

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

“Lord, what about him?”

What would “they” have looked like?

“They” being your favorite movies with “somebody else” perhaps playing the lead role?

Imagine how it would have been different – say – to have someone other than Marlon Brando play the part of Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*.

Well, it might have happened. Other actors considered for the part included Orson Wells – George C. Scott – and, if you can believe it, Ernest Borgnine!

Somehow I just don’t see Ernie Borgnine making me an offer I can’t refuse – can you?

Then again, did you know that Tom Selleck of *Magnum P.I.* almost landed the role of *Indiana Jones* instead of Harrison Ford?

Writer and producer, George Lucas wanted Selleck – who was on a hot streak at the time. But, director, Steven Spielberg favored Ford – who was no slouch himself.

But, Spielberg won out – Harrison Ford was cast -- and the rest is history!

Which was probably good because Selleck’s mustache might have gotten in the way of him fighting Nazi’s and chasing down all those artifacts anyway.

Other interesting tidbits you might not know is that the “*Oscar*” Dustin Hoffman won for his portrayal of Benjamin Braddock in *The Graduate*, might have gone to quirky actor Charles Grodin – who was first offered the part instead.

Or...

That Eric Stoltz and “not” Michael J. Fox was the original Marty McFly in *Back To The Future*. In fact, production had begun and a few scenes were already shot before they decided that Stoltz just wasn’t the right fit.

Did you know that both Kevin Costner *and* Tom Hanks turned down the role of Andy DuFresne in *The Shawshank Redemption* – which turned out to be a big hit for actor Tim Robbins.

But, Hanks had his own moment of redemption when John Travolta nixed the chance to play *Forrest Gump*, and Hanks grabbed the part and walked off with an Academy Award instead!

It’s kinda fascinating when you think about how all these movies might have been different with somebody else in the lead.

I mean, can you imagine Carey Grant playing James Bond instead of Sean Connery?

Coulda` happened!

Or, Will Smith as “Neo” in *The Matrix* instead of Keanu Reeves?

Would these movies have worked with “different” actors in these roles?

Who knows?

But, we do know that when God casts “us” in a particular role – He doesn’t make mistakes!

And, our job isn’t to question God’s choice of roles for us...

Or, wonder why somebody else is playing a different part.

Our job is simply to be obedient in doing do our part and following Christ’s call in our own lives.

Now, even though we're in the second week of May and summer is (supposedly) just around the corner – we're still celebrating the season of Easter and the good news of the Resurrection.

And, one of the truly fascinating things about Scripture is that even though the core message of the Gospel is the same – that Jesus Christ is Risen – each of the Gospel writers highlight different points for us to consider as we wrestle with what the Resurrection means in our lives today.

So, for example -- just as we saw last week -- Luke's Emmaus Road story confirms the truth of Jesus' Resurrection. But, it also encourages us to trust in the Risen Lord's Presence even when we don't always realize He's there.

This is what the two disciples on the way to Emmaus discovered.

Jesus is still with them – even though they don't always recognize it!

So, the way each of the Gospel writers emphasize different parts of the Resurrection story fills in another piece of the puzzle – and helps us understand what it means to live as Jesus' people in light of this great event.

That being said – we need to ask what special piece of the puzzle is John filling in for us today?

Well, the epilogue to John's Gospel really serves “two” purposes.

On the one hand, it resolves the issue of Peter's failures and his guilt.

You might remember that Peter had famously – or perhaps I should say, “infamously” – denied Jesus three times the night He was arrested.

And, without a doubt, this had to be the lowest point of Peter's life.

Something he might've never gotten over!

But then, Jesus appears as Peter and his buddies wrap up a night of fishing.

And, there on the beach the Lord forgive Peter and renews his sense of calling.

But, no sooner does Jesus re-commission him again for service – than Peter begin obsessing over the Lord’s plan for somebody else!

The Scripture says:

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them.

When Peter saw him, he asked, “*Lord, what about him?*”

Now, when you really think about it, this is so typical – isn’t it?

It’s not enough to know what “we’re” supposed to be doing...

We want to know what “everybody else” is doing as well!

And, I guess it all comes down to fear!

We’re afraid – I suppose – that somehow, someway we’re getting the short end of the stick or aren’t being treated fairly.

I mean, how many of you parents have ever asked one of your kids to do something – maybe take out the trash or mow the lawn or shovel the driveway – and the first thing they say is, “*Well, how come “so-and-so (usually a brother or sister) isn’t doing anything?*”

“*How come I’ve got to do it?*”

Am I right?

And, then you respond by saying, “*Because I told you to!*”

Now, that should be the end of it. But, it never is!

It never is because in their minds they think somehow they're being cheated or treated unfairly.

And, the irony of it all coming from Peter at this particular time and in this particular point in his life, is that Peter suspects he's being treated unfairly too!

I mean, no sooner does Jesus forgive Peter and renew his calling, than Peter's attention turns to Jesus' plans for somebody else.

You see, Peter wants to make sure he's being treated fairly.

He suspects he isn't!

And, you know what? He's right!

He isn't being treated fairly!

But, that's the point!

The Lord isn't treating him fairly!

But, that's a good thing!

The fact is, "fairness" would dictate that Jesus completely write Peter off for the miserable failure he is – denying he knew Jesus – not once, but three separate times!

"Fairness" would hold Peter accountable for boasting that even if everybody else abandoned Jesus, he never would!

And, "fairness" would reckon the enormity of all Peter's sins squarely back on himself – burdening him with a debt he could never repay!

That's what "fairness" would be like!

But, Peter doesn't get "fairness."

Instead, what he gets Grace!

Peter gets what he doesn't deserve!

Jesus forgives him and renews his call to service.

But, the very minute God “blesses” him like this – Peter wants to know, “*Yeah – but is the other guy getting a better deal than me?*”

The first “house” Faith and I lived in was a church-owned parsonage in Pennsylvania.

It was an old farm house that sat in the back of the parking lot behind the church building. Nothing really special, but the church did a nice job fixing it up for us to live in.

It had a big country kitchen with knotty-pine cabinets...

A nice big living room and a study in the back for me with a small deck off to the side.

The installed a new bathroom and ladies from the church came over and helped Faith put up fresh wallpaper.

It wasn't the Taj Mahal! But, it was nice!

Certainly nicer than anything the two of us had ever lived in before.

And, we were happy.

That is, until I visited a minister friend of mine in Virginia who was also living in a church-owned parsonage.

But, the parsonage he lived in was newer...

It was a tidy brick ranch with a unified color scheme -- new carpeting -- and loads of living space!

And, when I compared “my” house with my “friend's” house...

Suddenly I wasn't as satisfied anymore!

Never mind the fact that 5-minutes before I stepped in "his" house I was perfectly content with my own situation!

Once I saw his, it all changed!

My preoccupation with what the Lord had given my friend, distracted me from what the Lord had given me!

And, this is exactly what happens to Peter!

You see, the minute he looks over his shoulder and spies John following him and Jesus, he immediately loses focus on God's unique call in his own life, and begins wondering what God's got in mind for John.

And so, Jesus really has to be blunt with him.

When Peter asks, "*Lord, what about him?*" Jesus says, "*It's none of your business!*"

Now, that's not exactly what Jesus says!

But, that's what He means!

"My plans for someone else are none of your business!"

"The only thing you should be concerned about are My plans for you – and how you're responding to My call in your own life."

And, what Jesus is saying to Peter, He's also saying to all of us today.

Each of us have our own unique calling from Jesus Christ.

Just like with snowflakes – no two are exactly the same!

But, the best way *not* to live up to our potential as His disciples is to start becoming needlessly pre-occupied with the discipleship of others.

When I was in high school, I was a pretty good runner.

In fact, I've pretty much been able to run all my life.

Of course, I've slowed way down now. But, back then I could just run and run and run forever.

So, I went out for track and, naturally they tried me at the mile.

And, I might have been pretty good at it. But, the key words here are "might have" – because I never really knew.

You see, I could never stay focused on just one thing.

I'd see someone running the 200 – for instance – and so I wanted to try that!

I'd watch the other kids long-jumping or high jumping and figured I'd try that too – even though I've got the "hops" of a herniated three-legged turtle wearing corrective shoes.

I'd convince a friend to teach me how to throw the discus – even though I was hovering around 110 pounds myself – and had no business being anywhere near the strength events.

And, when my coach suggested trying me at the pole vault, I "jumped" at the chance (no pun intended), because where else, I figured, could I do my event and then sit around on big thick mats soaking up some sun the rest of the day.

Now, maybe there's some value sometimes trying a little bit of everything.

On the other hand, because I was always interested in what "everybody else" was doing, I never really mastered what I was best suited for myself.

And, I never knew the thrill of experiencing what I was – perhaps – supposed to be.

Back some years ago, there was a cartoon featuring a character known as Tooter the Turtle.

Tooter was a mild-mannered little turtle who wore a straw hat and a bolo tie.

And, the thing about Tooter was, was that he never satisfied with his life or with who he was.

So he'd go to his friend, "Mr. Wizard."

And, Mr. Wizard would grant Tooter a wish turning him into something more exciting – like an astronaut, or a lumberjack, or a fireman, or a secret agent.

And at first, Tooter was in turtle-heaven! He got to live out his fantasies doing all kinds of exotic things a simple turtle like him could never do.

But by the end of the episode, Tooter would always manage to mess things up.

Then, he'd cry out, "*Help, Mr. Wizard! I don't want to be an astronaut, or a lumberjack or a fireman, or whatever it was he was, anymore!*"

Then, Mr. Wizard would invoke the magical chant to bring Tooter home.

And, the cartoon always ended with Mr. Wizard saying to Tooter:

***"Be what you are – and not what you're not.
In the end you'll be a happier lot."***

A good lesson for Tooter...

And, a lesson for us, as well.

"Lord, what about him?"

Well, I got news for `ya!

“Him’s” not the issue!

And, what God doing in anybody else’s life isn’t the point!

The point is Jesus Christ’s unique calling in “your own life” and what you’re doing with that calling!

How, you’re responding to His invitation to “Come, Follow Me!”

There’s a wonderful scene in the fifth book of C.S. Lewis’ “*Chronicles of Narnia*,” where a young man named Shasta -- out to save the kingdom of Narnia from invasion -- is visited one night by the great golden lion, Aslan.

Aslan, of course, is the “Christ-figure” in the “*Narnia*” series.

He’s a metaphor for Jesus Christ.

And, as they talk, Aslan reveals to Shasta his own history and Aslan’s place in it. Aslan shares with Shasta his early life as a boy, and his present journey to save Narnia and all that it means – and how Aslan himself had been with Shasta through it all...

Even though Shasta never realized it!

But, when Shasta asks Aslan to also explain the experiences of one of his friends as well, Aslan refuses!

“I am telling you your story, not hers.”

“I tell no-one any story but his own.”

Well, likewise, using C.S. Lewis’ imagery we can say that Peter has his own story...

And Peter must make his own decision to follow Christ...

Regardless of what anybody else may do!

And, of course, what was true for Peter...

Is true for us, as well!

Jesus tells no one any story but their own!

And, that's good because the only story we're accountable to in the end, is our own.

Otherwise, we'd get distracted by needlessly focusing on God's call to others...

What He's doing in somebody else's life...

And, whether He's really being "fair" to us!

Because, while "fairness" may be what we want...

"Grace" is what we really need!

And, "Grace" is what we discover when we begin minding our own business and start following Jesus' unique call in our own lives.

Amen.