

Pentecost 6, Proper 10 Yr B: July 16, 2006: Amos 7:7-15; Psalm 85; Ephesians 1:1-14; Mark 6:7-13

There is a movie called; "Miracle" it is a true story of the 1980 United States Olympic Ice Hockey team that beat the unbeatable Soviet team to win the Gold Medal. This was a handpicked team of undisciplined college kids who really had no idea what it meant to be a part of a team. They just wanted to make a name for themselves. This is a story of grueling practices, exhausting workouts; players facing their own demons and having to dig deep within themselves when they thought there was nothing left to draw upon just to hang onto hope. The result was much more than just a win for their country it was a way to take the country's minds off the political and economic crises that were happening. They were contending with long gas lines, interest rates were at an all time high, the hostage situation in Iran and there were no summer games that year due to a protest by the United States against the Soviet led invasion of Afghanistan. This story is about a group of 26 young people who could bring hope back to a country that felt that there was no good news.

Herb Brooks the coach of the team not only worked these athletes physically, he also worked them mentally and emotionally. He made them do things over and over and over again until they accomplished it to his satisfaction. The one that stood out in my mind was how he kept asking them where they were from and they would say and finally one of them said he played for the United States. He then knew he had created a team, rather than a group of good hockey players as individual he had a team that could and would now work together to achieve the ultimate goal; to win the Gold medal for their country in 1980. It was incredible team work that made it possible to achieve the impossible.

Jesus was likely the first model for coach Brooks. Jesus coached his team of unlikely disciples and when his own community discredited him as we heard last week, he sends his disciples out two by two. He sends them out empty handed, with only the clothes on their backs and no provision for any of their survival needs. The team he was putting together had to know and understand from whence their very existence came. You see Jesus knew he would not be around long enough to help them learn everything they would need to know so he had to create a cohesive group that would be able to stay together after his death. Sending them out by twos assured him they would not be as likely to be distracted from the mission. They also would be able to draw upon each other for support when they became discouraged

Teamwork is essential, but keeping the team together requires something even greater than just being able to perform well in order to achieve a goal. When a team is well bonded and heading in the same direction with a common mission it is more doubtful that any member of the team will allow anything to get in the way. It also requires that the team be connected to a powerful person who is able to encourage and empower them to reach beyond their capabilities or personal expectations. For the 1980 Hockey team that person was Herb Brooks, a man of mystery and competence who believed in his team and urged them on to greatness. For the disciples it was Jesus who believed in them enough to hand pick them and teach them and then trust them to go out two by two to spread the good news that God loves them and that God wants them to love each other. The mission and the one whom they served made all of the difference between success and failure for both of these teams.

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Those same things will make the difference in the success of the completion of this merger too.

God has hand picked you all to bring this congregation together as one. God has chosen you! Each of you bring your own set of unique gifts and talents to the mission. Each of you bring your own way of loving and being loved. Determination to serve God in all of God's glory will assist you along the way. Seeing that you too can bring about a miracle of love in a community that is fearful and uncertain will motivate you to work together for the kingdom of God here in Clinton.

Oh, I know there are naysayers, just as Herb Brooks and the Hockey team had those who did not believe it could happen and Jesus had those who thought he was only the son of a carpenter, but in the end the negativity did not change the course of history. The team won and Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. So too Christ Church can be a united group of God's people working together to fulfill the mission that is waiting for you to claim. We are inheritors of the kingdom prepared for us.

I ask you now to take the thumb on your right hand and make the sign of the cross on your forehead, just as it was made the day you were baptized when you were marked as Christ's own forever. Again today we are reminded of our Baptismal vows and we are reminded WHOSE we are and WHO we serve.

In Christ all things are possible. In Christ we are to be all we were created to be; kind and loving, pure and holy, sacraments of God; the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. You are loved by God and you are disciples of God. We are called to carry on the mission given to the disciples long ago. You have the gifts, you have the ability, and you have the faith to be all God knows you can be. Go therefore and make this a success story...

Let us pray:

Gracious and loving God we thank you for the gift of story you have given us, we thank you for bringing so many people here today to assist in bringing this congregation together as One holy catholic and apostolic church. We thank you for the many gifts and talents among our members. Help us to remember we are all on the same team. Be with us today as we approach the altar to receive your Holy meal that as we come together to kneel before you we are fully aware of your presence among us; drawing us nearer to you.

Amen