

started digging. Once the hole was large enough, down their friend went, until he laid on the floor, nose to nose with Jesus’ sandals. Right then and there, Jesus forgives the paralytic’s sin. Mark tells us he did this because of the faith of those four friends; it was because of their faith. Jesus doesn’t ask them what they think about evolution or creation. He doesn’t ask them to make a confession of faith or affirm the Nicene Creed. He doesn’t seem to know or care to know what they think about the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement. Jesus knows all he needs to know, because they have done everything they could to put their friend in front of Jesus. That’s what faith is, not some list of doctrine or so many convoluted theological statements. Faith is working to bring the world to Christ. Working – not just thinking it would be a good idea — WORKING. What have YOU done this week to bring the world to Jesus? What can you do tomorrow?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, help me to do the work of faith by bring others to you.*

**Saturday: Read 1 Corinthians 13**

In this letter that deals with all the conflict, trouble, power struggles, and fighting the Corinthians are going through, Paul inserts these words about love. The Message translates the last few verses like this: "We do not yet see things clearly. We are squinting in a fog, peering through the mist, but it will not be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright. We will see it all then, see as clearly as God sees us, knowing God as directly as God knows us. But for right now, until that completeness comes, we have three things to do. Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly." Love one another, Paul says. Be filled with hope. And trust in God to pull you towards God’s future. We don’t know when that’s going to be, or what it’s going to look like, and where we end up is beyond our control, but love will show the way.

*Prayer: Eternal God, may your way of love guide me closer to you.*



**Series: Changed for Good**  
**Sermon: So I’m Supposed To Drop Everything?**

**Genesis 18:1-15**

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

**Monday: Read Luke 5:1-11**

In this story from Luke’s gospel, it’s not even Easter yet. This is at the beginning of Jesus’ story, not the end, which means in terms of miracles the they will witness, and in in terms of Jesus’ power, the disciples “ain’t seen nothing yet.” This isn’t a life-long illness healed or a multitude fed; this isn’t an empty tomb. It’s just a lot of fish. Even so, Peter, James, John and others dropped everything. Jesus issued the call, “Follow me: let’s catch some people,” and that was enough. All it took for the first disciples was a fish story, and yet here we stand on the other side of Easter. We know that Jesus was raised from the dead. We’ve seen the empty tomb. With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, we know that Jesus’ promises were true. In response, what are we going to do? What are we willing to do? What’s it going to take for us to drop everything and follow? What’s to keep us from going fishing?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you have called me to follow you. Help me to respond with my life.*

**Tuesday: Read 1 Peter 2:4-10**

1 Peter is addressed to newly baptized Christians, letting them know who they are now. Willimon reminds us that there are plenty of people in the world who try to tell you who they think you are. Madison Avenue says you are a maker and spender of money. Institutions of higher learning tell you that you are your brain, that you are a rational, thinking being. Movies and music tell you that you are a sexual being. The modern world tells you that you are autonomous — self-made and self-centered. But in baptism, God tells you who you really are: a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people. You are given a new name: Christian. Names are important in the Bible. Bible names aren’t like nicknames, which are usually descriptive, e.g. like you might call a tall person “Stretch.” Names in the Bible are generally prescriptive; they aren’t about what you’ve been, but about who you will become — who you are now that God has intervened. Think back to your own baptism for a moment; what do you remember about that day and how you felt? How has your understanding of baptism changed since then? In the waters of baptism, you have been given a new identity, a new name, and a new purpose; how are you living out that purpose today?

*Prayer: Eternal God, remind me again that I am yours, and help me to respond to that good news in faith and hope.*

**Wednesday: Read Luke 24:44-49**

Danish philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard once said that, “People have an idea that the preacher is an actor on a stage and they are the critics, blaming or praising him. What they don’t know is that they are the actors on the stage; [the preacher] is merely the prompter standing in the wings, reminding them of their lost lines.” Perhaps it may be even better to quit thinking of worship as performance at all, and instead imagine it as rehearsal. In worship we learn the fundamentals and

practice the skills we need for living our faith. The main event — the performance — is out in the world. Remember: when Christ meets us, Christ sends us. “You are my witnesses,” Jesus tells us, so that we may tell the world about him. How does worship equip you for the work of Christian witness? With what skills do you need some more practice?

*Prayer: Loving God, prepare me to serve you faithfully and well.*

**Thursday: Read Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60**

Stephen had been selected as a deacon “to wait on tables,” to help distribute food, and to tend to widows. He was full of grace and power, we are told, and some found that grace and that power threatening. Perhaps they saw something of Jesus in him and brought him before the Sanhedrin for blasphemy...just like Jesus. Standing before the council, Stephen preaches the gospel. He tells the story of God’s saving work throughout history. But then he does what always gets preachers into trouble: he quits preaching, and starts meddling. He quits talking about “them,” and instead starts talking about “you.” In response, the crowd becomes angry — so angry in fact, that they decide to kill Stephen by stoning him. The words of Stephen’s message are powerful, and his actions are powerful, too — standing courageous in the face of hate and violence. But for today, notice the people whose response to Stephen’s proclamation of the gospel is to cover their ears, to shout and last out (Acts 8:57). As soon as they hear truth they are not ready to face, the good religious folk who’ve brought Stephen before the council put their fingers in their ears and holler at the top of their lungs, just like a toddler throwing a tantrum. Maybe they are threatened by what he says, and how he calls their way of life into question. Or perhaps they are threatened by what he does, and how he prays for them even while they throw stones. Either way, they don’t even try to hear. They don’t even pretend to listen. How do you respond when faced with truth you don’t want to hear? How have you resisted what God has tried to tell you? How can we listen more respectfully to one another, even when we disagree?

Prayer: Loving God, give us the grace and power to open our ears and close our mouths long enough to hear one another, and to listen to you.

**Friday: Read Mark 2:1-12**

Sometimes faith looks like four guys who do whatever it takes. They have a friend who is ill; he’s paralyzed. They had heard about this Jesus; word was beginning to spread that he was a healer, and perhaps more. So these four loaded up their friend on a makeshift gurney, and they set out to find Jesus. That task didn’t take long, because it seemed the whole town woke up with the same idea. They got to the house and it was worse than the day after Thanksgiving at the mall. The smallest of their group couldn’t make his way through the door, much less four of them and a man on a pallet. Somehow, somehow, they made it to the roof of the house – no small task carrying a paralyzed man. Then they