

Baccalaureate

June 12, 2016

Tyler Callum

When the council of churches was organizing special services for the year, I knew that I wanted to do the baccalaureate service. It was not too long ago that I was in the same position as all of you, with almost no idea what I was doing, aside from going to plenty of Penn State games, but I am told that isn't a career. Now I realize that saying how young I am, makes me sound much older than I would like. Since then I have had to listen to more people speak at graduation services than anyone should have to bear. I have heard speakers peddle the same stuff time after time, telling me to dream my own dream, chase my own star, saying you can be anything you want to be. They may as well just say, sorry I've got nothing for you, you're on your own, good luck. So I am not going to waste your time listening to that message, when you could just buy a cheesy Hallmark card.

The Bible tells us that when the Israelites left Egypt there was a group within their number called the rabble. The rabble is the group that is on the journey but did not believe in the journey, or the God who called them to it. Their tolerance for discomfort was low, their capacity for complaint was high. Every journey you go on, is going to have some rabble in it, they do not let them speak at baccalaureate services but I am telling you, they're waiting for you. In Numbers 11, the rabble got the Israelites riled up, reminding them of the food that they had in Egypt, but on this journey they only have mana, the food that literally is what is it. The mana which they have to collect on a daily basis. Every day, day after day, God kept the Israelites alive with this critical question, what is it, what is it O God that you are doing with us out here in the

desert, what is it Lord that is so special about the promised land, and what is it that has to happen in our lives before we can enter it? Down through the centuries this critical question kept being asked, until we come to Christ, and now we ask a more particular question, what is it Jesus that You are doing today? Jesus, what are you doing in the lives of these graduates today as they journey on into the desert?

But inevitably as we all journey into the unknown we are going to encounter the rabble, which often lives within our own hearts. Which is why I never understood why everyone always says to follow your heart, if your heart is like mine it is more a bad committee meeting. The rabble within ourselves will start to make us cry out, if only, if only I could get a job, if only I could find someone special, if only I had done something different. The problem with, if only, is it preoccupies you with the future or the past, and that takes our focus away from the present, which is the only place that the mana can be found. This mysterious life giving grace of God, it comes a day at a time. Without the ability to ask what is Jesus doing in my life today, we are always anxious, never joyful. Don't let the rabble that lives within your own heart overwhelm you with anxiety, instead we must all go out again and again to find the mana of grace that God continues to give us.

Moses did not do a great job with this. In Numbers 11, he gets burned out by the rabble and God has to appoint seventy elders to prophesize and speak God's grace to the people as they journeyed along. The apostle Paul, knew something of the rabble within his own heart, continually asking God to take away the thorn that plagued him. In our second reading, Paul has a vision to go into Macedonia, after he and his companions are kept from going in every other direction. And at first everything goes great, at first. Lydia is converted, and it seemed that everything was just going to keep getting better. But then beginning in verse sixteen, they

encounter a slave girl who is demon possessed, who follows them around shouting that they are slaves of the most high God. Which is pretty accurate actually. Eventually Paul heals her because he had become so annoyed. When some men who were using this girl to make money predicting the future find out, they have Paul and his companions thrown in jail. And at this point on the journey, with their feet in stocks, in jail, you would think that Paul's companions have to be wondering about this vision. Are you sure that God wanted us to go to Macedonia? Are you sure it wasn't Bermuda, they both end in a.

You all have a calling, but somewhere along the journey it is going to get difficult and you are going to question this calling. But that is not what happens in the text, even when it has gotten about as hard as it could possibly get. Instead they begin to pray and they sing, and the other prisoners have to listen to them. I like to imagine that they sang the Psalms, like Psalm 136, which after every line reaffirms the steadfastness of God's love. An act of faith which affirms that even along the difficult journey when we may wonder whether we are in way over our heads, we hope, and sing, proclaiming that God's love remains, and we ask what is Jesus doing with me today?

I have no idea what God is calling you all to do, you may have figured it out already, you may think you've figured it out, or you may still be waiting to figure it out. At times on your journey you are going to feel empty, you are going to feel unsure, it is going to be the more difficult than you can imagine. But even when the journey is hard, when times are bad, know that you have been given a mission, and continue to ask yourselves what Jesus are You doing with me today? Where are you sending me today? And in faith that God will continue to pour out His steadfast love into your lives, sing in the joy you have been given, as those who have been sent on a holy mission.