a little perspective of our own will help. Job is one of three Old Testament books of Wisdom Literature--the other two being Proverbs and

Ecclesiastes. These three books are trying to make sense of how the world works. Proverbs puts forth the idea that right action leads to blessing and wrong action leads to curse. Ecclesiastes, on the other hand, puts forth the idea that life is more complicated than that, that the sun shines on the good and the bad, that good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people, and in the end everything except the love of God is vanity, a chasing after the wind. And then there's the book of Job, which teases out those two ideas almost in theatrical style, complete with a hero, villain, foils, plot twists, and ultimately the ending we have today, which is that Job may not understand what has happened to him, or what goes on in the world, but by listening deeply to God he keeps his hope alive, and he is blessed.

Again, there's a lot going on in Job but I think the key today is that Job was able to keep going by listening deeply to God and finding hope even in the midst of unknowing. And that is what we can provide to people in our daily lives when we listen deeply to them, respecting their dignity, and being present to them in their struggles. We don't have to have all the answers, or say the right thing, or sometimes even do all that much. But when we listen deeply to someone, we help them find hope, and that helps them keep going.

Faith, Hope, and Charity. Cross Boundaries, Listen Deeply, Live like Jesus. Living like Jesus means living with charity. These days, "Charity" has come to mean a non-profit organization which does good in the world. It's something you give money to and maybe volunteer for once in a while. That's fine but "Charity" comes from the Latin "Caritas" which means Love. Caritas is a specific kind of love, however. It's the love that God has for all of

humanity and this is the kind of love we see at work when Jesus offered himself on the Cross. Jesus' Caritas, his Charity on the Cross was, as Hebrews says, "once for all." "Once for all *time*" and "Once for all *people*." No more sacrifices. No more exclusions. Jesus both fulfills and ends the need for ritual sacrifice, and yet in his life and teaching, he calls his followers to still make some sacrifices. Not of grains or animals, but of our time, talent, and treasure; of our fear and distrust; and ultimately of our own lives in the sense that through being baptized into his death and resurrection, we are born into a new and eternal life, and it is no longer we that live but Christ who lives in us. That is a Jesus-Centered Life. That is the Way of Love, the way of Charity, that is for all time and for all people.

And that is why we must GO and live this Jesus-Centered Life. God's Charity, God's Hope, and God's Faith are for *all*! And by sharing God's Faith, Hope, and Charity with others in our daily lives, we share the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

The question is, how will you do that? Or what Halloween costume/grown up job would you wear to Go and Bless others? Are you a tree? A green light? Perhaps you're the Sun, or chicken noodle soup, or a megaphone, or an ear. What specific gifts do you have that you can use to share the love of God. I'm not just talking about programs and ministries we do here at St. Paul's. Those are great and there are tons of ways to get active. I'm also talking about those lesser known ministries many of you do, things that are spreading faith, hope, and charity, even if you may not recognize or name it as such. Things like looking after an older relative, advocating for

prison reform, visiting a friend who just lost their job, or simply smiling at the cashier at the store. Those things are ministry as much as being on the altar guild or working in the food pantry. Those things are practices in the Way of Love. But most importantly, those things happen OUT THERE, which means we have to GO out there, bringing with us what we get from IN HERE.

So GO, with faith, hope, and charity, to cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus.