

Our second reading this morning will tell the story of the first recorded faith crisis in the early church. This reading will be found in the book of Acts. The Book of Acts is commonly called “The Acts of the Apostles.” This is the book in the Bible which tells the dramatic story of the birth and expansion of the church.

The author of Acts is the same author as the gospel of Luke. The book of Acts introduces itself by referring to the gospel of Luke’s account of the life of Jesus through his resurrection. Luke then shares with us that after the resurrection Jesus again appears on the earth and gives instructions to his apostles.

Jesus spends 40 days on earth after his resurrection teaching his apostles. He orders the apostles to remain in Jerusalem and to wait for promises from God. Jesus promises them that the Holy Spirit will appear among them and guide them toward next steps.

But the apostles are frustrated. They are frustrated because the way forward seems very cloudy. They want Jesus to restore Israel and they want it done now. But Jesus tells them that it is not their place to know the future and that God’s time is not their time. They are going to have to wait.

As Jesus concludes his teaching, a cloud appears, and Jesus ascends into the cloud. As the apostles watch this occur, two other men in white robes appear and they tell the remaining apostles that Jesus will come again one day in the future.

The apostles then return to Jerusalem where they gather together and pray for discernment. And it is not just them that gather to pray. We are told that they gather with several women including the mother of Jesus.

In our reading this morning there will be a gruesome description of Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus, falling into the ground and dying. However, the gospel of Matthew describes Judas hanging himself. This is one of those places where details in the Scriptures contradict one another.

Read Acts 1:15-26

Today is Mother's Day. A day we set aside in our culture to celebrate the ideals of motherhood. But as any good mother or father knows, parenting requires the parent to make some tough decisions that they think is best for their child. Sometimes those decisions are made well and sometimes not so well. In the moment it can be very hard to tell if the right decision is made.

Let's watch this scene from the movie *Ray* about the life of Ray Charles. Ray Charles, of course, is blind. Watch as his mother makes a difficult decision about what to do when young Ray faces a crisis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkmvuV6PK20>

In the scene we read from the book of Acts, the remaining 11 apostles are facing a difficult decision. The decision to replace Judas who had betrayed Jesus and was now dead. The apostles did not have a Book of Order which gave them instructions about what to do if they needed to replace one of the apostles. They had to make it up as they went along.

It is into this void that the apostle Peter assumes leadership. Peter stands up among the believers which now number 120 men and women. These people were followers of "The Way" since the term Christian had not yet come about to describe them.

Peter informs the crowd that the life and death of Judas was part of God's plan. But that it was now time to replace him. Peter lays out the criteria that this new apostle must be someone who has known Jesus personally. Following these guidelines, the apostles present two names to consider. One is named Barsabbas and the other is named Matthias.

Each of the two men present their resumes and then the crowd begins to pray. After this time of prayer, the apostles then decide to cast lots and decide on who the next apostle will be. We would expect some other form of balloting to occur rather than a game of chance like rolling dice.

But that is what the apostles do. They cast lots and the lot falls on Matthias. Matthias is chosen to be the next apostle to replace Judas. The number 12 is restored which is a biblical number going back to the 12 tribes of Israel.

Matthias is chosen so we would expect that he would then assume some type of role in the ministry as it goes forward. But interestingly, after his selection as an apostle we never hear from Matthias again. Matthias makes this brief appearance as the replacement for Judas and then disappears forever from any recorded portions of the Bible.

So why do we never hear from Matthias again? Some people have an interesting interpretation. Some interpret the selection of Matthias as a mistake. Some read this passage and conclude that since Matthias is never mentioned again that he turns out to be a failure as an apostle.

Some read this passage to mean that the disciples turned inward in their selection when they should have turned outward. The interpretation is that the apostles should have sought out someone that was unlike them and had a different set of experiences than what was common among all of them.

So, I began to wonder about that. What if the apostles did make a mistake? What if they chose someone who did not turn out to be a very good leader for the early church? If they made a mistake, what does this mean concerning God's providence?

Making mistakes is something that we all can relate to. Every one of us has had to face situations in life when you had to make a choice. Maybe you were faced with temptation of some kind and you gave in. Maybe you faced some major life decision and you feel that you made the wrong choice.

Maybe you were given a couple of options and you selected the wrong option. Because of your error, you find yourself beating yourself up.

If you find yourself regretting a decision that you have made, pay attention to what happens in this story from Acts. If the apostles made a mistake in choosing Matthias, God's will is still carried out. Matthias does not become the next great evangelist, but an outsider named Paul does become this next great evangelist.

In fact, Paul the outsider becomes the most important character in the New Testament outside of Jesus.

So, on this Mother's Day we celebrate the love of mothers. But we also give ourselves room to accept that mothers don't always make the right decisions. Like all of us they do the best that they can do.

So, we are invited to either forgive our mothers or allow those of us who are mothers to forgive ourselves. Maybe this act of forgiveness can be the biggest and most important Mother's Day gift that we can give.

Even though we make mistakes, we learn from this story from Acts that despite our mistakes God's will is still carried out.

Thanks be to God that God is stronger than any mistakes that we will ever make.
AMEN.

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