

Homily – June 14, 2026

My home church in Tallahassee, Florida, had a tradition of a Mardi Gras festival, and they also had a talent, in quotation marks, which really meant no talent, show. And the choir every year did the song, Here I Am, Lord. But it was their own version of it. I won't sing it to you because I like you too much, but Here I am, Lord. Send Kelly. Here I am, Lord. Send Carrie. Don't send me, Lord. I'm not going to hear you when you call to me. Send the other guy. And of course, we would all giggle at that because it was cute, but it was kind of a nervous giggle. because really, if we're being honest with each other, we want to send the other guy, right? Come on, Kelly. You want to send the other guy. It would be a lot easier to just stay in our recliner and let the other guy do the work. Do you remember when you were a kid in school and the teacher was looking to ask people the answer and you would, like, look down, hoping they wouldn't know you were here like you had an invisible cloak like Harry Potter?

That's kind of what's going on with Jesus and eight and nine Jesus was bringing the kingdom of God near to the people there and now he tells his disciples guess what it's no longer a spectator sport. You are the ones that are going to do my work with your hands. I wonder what happens when we realize that there is a point where those of us that have been faithfully following Jesus are asked to be participant in God's mission. It's scary. Let's be honest. Maybe some of the questions you asked, “do I have the qualifications? What if I say something wrong? I might offend somebody”. What if, you know, there's so many roadblocks, we could spend hours talking about the roadblocks.

But if you heard in the beginning of the gospel, a thing that motivated Jesus was not programs, was not some marketing plan, but he saw the people suffering. He saw their pain. He saw them being marginalized. And he had compassion. That's what motivated Jesus, was compassion. Compassion to bring freedom to the people from what separated them from community.

I wonder, how does compassion motivate us to respond to our neighbor's needs? You know, sometimes I think we in church get into this loop that we have to have this big program. We have to have a great title for it, and we have to market it. And what happens if we just see our neighbor? and if they need help, we offer it. What happens if we just stay available every day wherever God has put us and we are available to the needs of those around us? That's bringing God's compassion.

The disciples are not sent as Jesus' assistants. They are sent to address the needs of the people because the needs were so great. That actually shapes the mission itself. Notice what Jesus tells his disciples to do. Proclaim the nearness of God. Cure the sick. Cleanse those with skin disease. Cast out demons. Raise the dead. You know, that's a mission both about proclamation of who God is and what God will do for us, but it's also a mission of restoration and reconciliation. Disciples weren't just delivering information about God. They were actually participating in God's healing work.

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I wonder, here, in Kihei, Maui, Hawaii, what do we see around us? What is causing you and us as a community to feel compassion? What are those things that are playing on the strings of our hearts that are calling us to mission and ministry, if only in this community who has been pushed to the margins? who has felt abandoned because of the world in which we live nowadays and who in this community has been written off as someone else's responsibility those are questions that we're going to be asking ourselves these next six months at least of who is on the margin, who is God calling us to reach out to and participate in mission and ministry together. We'll discover that. We don't know the answer today, but that will be part of our work to discover that together in community.

So your job is to keep your eyes open. Pay attention. See where God is calling you to be involved. One day, I was coming out of the hospital in Hayes, Kansas, up in the northwest corner of Kansas, and I had just had a breathing test, and I was just exhausted. And all I wanted to do was get in my car and go home. But I saw this woman walking around, and I can tell you I mumbled to God, "you've got to be kidding me". And I asked her, what's wrong? And she said, "well, my husband is in the Heart Hospital, which was adjacent to this, the other hospital. And I had never driven from a remote place in Kansas, but I had to get here. And I drove and I can't find my car". And I said, "okay, do you have your keys that have a clicker"? And she said, yes. So, we drove around the parking lot, several parking lots, several times, clicking, clicking, clicking. Finally, we found it.

And she said to me, "why did you do this? Are you the security guard at the hospital"? And I said, "no, I was just there taking a test. I said, I do this because Jesus loves me and loves you". I didn't plan it. I really didn't even want to do it, if I'm being honest with you. But I knew it was what I was called to do that day. That wasn't a big program. It didn't have a marketing slogan. It didn't even have a budget. It was just available to the work of God. And that's what I invite all of us to do, is be available in our workplace, in our homes, at the grocery store. Be available to the work of God, because I can guarantee you that not only will someone else's life be changed, your life will be changed too.

You're going to learn I'm a storyteller, so I've got one more story to tell you. When I was going to seminary, I was rather old. I was 43. And I was also the executive director of the Hyde Park Interfaith Alliance. I went to seminary in Chicago. One of my jobs was every Saturday to go and be at a food pantry. Food pantry was in a changing neighborhood, not necessarily the best of neighborhoods. And we had a security guard. And we were in a really big church that always set it up nicely for us. And so, I felt okay. And there was one Saturday I was so proud of myself. we had scored tuna for our distribution. Normally we were giving them beans and peanut butter for protein, but we had finally gotten canned tuna. I was so excited.

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And I've got to tell you, I was probably a little bit haughty, to be honest. So, we're handing out these bags, and I'm smiling and greeting people and everything. And this tall man, very tall, and at that time I was 5'10", so very tall for me is like 6'2" and above, big man, takes his can of tuna out and waves it in my face.

I'm like, "Ooh, I'm an old lady."

And he said, "What do you expect me to do with this?" There are a few other expletives that I don't think I should say in church. I said, enjoy it.

And he said, "what do you want me to do"? And he went on and on.

And I said, you know, let's call him Sam. I said, "Sam, is this against your dietary beliefs? Because we had some different religions that couldn't eat protein in the form of fish or meat".

"No".

"Do you not like tuna? Because, you know, we can substitute beans and peanut butter for your tuna. I'd be happy to do that".

"No". He said, "what do you want me to do"?

I said, "Sam, what's the problem"?

He said, "I don't have a can opener".

You know, here I was, a poor seminary student, but I had three can openers at home. So, I quickly went to the church and took a can opener out, gave him a can opener, And Sam became my consultant. Because whenever we had things that we normally didn't have, I would ask him, "Sam, do we have everything we need for people to enjoy"? And he would always say, "well, you know, you need a knife, or you needed this, or you needed that". And Sam finally felt a purpose in life and some worth. And Sam was really my greatest teacher at seminary. I had some wonderful professors that taught me hermeneutics and all those fancy words, but Sam really taught me how to be with people, how to listen to people, how to hear their needs and then respond.

It's worth the work. It's worth the scary to be connected with the people that God puts you in front of each day. There's a reason you're there. You might think you're there to cut the lawn, but there's a reason that you're there. Be the disciples that Christ has asked us to be. It's only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can do that. But believe me, the Holy Spirit is alive and working in each of your lives, calling you as his disciples to proclaim God's love and mercy and grace through your actions. Bless you and keep you. Amen