

Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church  
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Newark, Delaware

Matthew 10:24-39

“Dabble in or All in?”

Last Monday at lunch Pat and I sat with a woman we did not recognize. We soon discovered she was considering to sell her present house and move to Ware Presbyterian Village.

My ears picked-up. She asked some questions about living at Ware and how did we like it. She asked where we had moved from. From Wilmington, DE. On 22<sup>nd</sup> Street just off Baynard Blvd. She was not familiar with that area. She said she and her husband had lived for quite a number of years near the Art Museum in Wilmington.

As our conversation moved along she said that she was visiting retirement villages ... “I enjoy the complementary lunches, she said ... and this lunch today is very good.” She listed retirement places she had visited. She said she wanted to taste them all. We laughed.

In a lull in the conversation, getting back to the Art Museum, I asked something like ... “You lived near the Art Museum ... you like art? You are an artist. Oh no, she said, I just dabble in art. “Dabble” That’s an expression I haven’t heard for a long time.

“Dabble” ... that’s like, I go and take a look.

I browse around.

I have a passing interest.

So she dabbled in art and dabbled in retirement homes.

So there’s the title for my sermon this morning. Well, at least the first half of the title.

Later last Monday, I listened to an interview with Jurgen Klinsmann, coach of Team USA soccer.

The interviewer doubted that Team USA would make it out of the first group.

Doubted that they would even win a game given that they were in probably the most difficult group

of teams. Coach Klinsmann affirmed, “**We’re all in.**”

We have defined and adopted winning strategies.

We’ve challenged and picked the best, most committed players for our team.

We’ve practiced hard.

We’ve played excellent teams in preliminary games, so we have been tested.

We’ve have the best nutrition,  
the most rigorous training.

**“WE ARE ALL IN.” he insisted.**

And later that day they beat Ghana.

A nemesis who had beaten them in two previous World Cups.

Now, this afternoon, it’s Portugal.

**Dabble in – All in.** Where do you stand on that continuum?

I believe it depends on **where** you stand...and **what** you are looking at.

If **where** you **stand** ... is rock-solid and secure ...

And if where you are **looking** heralds sunny days ...  
**then dabbling is reasonable.**

If **where** you **stand** ... has brought you satisfaction and good times ...

and if where you are looking guarantees more of the same

**then dabbling is sensible.**

If **where** you **stand** ... is joyful, brimming with hope, content in the faith of your forbearers ...

And if where you are **looking** forecasts more of the same, yes, simply hold the course ....

**then dabbling can make sense.**

But if, where you **stand** is shaking ground, security upset, you feel kind of like you’re trekking through sand ... perhaps even sinking in the sand ...

And if where you are looking offers no hand-holds –or  
the next handhold is always just out of reach.

Then dabbling is not enough ...  
dabbling only delays inevitable demise.

And if where you **stand** has left you flabby and weak,  
frustrated and afraid ...

and if where you are **looking** is marked by clouds  
and storms, violence and pain ...

Indeed, dabbling will not clear vision.

And if where you stand leaves you isolated and lonesome,  
loved-ones gone, dear friends out of touch ... now the drone of  
the same-old, same old.

And if where you are looking is sparse, bereft of  
new friends and acquaintances ... without  
meaningful activities that engage your God-given  
gifts ...

Then, again, dabbling is not enough

Dabbling is merely, as the old adage put it ...like rearranging  
the chairs on the decks of the Titanic. And singing, “Nearer  
My God, to Thee.”

Our Gospel lesson this morning is a part of a larger section of  
scripture referred to as Discipleship Discourses. Lessons for  
living the way of Jesus.

Do you want to make something more of your life?

**(Come follow Jesus.)**

Do you want to embark on a journey .... with sin  
forgiven, guilt transformed ... truthful connections  
made with others? **(Come follow Jesus.)**

Do you want to shape an enduring difference  
with your family, your community ...yes even  
the world? **(Come follow Jesus.)**

I know this has been your intention ... perhaps for years ...  
possibly while singing a favorite hymn, such as “Here I am,  
Lord ...I have heard you calling in the night. Here I am, Lord!”  
In those moments of affirmation and passion it is clear there is

a better way. A more faith-filled way. At any age. In whatever stage in life.

**(Come follow Jesus.)**

The recurring theme in these recorded saying of Jesus is that dabbling will not be sufficient. Will not ease the pain. The depression. The guilt. The loneliness.

You can seemingly maintain control of your life ... and perhaps even the control of others, but dabbling will only divert you from honest healing of heart and mind and bring peace.

Jesus is talking with his followers, but I find him talking with me, too. Though his way is difficult. I'd prefer a workout less intense.

A disciple is not above his teacher, Jesus insists.

It is enough to be **like** your teacher.

A slave is not above his master. Rather, let the slave be **like** his master.

Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it. And those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Those are difficult words. Tough challenges. Especially when we have already lost so much:

Lost a dear friend/lost many friends.

Lost a child ... your spouse? And those losses can be registered even without physical death, and they are just as devastating...sapping us of energy and delight and hope.

Lost familiar ways of handling life. Ways that always seemed to work for us.

Lost mobility – flexibility -- mental agility.

And those losses multiply. And pile-up. And twist us into shapes where we may even fail to recognize ourselves ... and where **others** may even fail to recognize us.

They may say, "That's just not like Bob" Or Mary. And **we** may scratch our own heads and wonder ... "No ... that isn't me."

Indeed, perhaps that explains at least **some** of our losses ... The loss of some of those still around. But now out of touch. And our loneliness deepens.

But yes, we can make something more of our life?

**(Come follow Jesus.)**

Embark/or re-embark on a journey .... with sin forgiven, guilt transformed ... truthful connections made with others? **(Come follow Jesus.)**

Yes, we can shape an enduring difference for our family, our community, our Church ... ..yes even the world?

**(Come follow Jesus.)**

"Here I am, Lord. It is I, Lord. I will go Lord, as you lead me.

**(Come follow Jesus)**

**Not Dabbling. But all in. Full throated. Heart and Mind and Spirit.**

**Don't be bent out of shape when you hear Jesus say ...**

"Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me." **You are all in.** And you know and respect God's priorities.

And don't grieve as those who have no hope when Jesus says, "whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." **For you are all in.** And you know and respect God's priorities.

And more from Jesus ... "Whoever does not take up his cross/her cross and follow me is not worthy of me." That's an enduring challenging but not unthinkable for those "All in." For

those who find their life will lose it. And those who lose their life for Jesus' sake will find it.

### **Dabble ... or all in?**

Jesus invites us to a way of living that transforms fear into hope. Loss into gain. Lament into joy.

A way of living that recognizes that our destiny is in the hands of a loving God and so understands that there is nothing to dread.

Armed with such an assurance, those who trust are empowered to approach the cross in a new way.

No, the cross does not mean passive acceptance of the injustice that seems to permeate this creation.

Instead, the cross is the sign of the realm of God which is to come, but of which we have a foretaste now.

An inner strength that is known by those who are obedient to the call of Jesus, the Christ, in their lives.

Those who live by the light of faith challenge the evil powers in this world with the certainty of the faithful. Of those who are "all in" with Jesus' way. Knowing that he prevails against every hurt and challenge.

Why dabble? When "all in" is what you have been created for, yearning for ... and which promises you life ... life abundant. Life full and overflowing. At any age. At any stage.