

“...; they were fishermen.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Once upon a time, in Sept. of 1862 to be more precise, the Civil War was ‘tilted,’ decisively, to the South.

The morale of the Northern army dipped to its lowest of the war. Large numbers of Union troops were in full retreat in Virginia.

Northern leaders began to fear the worst. They saw no way to reverse things, i.e., to turn the beaten, exhausted troops into a useful army again.

BUT, & there’s that proverbial **BUT** again, there was one general, who might be able to work just such a needed miracle. And that was General ‘McClellan.’ He was the one who had trained these men for combat...and the men loved and admired him. However, the War Department didn’t see this. Nor did the Cabinet see it. Only President Lincoln, himself, saw it.

Fortunately, Lincoln ignored the protests of his advisors and put McClellan back in command.

McClellan accepted the command. He mounted his great, black stallion and cantered down the dusty roads of Virginia.

What happened next is hard to explain:

Northern leaders couldn’t explain it. Northern soldiers couldn’t explain it.
Even McClellan, himself, couldn’t explain it.

McClellan met the retreating Union columns. He waved his cap in the air and shouted words of encouragement. When the tired men saw their beloved teacher, they began to take heart. They began to get the unexplainable feeling that, now, things could be different...things could be all right again.

When word spread that McClellan was back in command, this is how one historian explained it:

“Down mile after mile of Virginia roads, the stumbling columns came alive, and threw their caps and knapsacks in the air, and yelled until they could yell no more...because they saw this dapper, little rider outlined against the purple sunset. And this, in a way, was the turning point of the war.... No one could ever quite explain it.” *The Hallowed Ground*

But whatever it was, it gave Lincoln and the North what was needed at that exact time, at that exact place. And history was, forever, changed because of it.

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I share that true story with you because it illustrates, dramatically, the impact a leader can have.

In one of his essays, Ralph Waldo Emerson has this remarkable line:

**“Our chief want in life ...is somebody who can make us do what we can.”**

And, one of the persons who can do this is a great leader. So very often, we, ourselves, cannot trigger the great potential that lies within all of us.

Funny as it may seem, most of us are like the lamp that Aladdin found on the seashore. We have a magnificent genie within us. **BUT**—the genie cannot get out by himself, nor can we, ourselves, release him. We need some Aladdin to come along, rub the lamp, and release the genie within us.

You see, this is what Emerson had in mind, when he said:

**“Our chief want in life ...is somebody who can make us do what we can.”**

And he quickly adds:

**“That is the service of a friend!”**

To which I quickly add:

**“That is, also, the service of Jesus Christ!”**

What is there in Jesus that makes him so different and more powerful than any other leader in history? The answer is simple.

Other leaders can only influence us, inspire us. Their influence is purely psychological. The impact of Jesus, on the other hand, is not only psychological, but also sacramental and, therefore, mystical!

**“What does this mean?” you ask.**

**Well (‘bout time), I am glad you asked that question!**

Simply put, it means that other leaders can fire us up. They can excite us. They can inflame us. They can ignite our imaginations. **BUT**...other leaders cannot, actually, give us their spirit. They can’t share with us their personal power and strength. If their followers are to change, it must come through their own power and effort.

**In the case of Jesus**, all this is different. Jesus can put his own spirit in us, just as he comes into us at Communion. He can share his own power with us. He can enter our mind, our heart, our very soul ...and help us do what we could never do alone.

To have Jesus enter into our life, we must do all we can to be as worthy and as prepared as possible. Then, as in Communion, we need only open our mind and heart to him. We must let go of our own restrictive, limiting control. We must let go and ‘let him.’ Trust him. He will do the rest.

**Now let me clarify this final point.** There is one thing Jesus can **not** do for us. It has to do with our freewill...a gift from God, along with our intellect, having been made to his image and likeness. He will not...because he **cannot** open the door to our mind, to our heart, or to our soul against our will.

He can do everything else, but he can’t do this. We, alone, hold the key to the door of our mind, our heart, and our soul. Just as in daily life, no one can force us to love them, nor can Jesus, in the spiritual life, force us to love him, which, by the way, is proved by our actions—how we love one another, as he has loved us! Only **we** can admit Jesus into our life and ...to the degree **we** choose.

I close with this prayer:

**“Who is this man ...walking along the shore by the shimmering sea?**

**Who is this man ...bright, shining, and yet terrible...**

who looks at us with searing eyes, eyes that search our very soul?

**Who is this man...who sees our very thoughts and reads our inmost heart?**

with loving, knowing eyes that seem to say:

**‘Nothing less than all of you is what I want...this and every day.’”**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**Oct. trip info, below.**

*Planning a trip some time in Oct. 2018; wondering if you are interested in joining me.  
This is what I am considering. Let me know if you have an interest in one. My cell: 412-759-5343.*

Caribbean cruise with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines... 1 week, approx. \$1,600 (inc. air)/person.  
**Itinerary to be determined... suggestions welcomed.**

Holy Land Tour... 11 days, inc. air, breakfast & supper, 4 or 5 Star hotels only, \$4,000 /person.  
**Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee, ViaCrucis, Last Supper, Gethsemane, Dormition, Nativity Church, Capernaum**

Italy Tour... 9 days, inc. air, breakfast & supper, 4 or 5 star hotels only \$3,700/person.  
**Rome, Tuscany, Florence, Assisi, & Venice**

Tours do NOT include lunches.

Neither cruise nor tours include optional Trip Insurance.