

HEAD LINES

A monthly message from Chip Denton, Head of School
September 2020



Dear Trinity Community,

Welcome to what may be the most uncertain and unsettling year in Trinity's 25-year history. In this moment, I'd like to tell you a story.

Once upon a time in a land far away, there was a group of people who had a mission. They were working at a frenzied pace; people were coming at them asking more than they could give.¹ They were busy, stressed. They missed meals and lost sleep.² These people gave up all kinds of things to deliver their mission.³ "Do you have any idea what I have sacrificed for this cause?" they asked.⁴



They were keenly aware that their mission was a matter of life and death.⁵ They were ignorant of the most important information they needed to make their best decisions. There was so much they didn't know, and no amount of study and research would fix that. And yet they were called to act. Not acting was not an option.⁶

Their leaders were making decisions they didn't understand or agree with.⁷ They were embroiled in conflict, on the left and on the right. Almost every decision they made upset someone. "Why did he do that?" was a common refrain, and the critics were certain and self-righteous in their criticisms.⁸ The best, most sacrificial and benevolent acts that some did brought criticism and anger from others. "That's a waste of effort and resources."⁹ They compared what they were doing to what others did and asked, "Why can't you do it *that way*?"¹⁰ Their mission, choices, and decisions disappointed, angered, and alienated some who were very dear to them.¹¹ Just when the needs and demands seemed overwhelming, they were told, "You need to fix this. Nobody else."¹²

The team that was called to deliver this mission did not all get along. They wondered how they had come together and whether they really belonged together.¹³ It was not a group designed for consensus: some of them were close to each other and tight; there were newbies and veterans, radicals and conservatives, the demurring and the outspoken, talkers and doers. Some were all in; some were not. Some trusted the leadership more than others did, who doubted and asked for proof and justification.¹⁴ Some lasted; some decided they couldn't do it any longer.¹⁵ This team argued with one another, so much so that they were ashamed to tell others about it. They compared themselves to each other and were deeply critical of the work that the others were doing. It was a broken team.¹⁶

Fear was epidemic. They were terrified. They had the howling fantods so bad that they cried out aloud, to others, "Don't you care if we die?"¹⁷ They wrestled over and over with the question: Can we trust the people in charge?¹⁸

Nothing was easy, and this was so frustrating: headwinds everywhere, never with the grain.¹⁹ Some of what they were being asked to do was literally impossible.²⁰ Only prayer could fix those things.²¹ Calamities piled on one another, making their work exceedingly complex and difficult. To pandemic was added other natural disasters.²² They prayed that they could just make it through the hard season before the worst of it came. They knew that there was a limit to how long they could go on like this, and they prayed for relief.²³

Their leaders reversed their decisions, sometimes publicly.²⁴ Some of the people asked for special favors, for exceptions.²⁵

Of course, eventually others heard about this, and it incensed them. Deep resentment and indignation built up and made it much harder for them to work well together as a team.²⁶ Sometimes the squeaky wheel got the grease, which frustrated many.²⁷

Popular opinion, the mood of the majority, the latest polls tended to influence their work powerfully. And this swung wildly in short amounts of time, from one week to another. Everyone was afraid of the crowd.²⁸ People wanted to know what their authority was—on what basis, with what data and what interpretation and what experts they were doing what they were doing.²⁹


Here’s how their story ended, as one of them told it: “They were terrified.”³⁰

Whose story is this? Is it yours? Ours at Trinity today? I expect that all of us found ourselves in that story somewhere. (Maybe you thought I was talking about you—or me?)

But it’s not actually, first, our story. It’s another Story. It’s the story of the Gospel of Mark (see the endnotes), the Bigger Story that we are invited by Jesus to join. It’s a comfort, I suppose, to be reminded that the challenges we face are hard but not unique. But the biggest gain in this telling is to realize the difference between our stories and Mark’s: How often have we told our COVID story without a Jesus in it? But in Mark, Jesus is everywhere. Jesus *is* the story. It is not about us. None of us can play that part of the story. Non Nobis.

Our real story is not one that asks, “When will this COVID end?” or “Should we be in school without a vaccine?” Our real story is one that asks, “Who is this that even the wind and the waves—and the virus—obey?”³¹ Will we trust him and follow him? This year, more than ever, I am thankful that the Head of Trinity School is and always has been the Lord Christ.

Non Nobis,



Chip Denton
Head of School

Endnotes - Our REAL Story

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|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Mark 1:29-34 | 11. Mark 3:31-34 | 21. Mark 9:29 |
| 2. Mark 1:35; 3:20; 6:31 | 12. Mark 6:37 | 22. Mark 13:5-8 |
| 3. Mark 6:8-9 | 13. Mark 2:13-17 | 23. Mark 13:18-20 |
| 4. Mark 10:28 | 14. Mark 6:2-3 | 24. Mark 10:13-16 |
| 5. Mark 8:34-35; 9:30-32 | 15. Mark 3:13-19 | 25. Mark 10:35 |
| 6. Mark 13:32-35 | 16. Mark 9:33-39 | 26. Mark 10:41 |
| 7. Mark 1:35-39; 2:1-12 | 17. Mark 4:38 | 27. Mark 10:46-52 |
| 8. Mark 2:6-7 | 18. Mark 5:35-40 | 28. Mark 11:8; 15:6-15 |
| 9. Mark 14:4 | 19. Mark 6:47-48 | 29. Mark 11:28 |
| 10. Mark 2:18 | 20. Mark 10:23-27 | 30. Mark 16:8 |
| | | 31. Mark 4:41 |