

The Next Steps on the Way

Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

St. Andrew's Anglican Church Kelowna

I speak with you this morning in the presence of God and the beloved people of God. Amen.

Ten years ago, I sat with the St. Andrew's Search Committee in the hall and Kenneth Philips asked this question: "How will you be our priest and not our CEO?" It was with that question that I heard God's call to this parish and I was so relieved and so thrilled when you offered me the job! I am so deeply grateful for the many ways you have allowed me to be your priest over these last 10 years: the tremendous tragedies and deep joys we have carried together, the liturgy we have faithfully offered, the bible studies and book studies, our Messy Church that has now grown into a youth group (I will never forget hauling sand and rocks in here to transform the church into a desert for Messy Church Lent!). Thank you for your steadfast faith through so many things, including a pandemic, and for the trust, creativity, good humour and risk that enabled us to listen to the Holy Spirit and follow Her into a new mission, a new parish structure and the birth of The Gift Farm Garden. Thank you for listening with me when the Spirit called us to the heart of what it means to be church: to be signs and witnesses of the Kingdom of God. Thank you for your clarity and generosity as we walked (and are still walking!) our way into these parish priorities: celebrate our Anglican tradition, cultivate each one of us disciples and leaders, and connect in relationship as we serve our community. It has been beautiful to see our Ministry Circles begin to work together discipleship cultivation and justice seeking; to see partnerships grow between our regional churches where had been none for at least 15 years; to watch our young people be baptized and confirmed; to see the amazing restoration of our church grounds and cemetery; to watch yesterday as 3 Anglican churches, 3 Rotary groups and the LDS youth group at the Farm for the year end clean up - this on top of hosting Canyon Falls Middle School and the Vancouver School of Theology this year and we have new connections awaiting us next year. We grew 3250 lbs of organic food for our community this year but more importantly we are growing people in the critical spirituality of seeing and treating the land as gift, a gift grounded in God's gift of God's self in Christ. Thank you for growing with me in learning to see the Farm as a living metaphor of the Farm-Garden teaching us to live into Christ's reconciliation all creation. Know that being your priest, and not your CEO, has been deeply formative for me and an extraordinary privilege.

I did laugh out loud when I read the epistle reading for today: "Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office"... I have been saying to a number of people this week: I'm not dead, I'm just moving! The word to us in this reading is perfect for today: the one true priest is only and ever will only ever be Christ Jesus and Christ will remain with you through the interim and into whatever next chapter awaits you as a parish. Thank you Bishop John for accepting the position of 1/2 time priest-in-charge during the interim and to Cathy, Julie, Lila-Mae & Monty, our Team-Leads and Council for your

faithful leadership during this time; to Elaine Soroka who will look after our Farm-Garden communication; Pam as our honorary assistant; Lynn our LLM; Soren who will look after our social media; Liz Norman in our office (you have been a godsend!) and David Sproule who will keep us singing. When the new Incumbent arrives, I know you will support them with the marvellous support you have afforded me. There are no shoes to fill, just the next steps on the way.

On the way. Those are the three words that end our gospel reading this morning. The story of Blind Bartimaeus is meant to be read next to last week's gospel reading when James and John, the Sons of Thunder as they are called, ask Jesus for seats of power in his Kingdom unable to see beyond their own assumptions to who Jesus actually is and what that would really mean. Here Bartimaeus, son of honour as his name means, comes to Jesus not with the expectation of power but with the desire for mercy. He is gifted not just with his physical sight but is revealed as the one who can actually see, see Jesus as God incarnate. In this vision he follows Jesus on the way. Early Christians were called People of the Way, the way of humility and mercy, death and resurrection; the Kingdom way.

At my Induction service 10 years ago you entrusted me with the symbols of what would become our ministry together: Brenda Thomson presented the chalice and paten, Cameron and Kenneth the keys, Rose Lloyd the prayer book, Delma Evans a Bible, Lisette Anonby the baptismal water and Randall the Diocesan Canons. And so at the end of the service today I will return those symbols to you so you can entrust them to the next Incumbent. And as I go, I have symbols to entrust to you which will be given out during our luncheon following the service. They are little Trinity symbols - the same as our logo- with an amaranth seed sealed in resin in the middle. In our second year at the Farm, the birds gifted us amaranth seeds which grew happily and we learned to winnow and grind it into flour which we shared with our region for communion bread. It is a symbol to remind you to keep the Kingdom of God at the heart of everything. It is a symbol to remind you that all is gift in Christ- from seed to Cupboard, from font to altar, from now into whatever comes next.

And speaking of whatever comes next, I am relieved to say that Nick and I finally found a place to live late on Friday night. I can also tell you that I will be going to a church about 15 minutes from where Nick works in Vancouver starting mid December. They are now announcing I'm coming next Sunday November 3rd and Bishop Stephens has asked that I wait to share the name of the parish with you until next week so I will leave an announcement for John to share on All Saints Day. When you are next in Vancouver please come and say hello!

So remember: there are no shoes to fill, only the next steps on the Way.
Remember: All is gift, so keep choosing God's Kingdom!

Amen.

The Rev'd Anne Privett