

Acts 1:12-26

Today being Mother's Day, I pose this question, "Is mother a noun or a verb?" We might be quick to reply that it's a noun. Nouns are persons, places, or things. But do mothers receive beautiful cards and so much attention, on this day especially, because of what they are? Is not what they are bound together with what they do? Mothers mother. They mother their children. They give birth to them. They raise and nourish them. They sacrifice for them...for years on end.

In our text we see the name Mary. "*Mary, the mother of Jesus*" it says. The title of mother is given to Mary not simply because this is her relationship to Jesus, but also because she mothered Him in every sense of the verb. Pain, sweat, blood, tears...all of this Mary suffered, a sword even piercing her very soul, because Jesus she mothered.

Let me pose another question..."Is disciple a noun or a verb?" Again we would be quick to say it's a noun. It's what a person is...a person, that is, who is a follower of Jesus. Fine, we agree with that. But can we not also say that just as a mother mothers, so also a disciple disciples? In fact, disciple being a noun is meaningless unless it is also a verb.

The eleven apostles, Jesus' disciples, gathered together after Easter and His ascension, and before Pentecost - that's right where we are today - and Peter got up in the pulpit to preach. His sermon in our text points to the fact that Judas must be replaced. There must not be eleven disciples; there must be twelve. They all agree, and so they cast lots and Matthias is chosen. He becomes number 12 to replace Judas.

But why? Just to have an even number? It is true that Peter points to the Psalms in his sermon. "*Let another take (Judas') office,*" it says there. And since there are twelve tribes of Israel, the number twelve is significant. Jesus chose twelve disciples, not eleven.

Okay fine. So now there are twelve disciples again; twelve apostles. Do they just sit there as nouns? "Look at me...I'm a disciple. I just sit here, but that doesn't matter. I'm not a verb that does action; I'm a noun." No, the disciples disciplined. This is what the book of Acts tells us. They were active in proclaiming the Gospel. They led people who were lost in their sins to Christ. They started Christian congregations. And in the same way that mothers mother, the disciples of Jesus suffered greatly as they disciplined. They were beaten, imprisoned, persecuted, and in the end they were martyred.

All the disciples of Jesus, now apostles, disciplined in these ways. Peter did, so did James and John, Andrew and all the rest, except...except for one...Matthias. He just sits there like a noun. No verb action from him. None that we know of anyway. We meet Matthias here in Acts 1 and we never hear of him again; not hide nor hair. As far as we know he's the only one of the twelve disciples who is only a noun and not a verb. He might have done things for the Lord. He might have done some disciplining, maybe a lot of disciplining. But for all we know he never leaves the upper room in Jerusalem. As far as we know he's the only one of the twelve disciples who never becomes a verb.

What about us...are we nouns or verbs? Well, you mothers are verbs. Especially if you have young children, you spend much of your time mothering. As disciples of Jesus are we nouns or verbs? Disciples are people of faith. And unless faith is active it's not faith; it's mere head knowledge. Disciples receive God's treasures in the Gospel, and receiving they give; they give from what they have received.

Now be careful here. We are not called upon to judge each other. But each one should test himself to see whether his faith is genuine. Disciples disciple. They are nouns who act like verbs. We can't help it. This is what the living Christ does within us.

No two disciples have the exact same gifts and abilities. Some are gifted in leading others. Others are gifted with accounting skills. Some with music. Others with hospitality or with other gifts. But every disciple of Jesus is gifted with abilities in some way. Not one of us is supposed to just sit here as a noun and never act as a verb.

And yet we do. I do. I don't take action and step up to fill that board or committee. I don't volunteer to help in those little ways. I don't act as a verb. And maybe it's because I don't see my abilities. I doubt myself. And so I sit, like Matthias, and go through life as a noun.

But friends, the verb in you is Jesus. He is the one who acts. He's always been the verb. In Holy Baptism He acted for you, calling you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Through the Gospel that reaches your ears...through the Sacrament that enters your mouth, Jesus acts within you. Every bit of discipling you do is Jesus doing it through you. *"It is not I who live,"* says St. Paul, *"but Christ who lives in me."*

Now let's have some fun with our text here. The name Matthias in the Greek is very similar to the Greek word for disciple: Mattheitei. And so is it possible that Matthias is standing in as the twelfth disciple for all of us? We hear nothing more about Matthias because you and I finish his story. You and I become the verbs for Matthias. We are the ones who take action and become discipling disciples.

You and I are here in this upper room, and we need to be here, for we gather as sinful disciples; as disciples who have let our Lord down; who have failed to be the verbs we are called to be; who have acted more in ways that are sinful than in ways that serve the Lord. Yet this is why Jesus has brought us here, for here is His Gospel. Here in Word and in Sacrament He gives real forgiveness for sins that are very real. You are not without worth, even if you have sat like a noun all your life and done nothing for the Lord. He has done everything for you. He died for you, friend. That's the worth He places on you. He shed His blood for you, and here He gives it to you, for you are His precious disciple; holy in His eyes, without spot or blemish, for you are completely forgiven of all your sins.

And being His forgiven disciple, He is the verb in you. You are a noun - the object of His grace. And being this, He now uses you as a verb. You are disciples who disciple. You gather here and sit as nouns to receive, and Jesus leads you out to acts as verbs. Amen.