Guilford Park Presbyterian Church

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“Holy, Make me Holy”

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Luke: 5:1-11 Is it true? Only a future preacher remembers his confirmation day and his first communion?

I had sat in that pew, 4th from the front on the left at Olivert United Presbyterian Church, so many Sundays during childhood. Six times a year I would watch the passing of the cups and bread. I began thinking I knew about communion. By 12 or so, I started to work out what would happen that first communion day.

It all came about on a Sunday in the summer of 1958. The anticipated event reached its penultimate moment when an Elder ,whom I had known all my life, delivered first the bread and soon after, the grape juice, to my pew.

I knew we always held the bread and the cup so all communed at once. I thought I was ready for that wait as the pastor prayed, and prayed and prayed even more. The wait was a bit like a trip to an amusement park where one buys a rollercoaster ticket, then gets line . There would be no further interventions, no detours, the ride, or the sacrament, was almost in reach.

Then I would understand being a disciple, being called. As Stevie Wonder put it: “Here I am, signed, sealed, and nearly delivered.”

I anticipated a sort of religious Fourth of July. stars bright above, angels singing, heavens opening—along with understandings I couldn’t possibly know beforehand—all about to break forth in that sanctuary. I wasn’t sure how adults around me managed such excitement, but since it was only 6 times a year, I figured I would, like others, have time to recover from the revelation which would descend.

The pastor held up his bread, I held mine. He ate, I ate. The pastor held up his cup, I held mine. He sipped, I did too. I closed my eyes to wait. Soon, I would be made holy; closer to my Lord; prayer wouldn’t be unanswered, faith’s mysteries would be explained. Let it all unfold.

I opened my eyes, looked around, everyone seemed solemn, perhaps unimpressed. I wondered how they hid their expectations for the changes surely revealed. at communion. I waited more.

After some moments, the pastor prayed again. The organ introduced the final hymn, always the same:“In Christ there is no East or West.” Soon after, the benediction. It was over. Complete.

Nothing had happened. No angels, fireworks, glimpses of heaven. I wouldn’t say I was disappointed. Rather I couldn’t fathom where I had gone wrong. How could I slip up? Was my plan too good to be true?

I was yearning to inhabit a holy place..a place next to God, protected, safe, free from falling.and failing Please make my yours, Lord, make me holy!

I wanted to be called, to be a part, not an appendage, not a child, I wanted to be a disciple like all of us want to be. *Was I not called?*

Luke gives us a disciple story where a call does go out. Jesus calls Simon, James and John. They’re fishermen, been out all night with no luck. They come back to shore to mend nets, get ready for tomorrow. They find Jesus nearby, the one some are calling Messiah. He’s telling stories as the listening crowds grow. They press in, Jesus keeps stepping back ,seeking room, and finally comes to the edge, the shoreline, and up against Simon’s boat perched there. He climbs in to finish the story. He’s weary and needs some quiet. He turns to Simon Peter: “Set out to sea.” Peter protests. Jesus insists. You know what happens then.

Peter is dumbfounded, and instantly feels unworthy of this tremendous gift of fish that Jesus provides. Peter say, essentially,, “I’m unworthy, preacher; I’m not holy enough. I can’t be *made* holy enough to be so close to you.

Jesus’ reply?: “Don’t worry about your humanity, your imperfections. You’ll do fine with me. Come along, let’s get on with life.“

Wanting to be disciples, wanting to be holy, but knowing we can’t make it happen ourselves, I invite you to the meal each of us first had some time ago. By the way, how many is it for you?

I probably speak for all of you, that a paper bag sacrament is about half of what we would like to be celebrating, like to be remembering today. So be it.

Remember “eucharist” the Greek word Luke uses for this meal means, thanksgiving, grateful. Holy evidently isn’t tied to the meal. So we won’t be magically remade.

Yet, we have all been, like Peter, James or John, called here. Some of us with a grasp on why we’re here, , most of us a little hazy on what being called means particularly or us. Nonetheless we’re grateful to have this meal, grateful to be followers of Christ, as unholy, as ordinary, as we may be. So be it.

Amen and amen.