

# Moving On

Dr. Lal Hmingliani Browne



Mark 6:1-13

*“In Which: A Search Is Organized, and Piglet Nearly Meets the Heffalump Again” from The House at Pooh Corner, Chapter Three.*

POOH WAS SITTING in his house one day, counting his pots of honey, when there came a knock on the door. “Fourteen,” said Pooh. “Come in. Fourteen. Or was it fifteen? Bother. That’s muddled me.”

“Hallo, Pooh,” said Rabbit.

“Hallo, Rabbit. Fourteen, wasn’t it?”

“What was?”

“My pots of honey that I was counting.”

“Fourteen, that’s right.”

“Are you sure?”

“No,” said Rabbit. “Does it matter?”

“I just like to know,” said Pooh humbly. “So as I can say to myself: ‘I’ve got fourteen pots of honey left.’ Or fifteen, as the case may be. It’s sort of comforting.”

“Well, let’s call it sixteen,” said Rabbit. “What I came to say was: Have you seen Small anywhere about?”

“I don’t think so,” said Pooh. And then, after thinking a little more, he said: “Who is Small?”

“One of my friends - and - relations,” said Rabbit carelessly. This didn’t help Pooh much, because Rabbit had so many friends - and - relations, and of such different sorts and sizes, that he didn’t

know whether he ought to be looking for Small at the top of an oak tree or in the petal of a buttercup.

“I haven’t seen anybody today,” said Pooh, “not so as to say ‘Hallo, Small,’ to. Did you want him for anything?”

“I don’t want him,” said Rabbit. “But it’s always useful to know where a friend and relation is, whether you want him or whether you don’t.”

“Oh, I see,” said Pooh. “Is he lost?”

“Well,” said Rabbit, “nobody has seen him for a long time, so I suppose he is. Anyhow,” Rabbit went on importantly, “I promised Christopher Robin I’d Organize a Search for him, so come on.”...Pooh said good-bye affectionately to his fourteen pots of honey, and hoped they were fifteen; and he and Rabbit went out into the Forest.

This is our Independence Day weekend. It is a time for parades and bands and flags and fireworks. It is a time for celebrating the struggles that protected our independence as a nation. It is a time for gratitude to God for those who fought and died for our freedom and those who now defend us.

It is a time for all Americans to recommit our loyalty as citizens of our country. It is a time for Americans who are people of faith to pledge ourselves to that original vision of being “one nation, under God, with Liberty and Justice for all.”

This is a communion Sunday. It is a time for the gathering of the people of the church. We come together as disciples of Christ around this table. We remember through bread and wine God’s love poured out for us in Jesus our Lord. We celebrate the miracle of this great mystery. We are renewed and transformed and given energy and direction

to leave the table to make more disciples in Christ’s name. And, having made them, we invite them to return with us to this table – an ever-increasing host of people loving and worshipping and serving God.

Today our path to the Lord’s Table brings us through two stories in the Gospel according to Mark chapter 6.

In the first story we learn that Jesus’ return to his hometown was marked by resistance. Jesus found himself unable to do much in the face of rejection. He could have responded with raw power compelling acceptance, admiration and belief. Instead, Jesus stays true to himself. He respects the freedom each person has to accept or reject his love/to love or not love him back.

Again and again the miracles Jesus does are accompanied with his words, “Your faith has made you well.” Jesus desires the person healed (or forgiven) to be a willing participant. Jesus does not force Grace on anyone.

But there is little willing participation to be found in his hometown. People choose not to see beyond what they think they already know about Jesus. Accepting that reality with sorrow, Jesus

went moving on preaching and teaching to those who would receive him.

It is interesting that there is no recounting of Jesus shaking the dust off his feet as he leaves Nazareth. Maybe he understands that the people of Nazareth have a harder time than other people believing in him.

His hometown people of Nazareth think they already know all about Jesus. That is the greatest obstacle to what they need to know. Perhaps Jesus goes moving on with the dust of Nazareth still on his feet, because he knows that time belongs to God.

The lack of reception now does not mean that God does not have another time for them. In time Nazareth did become a Christian village. Today there are 16 churches there and it is the center of the Christian population in Israel.

The second story tells us that Jesus didn’t just go ‘moving on.’ He responds to resistance by sending his disciples out, on their own, for the first time. He sends them by twos to speak his word, offer his healing, and invite others to his love and grace.

The logic of all of this is not so complicated. In fact it is simply illustrated in our Winnie the Pooh

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story about Rabbit's lost Friend-and-Relation, named Small. Rabbit knows he cannot cover the whole Forest by himself. He needs help and sends each of his friends to search an allotted area.

He tells Pooh to start at the Six Pine Trees and work towards Owl's house. Unfortunately Rabbit hurries off before he tells Pooh who or what "Small" is. Various mishaps and misadventures happen but, in the end, the organized strategy works. Owl and Eeyore and Tigger and Pooh and Piglet and Kanga and Roo and Rabbit all look. And, even though it is by accident, Piglet finds Small.

The 4th of July reminds us that it takes the effort of multitudes of people working together and immense sacrifice to defeat aggression and oppression.

Let me translate Winnie the Pooh and the Fourth of July back into the New Testament reading.

Today, on our way to the Lord's Table, we learn from the Gospel writer Mark that resistance and loss are to be anticipated in the living of our Christian faith. They are predictable faith crises. Following Jesus' example, we must respect those who resist, trusting them to the timing of God's mercy and we keep moving on making more disciples for the service of Christ.

Secondly, we learn that moving on involves getting others to join us as the multiplied presence of Christ's love in ever-new places to ever-new people. Jesus teaches us that moments of resistance are precisely the time to multiply ourselves. This lets us by-pass and reach beyond the blockage.

In sending his disciples, Jesus has transformed them from students and followers to become the multiplied Body of Christ - reaching 6 times as many places as Jesus could by himself.

Last week we commissioned 10 new Stephen Ministers and ordained and installed 2 new deacons. Altogether we have 43 active Stephen Ministers and Leaders, 192 Deacons and 40 people as part of our home communion and visitation ministry teams.

Day of Hope is coming up. Summer Mission trips for youth and adults are happening right now locally and globally. We continue to feed the hungry through the food pantry. We have growing ministries for children and families. We share in music and worship honoring the greatness and love of God. Not to mention how many people serve in tutoring, and hospitality and memorial services. Think about all these people – who are the very compassion and presence of Christ multiplied again and again.

Today we gather at the Lord's Table. We gather as equals in the eyes of God – whatever differences there may be amongst us. We come as people who once were lost and now are found. We come as those who are always moving on to search and find and invite others to become disciples of Christ.

When we come, we find that God is present at this table. We discover that we have stepped through a sacred door for this is not any table, it is the Lord's Table. Jesus himself is with us. At this Table we receive the very nature and spirit of Christ in the bread we eat and the cup we drink.

And when we go from here, we go moving on as the empowered and multiplied Body of Christ in the world making disciples for the service of Christ. Amen.



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