

**Sermon
Proper 5
Book of Genesis 12:1-9
Psalm 33:1-12
Letter of Paul to the Romans 4:13-18
Matthew 9:9-13,18-26**

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Matthew 9:9-13,18-26**

Since the beginning of time, we sought to become independent. Be your own person! Get yourself a good education so that you will not have to depend on anyone for anything! Become your own boss! How often have you heard someone say these words, “I started my own business, because I got tired of taking orders from someone else!”

In our quest to become completely independent, we even went so far as to sign a legal document, called the “Declaration of Independence,” declaring our independence and making that day, a national holiday. A day more commonly known as July 4th, the birthday of our nation.

So when we hear some one say, “Follow me!” unless it is an absolute, without a shadow of a doubt, guaranteed thing, we tend to think twice before we venture out, even thinking about giving up our independence.

By our baptism, we are called to, “Follow Jesus” every day. By our baptism, we are called to serve and seek Christ in all persons that we meet. By our baptism, we are called to strive for justice and peace, and to respect the dignity of every human being. Finally, by our baptism, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Is this an easy assignment? No, it is not! Do we fall short? Yes, we do. Why? Because we are human beings, and as human beings, we are taught to become independent!

Each time that I enter the parish hall, I am immediately drawn to those two shades that are hanging from the wall. One shade has the twelve traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous written on it, and the other shade has the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous written on it.

I would like to focus on the first three steps.

Step one: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

In our quest for complete independence, we sometimes forget that we do not have to go it alone. We forget that there is a power, greater than ourselves, out there. We forget that power, which is greater than us, is constantly saying to us, “Follow me! I will always be with you! Come to me and I will give you rest!”

In our quest for complete independence, how often do we hear those words? How often do we take the time to even listen for those words?

In today's gospel reading, we hear of a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She went from doctor to doctor hoping to find a cure.

After having spent all of her money, and having lost all hope of ever being cured from her disease, she decided to take a huge leap of faith, and try Jesus. If she could just touch the fringe of Jesus' garment, she knew in her heart that she would be made whole again.

Here was a woman, whose life was very much unmanageable. She was seen not only as an outcast, but also as an unclean person, by society, during that time period.

She tried to go it alone, but eventually, she had to admit defeat, and realized that she was powerless over her disease.

She also came to realize that there was no human power that could ever cure her of her disease, so she sought a power greater than herself to cure her and make her whole again.

When she touched Jesus' garment, she was made well.

Jesus turned to the woman and said, "Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well."

It was not the touching of his garment, but it was her faith that made her well.

The dictionary definition of the word faith is: a firm belief in something for which there is no proof.

Did this woman have any proof at all that she would be cured? No she did not. What she did have was a firm belief that Jesus would, and could do something for her.

"Go in peace", Jesus tells her. She no longer sees herself as an outcast or as an unclean woman, but now as a child of God.

The last thing that Jesus said to the apostles as he was being lifted up into heaven was, "I will always be with you."

A leader of the synagogue, we heard in today's gospel reading came in and knelt before Jesus saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her and she will live."

Jesus got up, and without asking any questions, began to follow this leader, to his house "I will always be with you.

We are told in today's gospel that Jesus told the crowd that had gathered, that the girl was not dead, but sleeping. Jesus then took this little child by the hand, and this little child got up.

In our quest for complete independence, how many times do we forget to bring Jesus along with us? How often do we forget to invite Jesus in? How often do we forget to let Jesus take us by the hand, and walk with us? How often do we forget that we too, are all little children of God.

Here is a suggestion. When you enter a room, let Jesus enter first. You don't have to make a big deal about it, but wait a few seconds before entering any room. By waiting a few seconds, you will be giving Jesus the opportunity of entering first.

Here is another suggestion. When you leave here today and return home, don't leave Jesus standing outside your door, but invite him in. Hold the door for him, and say, "After you Jesus!"

Remember Jesus said, "I will always be with you."

By our baptism, we are all called to "Follow Jesus.", but in our quest for complete independence, we tend to forget that we do not have to go it alone.

Remember, we are powerless! Remember, there is a power greater than ourselves! Remember, that power, which is greater than us, is patiently waiting!

"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." Rev. 3:20

"The only person who can open that door is you! You are not dead, but sleeping! Let me take your hand!"