

## Stewardship I – What Would Make Jesus Say “Wow”?

October 21, 2018

We are pondering the question, “What would make Jesus say “Wow!” about St. Andrew? My own thoughts on this question lead me back to the gospel story as we know it.

On many occasions Jesus was wowed by people’s faith, especially when it was exhibited by people beyond his own tradition, like in the case of the Syrophenician woman who insisted he heal her child, or in the case of the Roman centurion who recognized Jesus’ authority in divine matters, believing that Jesus simply needed to give the order and his servant would be healed. In both these cases, the gospels did not hide Jesus’ joy when he found faith beyond his own kind and his own tradition.

So I believe Jesus would be pleased in the way that St. Andrew is recognized throughout our community as a church with a wide embrace and inclusive culture. Jesus would be pleased with our relationship with our Muslim brothers and sisters in the Islamic community. And how we recognize the faith found among all traditions, and all persons. How we offer prayers from our own tradition such as, *O God... Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect.*

I think Jesus would be pleased with the persistent and faithful prayers that are offered from this parish throughout the week, for decades. He encouraged people to pray, not as an exhibition, but in quiet and humble constancy, and to believe in the powerful force they create in whatever generation and time they are offered. I think Jesus would be encouraged by the number of times persons enter the chapel to offer prayers, how faithful care is given by Corinne who minds the prayers, and all who offer the prayers from their own homes and heart.

Jesus was wowed by acts of humble generosity. In the crowded city of Jerusalem, at Passover, his eyes caught an old woman approaching the temple coffers. She dropped in two coins – Jesus told his disciples, her gift was the greatest because she gave from her scarcity, and not from her surplus. Gleaned from his own observation, he told the story of the good Samaritan, who interrupted his travels to help a man wounded on the road. He reveled in the display of affection he received from a woman while he was a guest at a Pharisees’ house, while she poured costly perfume over his feet.. All these acts were gifts of sacrifice and devotion.

I believe Jesus would commend the ways people serve and give around here. The way that banquets are presented, finances are managed, facilities are cherished, meals are served, and moneys are given out of love for this community. I believe Jesus would commend those who bring flowers, deliver meals, offer help to those who are sick and recovering. I believe that whenever Jesus would catch any of us acting on behalf of another at a cost to ourselves, he is blessed.

Jesus loved to go out of his way to include those who were generally ostracized or marginalized by the mainstream culture. He loved the fact that Zaccheus, the tax collector went out on a limb to see him pass by. Jesus loved paying attention to the blind, the leprous, the gentile, the Samaritans, the children, the discarded women... all of whom were considered "lesser" or even "untouchable." So I think Jesus would be encouraged by the breakfast we offer every Saturday for the past eight years. He would be happy that members of the discriminated gay community have found a home and belonging among us, that the sol house has become a sanctuary for women, men, and young people who cannot yet or ever be a member of our church, but are welcomed in circles and gatherings offered through the facilities and resources of this parish. I think Jesus is pleased that this parish is recognized as a place that indiscriminately welcomes all persons... especially those who others would rather we not associate.

And finally, Jesus was pleased by persons who remained in community through all kinds of trials and changes. In the gospels Jesus asks his disciples, "Why are you still here?", when so many others had gone away. I think Jesus would be wowed by the depth of commitment and the duration of community that is shared here. How Jack and Hazel make the effort every Sunday to be with us, how long people have served in choir, in the kitchen, at the 11:11 service, leading Pilgrims in Christ, making meals, decorating tables, sharing the Eucharist. It is true we have seen many come and go. But it is also true, that many have been and remain here because they are called to be in community here.

One of the commitments of Benedictine spirituality is stability: the commitment to accept a call to be in and remain in a place. To be deeply rooted and shaped by the people and landscape of a place. I believe Jesus would say wow to the depth of character and stability of characters in this parish. It's the people of this parish who have changed my life, they have taught me to believe, to pray, to accept, to endure, to persevere, to love and be loved, to remain, to celebrate and to suffer..and I believe Jesus was all about, and gave hearty approval of all those things.

Amen