

SALT LIFE
Micah 6: 6-8 Mark 9: 33-37; 47-50
Lexington Presbyterian Church
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The question: How do you get to Carnegie Hall? The answer: Practice, practice, practice.

“Getting to Carnegie Hall” would, in some circles, indicate that you are great, if not the greatest. The disciples were following Jesus around Galilee, and most of the time they were practicing. If not practicing, they were watching Jesus, certainly “The Greatest” actually being great. He was teaching them by doing Christ-ly things. In Mark’s account of the Gospel, Jesus already had healed many, fed thousands, even walked on water, but the disciples had trouble understanding the significance of Jesus’ presence among them. In this account, Jesus has just explained for the second time about his death and resurrection. Yet, as they continue on their journey, rather than trying to figure out what Jesus means by “his resurrection,” the disciples argue among themselves about who is the greatest and perhaps anticipate becoming the replacement for the Son of God. As if that could happen. But to be fair at this point, they didn’t know how it turns out.

It should not surprise us that Jesus sees the situation from a completely different perspective than the disciples. Jesus saw almost everything from a different perspective than the disciples. I imagine the disciples were comparing their various traits and qualities that would make them the best: public speaking, financial resources, knowledge of those who lived in towns (it’s always been about who you know), and maybe the best pray-er. Jesus understands this human quality of competitive comparison. And he wanted to put that to an end. So he got up from the circle of the great disciples, went into the other part of the house, and brought back a child. Now this could have been an infant, toddler or better still the young child of a slave.

This is where things get dicey. There they were Peter, James and John and all the rest, waiting, perhaps hoping, that they might step into the sandals of

Jesus, when Jesus says, “Accept this child as your leader, and that’s when you will be great.” I’m sure the disciples were stunned, open-mouthed and silent. In a society where children were invisible (slightly more than women) and valued less than animals and property, Jesus turns the disciples’ argument upside down. Not only did Jesus dispel their thoughts of who was the greatest, but also he offered an alternative that was outside of their imaginations.

Pride, self-righteousness, and self-importance are not what God requires. God requires a leadership that considers the needs of others long before considering what is best for ourselves. Pushing personal agendas defeats the communal understanding of God’s family where the least of these deserves the most attention, protection, and support.

John Turnbull and I are on a Presbytery committee that is crafting a Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult protection policy. This policy sets up standards by which Presbytery events are governed to prevent any child from endangerment. Some of the rules are to have two adults present in every setting where children and youth are gathered, requiring background checks on all volunteers and staff, and regular updating of all information gathered. Individual churches such as ours also have this kind of policy in place to protect our youngest members.

In last Sunday’s sermon, Bill Klein talked about stumbling blocks, most of our own making, and how they can come between us and others, impeding our relationships to others and to Jesus. Certainly pride can be a stumbling block as can not welcoming “one of the least of these” as a respected and valued part of God’s family. Children are part of the least of these but also those whom we see as outsiders, those not like us, those who would be uncomfortable in our worship service are “the least of these” in our midst. Being aware of our stumbling blocks is the first step to building stronger relationships within the beloved community.

The sayings about salt at the end of our readings today may be a clue as to how we are to go ahead, fulfilling the words of Micah, to go out into the world doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God. Salt in the ancient world was a valuable commodity. It was used for preservation of food – one of the few ways to safely save food from contamination. The Romans used salt as wages. Salt flavored the lives of those in ways nothing else could.

Bill Klein uses a benediction from the 4th chapter of Philippians which says: “whatever is good, whatever is honorable whatever is worthwhile, whatever is right, think on these things.” The phrase at the end of our passage today “Having salt in yourself” means relying on the goodness of God within you. It is thinking on the positive, God-worthy experiences in your life. It is doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God. When you focus on the good, then you will have peace with the disciples walking by your side and perhaps with the rest of the world.

On many places to day you will see the logo for Salt Life. Salt life is a brand of beach apparel and ocean equipment very popular with anyone who likes the ocean life. Let me read to you what I found on Google.

So let me take the liberty of re-thinking this for us. The Salt Life brand was created about 2000 years ago by 12 men wo weren't just friends but avid fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Drawn by their unbefore discovered passion for following Jesus, they embarked on a journey to develop a brand that wasn't just a logo – they wanted it to represent a style of life. ... With relentless dedication to provide loving care to others that transcend, it has more or less successfully evolved into a life style brand with world wide appeal.

Whether it is serving, or worshipping, or caring for the least of these or simply enjoying a day at the beach, those who live and breathe the Salt Life have one thing in common... Jesus and all he has to offer.

So how do you life the Salt life? You do justice, live kindly and generously, and you walk humbly as Jesus would have you walk. And how do you do this? Practice, practice, practice.