

Franchise  
 Mark 1:16-20  
 Mark 6:7-9  
 1 Corinthians 12:21

Do you prefer working alone, working by yourself, or-----or do you prefer working with others, working with a group?

Have these words ever left your lips, “You just can’t depend on, you can’t count on anybody”?

Or how about this one: “Nevermind. I’ll do it myself.”

It’s been said, and by the way, not said by me because I have the perfect marriage, ummm, ummm---Sorry I had to clear my throat for some reason. This silly little sermon illustration uses the man/woman, husband/wife paradigm but feel free to substitute partner/partner, boss/employee, parent/child, brother/sister.

O.K., here we go: It’s been said that a man is a person who, if a woman says, “Never mind, I’ll do it myself;” lets her.

Got that? O.K., we’ll move onto the next part.

A woman is a person who, if she says to a man, “Never mind, I’ll do it myself,” and he lets her; gets mad.

Moving right along. A man is a person who, if a woman says to him, “Never mind, I’ll do it myself,” and he lets her and she gets mad; says, “Now what are you mad about?”

Did I hear someone say amen?

We’re almost finished. -----A woman is a person who, if she says to a man, “Never mind, I’ll do it myself,” and he lets her and she gets mad, and he says, “Now what are you mad about?” she says,-----she says “If you don’t know I’m not going to tell you.”

If you’ve had that conversation raise your hand.

Nevermind, I’ll do it myself.

What I’m getting at---and this sermon does have a point so be patient----what I’m getting at on this day on which we ordain Emily Tadlock and Frank Prevatt as Wedgewood deacons----what I’m getting at is Jesus in choosing disciples, in sending out those disciples, evidently, apparently decided not to say “Nevermind, I’ll do it myself.”-----It appears that Jesus in choosing 12 disciples made a conscious effort not to be like John the Baptizer who was a one-person show, a in the center ring, on the high wire, trapeze artist. In contrast to Johnny, yeah, I like to call him Johnny----in contrast to Johnny, Jesus decided to go with the teamwork model.

Or put as John Dominic Crossan puts it, John the Baptist was a monopoly, but Jesus was a franchise,----- kinda like Chick-fila and Bojangles and Wendys and McDonalds, and I saw one of these this week, kinda like a Maryland Fried Chicken.

I thought Maryland Fried Chicken had become a dinosaur.

Jesus didn't want to become a dinosaur. Jesus wanted a "Jesus" on every corner serving greasy fried chicken---no Jesus wanted a Jesus in every city, on every street, on every corner, in every synagogue, in every street market Jesus wanted other people being Jesus-like serving up huge helpings of the nourishing love of God.

Now Jesus didn't have to be a franchise. He could have said, "You know, those disciples aren't as smart as me. The boys---well, how can I say it?---the boys aren't the sharpest tools in the shed. And---and the fact of the matter is those disciples-----you really can't count on them. They are distracted by so many things: wives, children, jobs, their own neuroses, all their personality quirks and idiosyncrasies. And there are some procrastinators among them. Shoot, some of them are slower than molasses on Christmas Day in Antarctica. But even if I could get the disciples to do what I need them to do in a timely fashion they wouldn't do it the way it should be done. They wouldn't do it correctly. The truth be told they would mess it up.

"You know, on second thought, never mind, I think I'm going to do this myself."

Jesus in his southern accent could have said, "Yall go one home now. Go on. Go on home. I don't need you."

Did I ask you this earlier? Do you like working alone?

Do you have difficulty working with others?

Does your perfectionism ever get in the way?

I remember my perfectionist father was so proud of his yard, his green Garden of Eden, his great grassland, his prized pasture.----- People would stop by and admire it and want to know how he did it, what his secret was, what fertilizer he used.

For those of you from Winston-Salem, he used Weaver's fertilizer, fertilizer from a local company. That was his secret ingredient.

Anyway, the great thing about Dad being a perfectionist yard person was he didn't trust any of his sons to mow the yard correctly, to his satisfaction so-----so he mowed----yes, he mowed it himself which meant we didn't have to mow it.-----Of course, they thought of a lot of other things we could do.

Did I ask you this earlier? I think I asked you this, but I'm not sure and it's important that I ask you, Does your perfectionism ever get in the way?

Jesus chose not to be a one person show. Jesus chose disciples.

And here's one other thing that intrigues me. When Jesus sent his disciples out he told them,--- --well, the gospels don't exactly agree on what Jesus said, but basically Jesus said, Don't take much of anything with you. Which means-----which means Jesus set the disciples up to be dependent on other people just as he made himself dependent on his disciples.

Dependency. Teamwork. Do you remember this line? Houston, we have a \_\_\_\_\_. Yes, Houston we have a problem. If not for teamwork, those astronauts would have died in space, never making it back to earth.

Teamwork. Look at the photo inside your bulletin.

Isn't that a wonderful image of teamwork!

The giant California redwood trees tower 300 feet into the sky and it would seem they would require extremely deep roots to anchor them against strong winds but their roots are actually quite shallow. What keeps them stable is that they spread in all directions, intertwining with other redwoods. Teamwork.

I've always wondered how homeless people survive in the cold winter. And two Sundays ago after our annual chili contest when I dropped off four of our Room In The Inn guests including a small child, I wondered again, How? How do homeless people survive cold brutal winters?

Gail Goynes, a homeless person herself, has an answer to my question. She writes:

“If you want to survive in the street world you have to help each other out. The people who care, and stick together in our community are called “family”, because we all work together, love each other and help the good people stay above water. Not everyone is like this, of course, but I like to consider myself “family”. (<http://www.roaddawgz.org>, Mar 24, 2003)

The importance of family, community, teamwork, opening up to others.

The seventh principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is “Respect for the Interdependent Web of all existence.”

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, “The ear cannot say to the eye, ‘I have no need of you.’”

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen Buddhist monk from Vietnam, outlines the following exercise. He takes a piece of paper and claims there is a cloud that floats above that piece of paper. Paper, as we all know, is made by trees. Trees require earth, sunshine, carbon dioxide, and water. The water comes from an aquifer in the ground that is fed by rain water. Rain comes from clouds. When we look at a piece of paper, Thich Nhat Hanh says, we should see the tree, the water, the rain and the cloud. All of them are necessary in order for the page to be printed. Without the cloud there would be no water, no tree, no paper, no page.

This leads Thich Nhat Hanh to introduce what Buddhists call Emptiness. They claim----Stay with me and don't let any initial confusion be an obstacle to understanding----they claim there is

no cloud, no water, no tree, no paper, no page no anything. But, and don't miss this point because this is the point, Buddhists in making this claim are not saying these things do not exist. What they are observing is that all things, all matter, all people do not exist as isolated, independent, and autonomous things or beings. Buddhism rightly stresses there is an interdependent web that includes all of existence.

Interdependency.

A person with Buddha-like wisdom once made this statement. See if you can guess who said this.

“Michael, if you can't pass, you can't play.”

That's what Coach Dean Smith said to Michael Jordan his freshman year at UNC. “Michael, if you can't pass, you can't play.”

Do you pass the ball or do you mainly dribble the ball and shoot it yourself?

I finally got around to seeing Spiderman 3. There was a great line in it. Spiderman's girlfriend says to Spiderman, “Even Spiderman needs other people.”

Spiderman and Jesus-----and you-----and me.

Today we ordain Emily Tadlock and Frank Prevatt as deacons. We do this because Jesus was a franchise, because even Spiderman needed help, because even Michael Jordan has to pass the basketball, and because here at Wedgewood we are trying to be a family that calls itself church.