

BECAUSE YOU SAY SO, I'LL DO IT
THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
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Because you say so, I'll do it.

Of all the words and stories about the heroes and superstars of faith that the Bible has, these 7 words blow me away.

What trust! And how I fall short of them!

In fact, the two fastest ways to get me to do dig in my heels and have MY way (until I figure out that I'm being played like a banjo)

is to tell me a CAN'T do something or that I MUST do something.

That rebellious teenager in me has never quite left home.

I am prone to react quickly with "Oh, yeah? You're not the boss of me."

Then I go do what I want. What I want.

A true story. At my last church, we had a terrific parish administrator.

The receptionist and other folks, often volunteers, who answered the phone were frustrated because people would call for one of the pastors

(there were two of us, Walter and me), and if we weren't there, the person would inevitably ask, "When will they be back?"

Usually no one knew. Walter and I kept our own calendars.

The caller would often take their frustration out on the office staff and volunteers.

At our next staff meeting, the parish administrator explained the problem to Walter and me

and how he had a cheap, easy fix that would take the pressure off of our very busy office staff.

He wanted to get one of those "IN/OUT" boards with magnets for each of us.

We were supposed to indicate when we'd be back. Simple enough.

I absolutely lost it. "NO. I WON'T DO IT. YOU CAN'T MAKE ME. I CONTROL MY SCHEDULE.

I GOT THREE DEGREES SO NO ONE CAN TELL ME WHAT TO DO.

YOU'RE NOT THE BOSS OF ME!"

Now, this is not the reaction of a reasonable person.

It is not the reaction of a person who cares about the problems of others, especially when she's one of the causes of the problems.

This is the over-reaction of someone who is thinking 100% about herself.

The IN/OUT board never went up, but I quickly discerned that I had a big personal issue to work on.

It was an issue of trust, trusting the staff was not looking for ways to be critical of how I used my time.

(Yes, this had been a problem at another job long ago in another lifetime.)

Usually in gospel stories, Simon Peter is one of my favorites

because he can be such a bumbling, clueless yutz, it gives hope for the rest of us yutzes out there.

But this time he was spot on when he said those 7 words:

Because you say so, I'll do it. He trusted Jesus with his time, his efforts.

Now, Simon Peter already knew Jesus pretty well. Peter lived in Capernaum.

In Chapter 4 of Luke, there's a story of Jesus was staying at Simon Peter's house.

Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever. Jesus healed her instantly.

Then she got up and fed everyone. Now, THAT is a classic Jewish mom!

Some time later – we don't know how long, but now it's Chapter 5, Jesus was back in Capernaum.

He came upon Simon Peter and his partners, James and John,

on the beach after a long night of fishing.

Today's Collect and Scripture readings are at the end of the sermon text.

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Jesus needed the 1st century equivalent of a microphone: he wanted to project his voice over water.
He asked Peter to take him off shore a bit.

If the rabbi who healed my mother-in-law asked me to take him out in my boat,
I'd do that. Yeah, it's time to return the favor, even though
I'd rather finish my work, then go home and catch some shuteye.

But, when the rabbi is done teaching and is all finished with his own business,
he went and interfered with Simon's by he telling him to go fishing. Again.

Peter's an expert, a professional fisherman. Jesus is a rabbi.

Whatever miracles Jesus has done, this is stupid. The fish ain't there.

Very understandably, Peter grumbles a bit about the request,
and then he says those amazing 7 words: *Because you say so, I'll do it.*

Now, that is trust; grumbling trust, but trust.

Peter had some kind of faith that Jesus had a reason for asking this.

The thing is, real trust is not easy. Sometimes faith grumbles.

We KNOW what's what in our world. We're experts in our own lives.

Most of us work pretty hard to become mature and able to manage our affairs.

Even though most of us have had a boss in our jobs,
we like to control our own lives as much as possible.

For many of us, then, the hardest step in the journey of faith
is to do something we don't want to do because God has told us to do it.

The great news is that God never asks us to do things capriciously.

God has a plan, a purpose: God is creating and healing the earth, RIGHT NOW.

At this very moment, heavenly beings are SHOUTING

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heavenly forces! All the earth is filled with God's glory!"

We're actually going to join them;

in just a few moments from now, Heaven and earth will come together.

Maybe we could even shout a little, instead of being all prim and proper.

Anyway, God is creating and healing the earth right now,

and God is also creating and healing the Church right now,

this flawed but truly amazing organization full of sinners and clueless yutes
whom Jesus has called together to be God's agents, angels and anglers
in a world that has so much to learn about glory, trust and love.

The letter to the Ephesians makes abundantly clear

that Isaiah and Simon Peter weren't the only sinners God has called.

God has called each of us, all of us, not because we are experts or professionals,
but because God needs us to be the hands and feet of Christ,
the whole body of Christ, in the world.

If we, with the psalmist, trust that *the Lord will make good his purpose for me*, for us,
have some faith that this purpose is for earth to be filled with God's glory through us,
then those 7 words become not only about trust, but hope:

Because you say so, I'll do it. I'll be part of the healing of the earth.

WHAT we are to do to heal creation is simply do what God does.

For Christians, it's to do what Jesus does, and to do what he says.

I've told you before that there is a movement out there called

"Red Letter Christians,"¹ started by people who became appalled
with the way Christians fight over so many things,

dividing the Body of Christ to the point that an unbelieving world looks at us and says to itself,
"Yeah, I don't need another group that is hell-bent on telling me whom I should hate."

¹ <https://www.redletterchristians.org/what-is-rlc/>

Red Letter Christianity's basic premise is that we should do what Jesus says, those things that are written in red letters in some versions of the Bible.

In those red letters, there is truth-telling, healing, forgiving, feeding, there is welcome, mercy, inclusion, commandment, warning, and there are even some things we don't fully understand.

No matter what we think about the topic of biblical literalism and inerrancy, those words in red letters are always about healing Creation to make the Reign of God near, which is God's project and the purpose into which God calls us all.

Red Letter Christians say that AFTER we have done all the things Jesus said in the red letters, THEN we can fight over the stuff that he didn't say. IF we still want to.

HOW we each will heal creation and fill the earth with the glory of God will differ.

Some, like Isaiah and Moses, will be called to do something entirely new.

No worries! As the saying goes, "God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called."

Others will be like Simon Peter, James and John, all were going about their lives, their everyday, normal, lives, doing what they knew how to do, in the place they always did it, when Jesus called them to use their abilities another way.

Either way, God will equip us for whatever it is we are to do.

WHERE we do God's work is everywhere, all of creation.

WHO we do the work among is everyone, but Ephesians teaches us that we NEED the company of other Christians, the Church, to do it best.

In particular, we need a church family, a parish church, a place where we are *joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments*.

(Remember that the word "religion" comes from the same root, *ligare*, as "ligament," which means to bind together, to hold fast.)

Joined and held together, the body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with LOVE as each one does its part.

As we do our part, the promise is that we will grow in every way into Christ.

That's quite a promise, to grow into Christ. Do we trust it?

Can we have faith that God will do this even with sinners like us?

If we trust it - even if it's a grumbling faith - we can hear Jesus' words to Peter, words that would be in red letters in some Bibles - also addressed to us,

Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people.

Going fishing for people because Jesus says so makes those 7 words ones of discipleship as well as of trust and hope.

Those who follow Jesus fish for the last, the least, the lost, and the lonely;

the hopeless, the homeless, the hapless, and the helpless;

the selfish, the snobbish, the screwballs, and, yes, even the saints,

and bring them into the boat of God's love.

Remember, we have a boat, too! We're in a nave, from which we get the word "navy;"

a old-fashioned church nave like ours looks like an upside-down boat.

Jesus has asked our congregation to go fishing and we've been doing what he says for over 132 years.

What have we done recently?

Come to the Annual Meeting! Read our 2018 Annual Report!

You'll be AMAZED at our catch of fish!

As we go into the meeting and the rest of this year,

I pray God continues to give this each of us in this parish the courage

to keep saying, day after day, those 7 words of discipleship, trust, and hope:

Because you say so, I'll do it.

COLLECT OF THE DAY

Most holy God, the earth is filled with your glory, and before you angels and saints stand in awe. Enlarge our vision to see your power at work in the world, and by your grace make us heralds of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

ISAIAH 6:1–8

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, the edges of his robe filling the temple. Winged creatures were stationed around him. Each had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two their feet, and with two they flew about. They shouted to each other, saying:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heavenly forces! All the earth is filled with God's glory!"

The doorframe shook at the sound of their shouting, and the house was filled with smoke.

I said, "Mourn for me; I'm ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips. Yet I've seen the king, the Lord of heavenly forces!"

Then one of the winged creatures flew to me, holding a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt has departed, and your sin is removed."

Then I heard the Lord's voice saying, "Whom should I send, and who will go for us?"

I said, "I'm here; send me."

PSALM 138

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise.

**I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your Name,
because of your love and faithfulness;**

For you have glorified your Name and your word above all things.

When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.

All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord, when they have heard the words of your mouth.

They will sing of the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord.

Though the Lord be high, he cares for the lowly; he perceives the haughty from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe;

you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.

The Lord will make good his purpose for me;

O Lord, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands

EPHESIANS 4:11–16

He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. As a result, we aren't supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ, who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part.

LUKE 5:1-11

One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets." So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink.

When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too.

Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

SERMON HYMN: *Will You Come and Follow Me?*

BLESSING: Beloved, life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel with us, so be quick to love and make haste to be kind. As you leave this place, the blessing of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you, now and forever. Amen.