

Epiphany 5, Year C
The Rev. Martha L. Hubbard

February 7, 2010
St. Paul's, Nbpt, MA

I will be brief this morning as we have the annual meeting following the service and we want honor the need we all have of getting home at a reasonable time. I just want to say that this morning's lessons speak to me about the way God's grace works in our lives to bring us to the places we need to be, to meet and be with the people we need to meet and be with. And God does that in surprising ways.

Was it just a chance meeting of Jesus with Simon and the sons of Zebedee that day on that beach in our Gospel? If we read the rest of the story it becomes clear that it was not. And what about Paul? He had spent his time breathing threats against the followers of Jesus, and had done all in his power to persecute them. Then God knocks him off his horse on the Damascus road and claims him as an apostle, though he was in his own words "*untimely born*". And so through the persecutor grace flows. Well scripture is just full of this same plot line. Things unfold in gracefully surprising ways and people look back and see clearly that all the time God was working under the surface. And our lives are full of this plot line too.

It was a fun lunch time exercise for the Vestry this past October on our retreat day, to each tell a bit about how we had first come to St. Paul's. As I listened to each Vestry member's story of how they came and why they stayed, I could see God's fingerprints all over the place.

It is my conviction that each person who comes across the thresholds of St. Paul's comes not by accident but on purpose - and not just on that individual's purpose alone, but as part of the larger purpose of God. Each of us comes in to be spiritually fed. Then each in the process of being fed is transformed in one way or another, and also ends up transforming this place in one way or another, just by being who we as parts of the larger mystically body that is alive in this place.

I hope that as many of you who are able will stay for the annual meeting because we will hear receive the reports about where we have been together over the last year of ministry, and we will begin to chart a course for the future. And it is no accident that we have this opportunity together. We are here on purpose, even if we are not yet quite sure what that larger purpose is. One thing I feel certain of - that purpose will be gracefully surprising, and it will become clear when all of us do our part to make it known. In Christ's name. Amen+