**Sermon Sparkler for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost**

I feel dragged in two directions by this week’s Gospel. On one hand, this request for faith is an immediate response to Jesus’ command to forgive even when it is hard. On the other hand, this lesson fits into the larger conversation about discipleship we find throughout Luke’s gospel.

Jesus’ response to, “Geee, this forgiveness stuff sounds hard, please give us faith enough to be forgiving” is “be faithful in a little, and you will then be faithful in much.” It feels kind of like Nike’s slogan, “Just do it” and reminds me of a friend who gets annoyed when people linger at parties, you know how it is, those farewells that take 45 minutes to an hour. The phrase he uses to respond to this is, “the key to leaving a party, is leaving!”

And so too faith. “The key to having more faith, is being faithful” or something like that.

At the same time, there is the larger theme of discipleship in which these two sayings are thoroughly soaked. We are called to follow Jesus; Jesus, who reverses things—the sovereign who serves. Think about the event we celebrate on Maundy Thursday, the Master washes his Disciple’s feet. He is the master who serves the slave, and yet, because he has served us, we serve our neighbors in need. Our duty is to follow him.

* What small step of faithfulness are your members being called to? How might you help them see the way that act will grow?
* What “duty” is your baptismal identity calling you to today?
* Luther writes, “A Christian is the most free sovereign of all, and subject to none; a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one.” How is that reality reflected in your life and in today’s Gospel lesson?