

Do you ever feel inadequate? Do you ever feel like you are just not up to the task at hand?

Many of you know that in July, I had the privilege to return to North Dakota and take part in a worship service for a Rural United Methodist Church that was closing. It was a good day for me. It was a sad day for me as well. While I was in North Dakota, I was able to spend a lot of time with my family: My mom, my two sisters and their families, along with extended families (aunts, uncles, etc).

When the events at the church were over with on that Sunday, my mom, my sister, my brother-in-law and their son ended up getting side-tracked. They went by the farm that my mom grew up at. Then they traveled past the farm house, and on a rural road that clearly not many people had traveled upon, because it was pretty weed covered and overgrown.

The area we were in is rural, North Dakota. You may have heard the joke that says, "North Dakota isn't the end of the world, but you can see it from there." We are talking, so rural that the roads are gravel and there is no cell phone coverage rural.

As they were driving down the road, it was so over grown, that they slowed way down. That was when it happened. Before they could do anything about it, they came upon a part of the road that had been washed out. Unfortunately, nothing had warned them about the washout.

They discovered the washout, as the front of their van slid over a ledge that dropped off 7 feet. When the van came to an abrupt stop and they all realized they were okay, they somehow tumbled out of the van to look at the damage. Their back tires were still on the top of the washout, on what had been the road. The front of their van was resting on the ground.

They at first stood their, scratching their heads, trying to figure out what to do. When they checked their phones and realized they had no coverage, they knew they needed to walk for help. But they had no clue how they were going to get their van out of the hole or even if it would work again. They had a huge problem, and they felt inadequate to fix it on their own. Do you know what that is like?

**In our scripture for today, we meet the disciples who are also feeling inadequate.** They had been out on a preaching mission, sent by Jesus. When they returned, he took them off to a place, where they could be alone. But the crowds found out about it and went there to be with Jesus and the disciples.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them. He taught them. He healed those who were sick. And he continued on, until the day was almost done. That is when the disciples came to him and said, "Look, send the people away so they can take care of themselves. Send them away so they can get lodging and food."

Jesus looked at the disciples and said, "You give them something to eat." The disciples were shocked. What they had, was barely adequate to feed themselves. It certainly wouldn't go far toward feeding the more than 5,000 that had showed up. They felt inadequate.

We are in the midst of a sermon series called, *Let's Get Going: Living Life with Mission*. One of the biggest obstacles for us being involved in mission and ministry is dealing with how inadequate we often feel. We can look at ourselves and our resources and convince ourselves that what we have isn't much. We can look at ourselves and our resources and convince ourselves that it is so little that it can't possibly make a difference. And we let our feeling of inadequacy stop us from living a life of faith. We let our feeling of inadequacy stop us from being involved in ministry.

I think, Jesus looked at his disciples and he saw the fear in their eyes and the inadequacy in their hearts. And he said, "Tell everyone to sit in groups."

The disciples did what they were told. They placed people into groups. Jesus then took the bread and the loaves and gave it to the disciples to distribute to others. And they did. Then we are told a miracle took place, everyone had enough to eat.

**When the disciples were willing to share what they had and willing to serve, the need was met and God was glorified. This passage reminds us that when we are willing to share what we have, ourselves and our resources, that the needs around us will be met.** In this sermon series we have been challenging people to take a chance, and share of yourself.

As a pastor, I am so excited about the stories that I have heard about the people who have done so. It has been a thrill to hear about a person who has visited with elderly people and found their life enriched. It has been a thrill to hear about the person who helped out a homeless woman, and the thought process that ensued. It has been a thrill to hear about the person who is organizing a golf tournament to raise money for a housing project for an injured war veteran.

As I look out and see what is happening to members of our congregation, I am convinced that God is at work within us and within this world. Our choosing to be faithful and give of ourselves, even when we feel inadequate, is making a huge difference in our community.

I am convinced that our world: Our economy: Our community needs the ministry of the church, NOW, more than ever. I am convinced that as inadequate as we may sometimes feel, that God is able to work through us to make a difference. We just need to remain open, and give our feelings of inadequacy to God.

Last month, my sister, my brother-in-law, my mom and my nephew, looked at their van leaning into a washout, and started walking. They walked to the nearest farm house. From there they were taken to a relative's farm house. From there a phone call was made on a Sunday evening and a huge crane that was in town for the weekend, was taken out to the wash-out site. It was hooked up to the van, and it lifted the van out of the wash out.

They got into the van, started it up, and drove it to the nearest mechanic who opened his shop, just to look at the van. Miraculously, it checked out okay. And they drove it home.

There are moments when we simply feel overwhelmed and inadequate. Those are the times God calls to us; those are the times God invites us to trust. Those are the times when God invites us to take a chance and continue to risk.

May God help us, live lives of faith, hope and trust.

Amen