



## Proper 12, Year C – June 20, 2010

Luke 9.51-62

### A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

I'd like to talk to you about John the Baptist for a moment. It's been a while since we've heard about him but his story is relevant to the Gospel reading for this morning. John the Baptist had what we might call today a sole proprietorship. He had a particular expertise and only he could perform the task. He remained stationary and commanded that people come to him. From far away lands people gathered at the shores of the river Jordan and he baptised with water promising that one who would baptise with the spirit was coming. John the Baptist was THE Baptist, performing a task which no one else could undertake. The business that he was in was solely dependant on him. Without his presence, without his knowledge and faith, there was no baptising.

Many years ago I ran a business. I had worked as a behaviour therapist specializing in autism and acquired brain injury for some time and an opportunity arose for me to provide a wider variety of services for clients and directly bill the insurance companies for the service. Being young, eager and energetic I undertook this challenge with gusto and quickly built my business from one client to three. That may not sound like much but I was a sole proprietor. I WAS the TKARE Case Management business. I split my time between the varying needs of my clientele, attending all meetings with other professionals like physiotherapists, psychotherapists, doctors, neurologists, lawyers, insurance adjusters as well as mediating family issues that often arose. I participated in the creation of all of their program plans and arranged for staffing. I saw the clients on a regular basis so that I could remain on top of all of their changing needs and progress. I WAS TKARE Case Management and without me, the business could not stand.

Pregnancy was all it took. I had to say good bye to my clients and encourage them to find someone else to look after their needs. With the impending birth of my first son I knew that I could no longer respond to the harried 2:00 AM phone calls when a client had gone missing or filling in for staff who had called in sick. My business was no more.

Thankfully no one beheaded me, but my sole proprietorship was dead just the same.

Now, I don't propose that I was John the Baptist but I made the same mistake as he. When the day finally came that John had stirred up enough controversy within the Jewish community and had upset enough of the Roman society, all they had to do was to cut him down. And they did. Literally. Without John the Baptist, the baptism business was no more.

And then came Jesus. May be Jesus learned some lessons from his older cousin. Jesus did not create a ministry that solely revolved around him being present. He did not make people come to him on the shores of the Jordan, rather he travelled the country side spreading a radical message of inspiration, of freedom from oppression, of belief in something bigger than people could touch and feel. And then, and this is the reason that we still follow the message of Jesus, he empowered those around him to go and spread this good news, this Gospel, throughout the world.

Jesus created a franchise.

Jesus taught his most trusted companions how to do what he did. Jesus inspired his disciples, his friends, to go out and spread the message. And not only that, but to then encourage others to spread the message once they'd heard it. He didn't hang out at the shores of the Jordan, or even at the Temple in Jerusalem waiting for people to come to him. He empowered those who heard him to go out from him and continue the ministry. Imagine that John the Baptist at the centre of a circle and all paths lead to that centre. Now imagine Jesus at the centre of a circle but now, unlike John, all of the motion arrows lead away from him to the edges of the earth.

And in the Gospel today we hear that Jesus did not just empower his closest and most trusted companions, he empowered the man whom he had healed to do the same. This man was given directions to carry the message out – away from the centre that was Jesus. In today's Gospel Jesus said "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

Jesus; the greatest franchise owner in the history of humanity. Jesus created a movement that could not be stopped when he died – and he surely knew that the message of freedom and love that he was spreading was going to ultimately lead him to his demise. But unlike his cousin John the Baptist, who was the only expert, the only baptizer, Jesus gave his expertise to everyone he met and then encouraged them to go out and do the same. Jesus' message could not possibly end with his death – too many people had already received the how to manual.

Upon our ordination the clergy promise many things. Among them, we promise to spread the Gospel and bring the Good News to the world. But I propose that this is not just a promise of ordination. It is a promise that each of take with our baptismal vows. A clergy person, no matter how faithful, how talented, how passionate, cannot fill the pews or build a community. Because just as we are empowered, indeed commanded, to go out into the world with the message of living a new life in Christ, so are each of you. It is through your faith that God's grace reaches people who may need to hear the message. It is through your voice that God's compassion can reach those who are hurting. It is through your passion that God's understanding can reach those who feel isolated and alone.

So I say to you, as Christ said to the man healed of his demons, return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.

Amen.