

Samuel Moffet arrived in Korea at age 25 as a Presbyterian missionary. He and the native believers faced persecution. God continued to work and eventually there were seven young men he trained to be pastors, the first 'graduating class'. They wondered what to do next. They went up on a mountain to pray. They asked, What does the church do? Send a missionary. But there were only seven, they needed them all to grow the church in Korea, could this be right.)

What do we do when we find ourselves at a transition point? What do we do in the church or in our lives when we aren't sure which way to go, or what God will do, or how what Jesus seems to be asking us to do is possible?

In John...there is a crowd following Jesus. Jesus asks the disciples, where are we to buy bread for all these people to eat. In Acts...the disciples have been told they will receive power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Today a young man has been called to be baptized and follow Jesus. Our church gathers to discern what God wants us to be and to do together.

God has always wanted his disciples, those who believe, to be involved in ministry, even with our questions and uncertainty. Small but genuine responses of faith are important even when mixed with doubt or pessimism.

You see, just like the crowd following Jesus in John, there are still many who believe only because our needs will be satisfied. We believe so we will get what we want, feel good...Jesus is not a mascot, a good luck charm, or a symbol of hope. He is the son of God in whom God offers eternal life.

Jesus leads us into ministry that is not simply what good people decide is reasonable to undertake in order to meet basic needs. Instead, Jesus multiplies the resources we offer to him so that what might have been a social handout becomes a revelation of amazing grace."

Back in John we see Philip's pessimistic/realistic response to Jesus asking the disciples to do ministry: It would take eight months wages so each person could have just a bite. Andrew's hopeful response: Here is a boy who has a lunch of five small loaves of bread and two fish. Though he doubted the value of his response 'What are these among so many?'

The question is: What are these among so many? Andrew wonders how this boy's lunch matters in the midst of this crowd. We wonder how a group of rural disciples can get people to consider Jesus in cosmopolitan Jerusalem, let alone the ends of the earth. We wonder how could one boy being baptized today matter in a world of billions of people. We wonder what God wants our church to do at this point of time.

Ministry is not only about what we can do. People are compelled by what they see God do through people... 5,000 fed, disciples speak in tongues, a young man comes to be baptized, a church makes commitments in specific ways to bless the youth of our community.... This compels people to recognize Jesus. Ministry should leave people exclaiming that God is at work in the world.

The boy's lunch does matter in the midst of the crowd. Jesus takes this meager amount of food and provides for 5,000 with twelve baskets leftover. People exclaim 'indeed this is the prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus takes what we offer and makes it more than we can imagine.

On Pentecost the church begins as the Holy Spirit moves the disciples into engagement with the world to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. The disciples who some think are drunk convince people about Jesus. People are 'cut to the heart and exclaim, 'What should we do?' Jesus uses us to do more than we imagine.

Today we baptize David. This young boy carries with him a faith that God says can move mountains. We believe Jesus can use this young boy in our church and in the world in such a way that people exclaim. 'I believe in Jesus.' The Holy Spirit can make more than what we believe is possible happen.

Today we are gathered as part of God's church in Ellwood City. We are called to ministry though there are so many possibilities we are overwhelmed. We have hope that Jesus can take what we offer even if it seems inadequate. We have hope that the Holy Spirit will be with us even if we undertake what seems not possible for the sake of the kingdom of God. Doing what Jesus asks that people may exclaim: 'God is real.'

The Koreans sent one of their first pastors to China as a missionary. A young boy offered his food. The first disciples proclaimed Jesus in public. Another young boy offers his life to Jesus. What step will our church take to show our trust that the Holy Spirit will do more than we can imagine?