

“He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.”

I decided last week that it was time for me to take a journey into getting in better shape—Oh I don’t mean thinner, necessarily. (Well, yes I do...) But I remember a time when I didn’t gasp like a fish out of water when I walked 3 miles. I remember when I used to lift 40 lbs of cat litter gently into my grocery cart and then into my car, and then into the HOUSE--rather than having to let Amazon deliver it to my door.

So when I decided to get into shape—everyone told me it was better to start small. So *of course* Monday morning I decided to start working out again—doing the Jillian Michaels Body Revolution Videos! And why start by modifying the tough parts. So I doubled them. Because who needs to start small when they can knock it out of the park the first time out of the gate.

Well, the good news is I didn’t give myself a heart attack. But I was really sore for a number of days. Maybe if I’d started more gradually, I wouldn’t have had to stop after one workout.

Why do we do this?

The journey of a thousand miles, after all, begins with a single step.

The idea of walking **a thousand miles** is instantly exhausting – but it’s also a distortion of reality.

No one has ever had to walk a thousand miles TODAY.

So why do we think we can’t do anything until we can do everything?

It took me many months of sitting around to begin exercising. I kept thinking-- when I get thinner... when I’ve slept better... when I get stronger... THEN I’ll start working out. When I feel more fit, I’ll start working out.

Sadly, it doesn’t work that way. We only get the result we’re going for AFTER we’ve—however slowly—taken that first step.

We develop relationships with people only after we’ve taken the risk of saying hello, and slowly found common interests together. We become good at a skill AFTER we’ve repeated it over and over again. We become a marathoner only after we take that first step—walking.

The same seems to be true with matters of faith.

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase," says the brilliant Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In today's Gospel reading--Jesus sends the disciples out by themselves--for the first time-- to do the things he has been doing: loving, healing, forgiving, calling people to see things from a different perspective—otherwise known as repenting.

And here the disciples thought the miracles and healing and teaching were something only a messiah could do—nope. Jesus sends them out and says—"No, every human being can do everything I can—so go out and do this, too."

Were they nervous? Did they think, "How can I do all that—teach, heal, love. What if I fail?"

I'll bet they were nervous. And we humans often combat nervousness—like I did-- with bravado: We start big! The disciples probably described to Jesus what they thought they'd need for the journey: clothes, swords, extra food, extra money, and friends to stay with.

And Jesus might've made a superhuman effort not roll his eyes. And of course he succeeds. After all, he *is* God.

"I like the enthusiasm, gentlemen," he might say, "But how about just a walking stick, no bread, no bag, no sword, no money. Sandals, but no extra clothes. Start small. Just take what you need. Concentrate on what's in front of you. After all, my friends, no one walks a thousand miles in one day..."

We forget that. Even here at St .Thomas' we begin new ministries with grandiose ideas, all the bell and whistles. We like to start big and get even bigger.

We're Episcopalians---and we like to go big or go home. Or maybe that's Americans. Anyway—we say-- we've got this, Jesus:

- we've got notices about our new ministry in print and radio and even on Facebook—
- we've had a committee looking into this, doing feasibility studies for a YEAR,
- we've put a line item in the budget for it

And we know Jesus is excited.

He turns to us, all smiles, and says: “***Why do we think you can’t do anything until you can do everything?***”

- Stop trying to eat the whole cake in the first bite.
- Everything begins small, even lions.
- Find someone asking questions and listen to them. And share your story.
- Look around for the people who are struggling and help them.
- Look for the people who are being ignored, or judged or hated—and love them.
- But do it with a partner. You’ll need their support and they will need yours.

And while many people gathering to do ministry is wonderful, and a great way of spreading God’s love, remember,” Jesus says, “that everything I’ve done, you can do – and all you need to begin—is to take the first step. Just start at the very beginning. I hear it’s a very good place to start.”

And then Jesus will laugh, and say, “You can do anything- anything in the world—as long as you remember you don’t to wait until you can do everything.” Amen.