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Proper21B21
St. Mark's, LaGrange

*Would that **all** the Lord's people were prophets,
and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!*

These are the words of Moses.
These are the words of a person
who has been leading God's people across the desert.

I can imagine saying these same words myself,
after leading God's people across
and in the midst
of the desert of COVID.

And it's not just me.
Senior Wardens
and vestry members,
chairs of committees.
Anyone who is a leader,
in any field,
church or otherwise.

*Would that **all** the Lord's people were prophets,
and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!*

Could you do it?
Do you feel up to being a prophet?

If the Lord would pour his spirit upon you,
would you feel up the challenge?

I don't always feel up to it.
It's rarely easy to lead God's people,
especially on the winding way through the desert.

I don't always get it right.
But I learned a long time ago
that you just show up,
and God is already there.

I don't always know where God is;
I don't always know exactly what we are supposed to do,
but I know that God is faithful.
I trust that God will *put his spirit* on me,
and on the people around me.

I might trust...
But I've got a lot of questions.

What did Ronald Reagan say
about the Communist government in the USSR?
Trust, but verify.

If I was my dad,
I'd do a decent Ronald Reagan impression.

But I'm not my dad,
so I will spare you my terrible Ronald Reagan impression.
Trust, but verify.

I might trust God;
I think I really do.
But I've got an awful lot of questions for God.

So...many...questions.

God pours his spirit on you,
and you're a leader.

But being a leader of God's people
does NOT,
in my experience,
mean having all the answers.

Instead,
it requires being able to ask the right questions.

Jesus' disciples don't have any questions today.
They've got ALL the answers.

*Someone was casting out demons in your name...
so we stopped them.*

Jesus says,
*Whoa,
whoa,
whoa.
Hold up.*

*Whoever is not against us is for us.
If he's doing good work in my name,
why would you stop him?*

*Because you aren't getting the credit?
Because you are worried
that they'll wind up more important than you?*

Jesus asks questions.
His disciples offer answers.

Most of the time,
when I ask people to step up and help,
they are willing to do it.

But sometimes,
they aren't.

Sometimes that has to do with busyness or schedules.
But most often,
people tell me that they just don't feel up to it.
*How can I teach kids about God
when I don't have any answers?*

*I'd feel like such a fraud.
How can I serve on the stewardship committee
when I don't like talking about money?*

Too often,
people tell me that they feel like frauds.
That they just don't have the right answers.

Too many questions they say,
not enough answers.

The truth is,
the person with many questions
is not a fraud.

The person with many questions is,
in my experience,
faithful.

It's the person who thinks they have all the answers,
that's the fraud.

What do you wish you had the answer to?

What burns within you,
what question,
what curiosity,
what wondering?

Wonder is one of the things we pray for
in our baptismal service.

That they would have joy and wonder in all your works, O Lord.

Wondering,
questioning,
is NOT a sign that you are on the wrong track.

It is a sign you are on the RIGHT track!

What questions do you have?
What have you always wondered,
but you felt like you couldn't ask,
or shouldn't ask?

Look in your pew.
There are slips of paper
and pens
and pencils.

Think about your question.

Maybe it's something about the service:

why do we use candles

or why is it called the sequence hymn?

Maybe it's something about life
and the world we live in.

Why would God be willing to live on this earth and die?

Why do bad things happen to good people?

I invite you to write down your question.

I do NOT promise to have an answer.

I wish I could.

I wish I could give you the thing

that makes splendid sense

out of the mysteries of the universe.

But I don't have that.

What I can promise

is to join you in your asking.

Your questions are my questions.

My questions are your questions.

Together,

we stand in awe and wonder,

before the Lord who made us all.

Last week,
our gospel said,
*The disciples did not understand him
and they were afraid to ask.*

If you are afraid to ask your questions,
you are in good company.

The saints of the church were sometimes afraid to ask.

We don't always want the answers.
But God invites our questions.
God invites our wonder.
God invites our wonder-ment.

I know that God loves me.
I don't always believe it.
I don't always act on it.

But I know that God loves *me*,
and every one of you.
God loves every person who has ever lived.

I know that.
Beyond that,
I wonder.
I fear.
I doubt.
I question.

Write down your questions,
and place them in the offering plate.

Or if that's not enough time,
between now and the offertory,
then take a little more,
and drop them in the basin on the way out of church.

Write down your questions,
even the ones you are afraid to ask.

Afraid because you think it's stupid,
or afraid because you aren't sure you want the answer.

They are all good questions.
They are all holy questions.

I can't promise you any answers.
But I can promise that God loves the questions.

I can promise that God loves me
and God loves you.

And that's the only answer we need.