

When times look dire or challenging, when things aren't going smoothly, or we can't find a way out of whatever circumstances are making us despair—God speaks to us.

The Israelites thought that rebuilding Jerusalem after being released from captivity in Babylon could never be as great as their memories of what had gone before. They would never be able to re-build their old city, so that that it shone with the same light as before.

God speaks : “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.”

God was telling them: perhaps the light wasn't going to be exactly the same as it had been before, but how could it be if God was ever to bring anything new to pass? How very boring for God to have to recreate things always in the same ways.

When I was in elementary school, I loved Life cereal. I mean I REALLY loved it. I had it every single morning for breakfast for years. Eventually, though, I became tired of the same cereal all the time. You'd think I'd learned my lesson, but when I started cooking a lot I discovered that I loved chicken for dinner. Actually, I still love it- although not at every dinner. My daughter, on the other hand, would come home after school and ask me what was for dinner. Then she would roll her eyes and say, “No, let me guess. Chicken.” At first it was a joke and we both laughed, then she really got sick of it and she asked the question with a kind of despair. She rarely eats chicken now. Not trying new things has consequences.

Jesus approaches the people who will be his disciples and they are fishing. They have always fished. It has provided their families with a living, and frankly they never spent one minute contemplating a change.

But Jesus sees different horizons awaiting them. He calls them to a new thing: *“Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”*

I have to say—with most human beings there is a real resistance to change. It was relatively easy for us as human beings to go through our lives with only small, incremental change, until about the mid-80's. Society,

technology, information, our capacity to understand complicated things has become greater. Life moves much more quickly now.

And that is affecting churches. The old ways of doing things sometimes no longer work. ECW has disbanded nearly everywhere. I bet there are some here that don't even know what ECW stands for!

Strategic five and ten year plans no longer make sense because we have no idea what our community—or even our world-- will look like in five or ten years.

Theologian Patrick Keifert points out that “*What is needed is continual, faithful listening to God's leading, and to our changing world.*”

He goes on to say that these days, the vestry and congregation should probably operate more like a sailboat than a corporate board. They must be alert and nimble enough to move quickly so they can catch the changing winds of what Keifert calls the “Holy Gust” or Ghost.

Sometimes we need to leave ourselves open to the whisperings of God, where God wants us to go.

My daughter, for one, would be delighted if I would give up chicken entirely, and move on to something else.

And here's the thing: I think the Holy Spirit often takes us out of our comfort zones. When Jesus asks us to follow him, he will probably lead us into things that we've never attempted before--lead us to places that we don't completely understand. Places maybe that we don't even WANT to completely understand.

I know that God has taken me out of my comfort zone many times in my life—and never more than now—with all the issues of my dad's dementia, and my mother's physical mobility issues, moving when I didn't expect to, dealing with other things as they come up—like with our building issues.

I mean, when I took this job 2 and a half years ago, I didn't think I would ever find myself up here saying that now, 2 and half years into my ministry here, I have not spent one day not thinking about building campaigns.

I know priests that have been in ministry over 30 years and have never once had to think about a building campaign! So the fact that I’ve had to deal with this for all of my ministry here-- is unusual. I’m guessing it’s probably unusual for you, too.

It’s out of my comfort zone. It may be out of your comfort zone. But it seems to be what the Spirit is calling us to act on.

And so I see it as an opportunity.

An opportunity for all of us to come together and envision what this place could be in the future. Envision where we could go in the future. And I don’t just mean with this building program--- I mean with everything that has to do with us dropping our safety nets, and following Christ—perhaps to different horizons that we thought. Maybe we won’t be rebuilding the old Jerusalem.

I think we are being given the gift of really listening to the Holy “Gust”, as it nudges—blows us--in directions we hadn’t seen, directions that might even be a little terrifying and exciting if we take on the challenges the Spirit brings us. Can we do any less than the original 12 disciples did?

Maybe we should spend a little time discussing what really makes our heart sing here at St Thomas’. Maybe we should find out what could happen if we dared to talk about what following Christ might mean to us.

**** I was walking out of the church the other day. I had a set of keys in my pocket—I could feel them jingling around. I needed to go somewhere in my car, and when I reached down to get my car key, I realized I was holding the wrong set of keys—I didn’t have the key to the car, I had my other keys to the church building doors.

Then I realized that my car keys were in the other pocket. That’s when it hit me-- that’s kind of like our life with God.

Sometimes we need to reach into one pocket, sometimes we have to reach into another—sometimes we instantly come up with the right keys, sometimes it turns out we need what’s in the other pocket.

But never forget: we always have all the keys we need to follow Jesus. Amen.