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May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, o Lord my strength and my redeemer. Amen.

I was in high school when the musical *Grease* came out. I would guess that most all of you have seen either the movie or the stage production. I have to admit that it is my all-time favorite movie, and I have seen it at least a few dozen times. I know every scene, and I know all of the songs by heart. Of course, the fact that I was 15 years old and John Travolta was dancing in it had nothing to do with my interest in it! Well, if you are familiar with the movie, you'll remember that early on, Danny (John Travolta) and his Thunderbird gang member friends (the Greasers) are taking auto body repair and mechanics at school, and they have a big dance number in the auto shop to the song *Greased Lightening*. As they sing and dance, they build the custom car of their dreams out of an old clunker that one of the guys bought. But at the end of the song, the shiny new souped-up car is gone, and they are sitting on the old clunker. They are jarred back to reality, and looking around the auto shop, Danny says to them, "Ok guys, let's get to work here!"

Meanwhile, Sandy (Olivia Newton-John) is madly in love with Danny, but she is a very prim and proper young lady from a very different cultural background, and she is simply not able to connect with Danny and relate to him as a Greaser and a member of the Thunderbirds. Toward the end of the movie, Danny and the leader of a rival gang meet to race their cars, and Sandy is there to watch. But she is not part of the crowd who has come out to cheer Danny on to victory; she is sitting off by herself watching the others celebrate. One of the Pink Ladies come up to her and says, "What's the matter, Sandy? Danny won! Aren't you happy?" To which Sandy replies, "No, not really, but I think I know how I could be. Would you help me?" And the two take off together. During this scene, there is a background recording of Olivia Newton-John singing what is meant to be her thoughts: "Sandy, you must start anew. Don't you know what you must do? Hold your head high; take a deep breath and sigh, good-bye to Sandra Dee."

In the next scene, it is the last day of school, and all of the kids are at the graduation carnival. Danny comes strolling up to his friends sporting a letterman's sweater, and they all about fall over. It seems that he has spent most of his senior year lettering in track, all without his friends' knowledge. And his explanation is, "Sandy means the world to me, and I'm going to do whatever I can to get her." This is just beyond their comprehension, and they think that he has lost it. But just then, something catches everyone's attention. All of the guys who have been shaking their heads in disbelief at Danny go wide-eyed in disbelief at what they are now seeing: Sandy comes into the picture, but this is not the straight-laced Sandy Dombrowski that everyone knows; this is Sandy, the newest member of the Pink Ladies. She's wearing skin-tight black spandex pants, high-heeled shoes, and a black leather jacket. Her hair has been permed, and she is wearing makeup. The music then starts for the smash song *You're the One that I Want*.

This scene is a shocker because nobody ever expected Danny Zuko to shed his cool gang member image and have the discipline to letter in an athletic event. Likewise, nobody expected the wholesome and timid Sandy to become a flirtatious tease. Each had begun a new life in a very different direction from the one they had been following, but they began their new lives together. They were both willing to let go of the old and the comfortable and step into uncharted territory because their focus was not on their friends and those around them – it was on each other. Each had become a new person now, and the individuals they had been previously no longer existed. The old was gone, and they did not look back. The movie ends with the two of them riding through the crowd of kids in the souped-up dream car that Danny and his friends had created in their imaginations then lifting off the ground into the clouds, leaving their old lives behind. Where were they headed? We don't know. But each was sharing with the other the new person that they had become.

In our Old Testament reading, we hear about the call to discipleship Elisha experienced while he was plowing his field with his oxen and Elijah came by and cast his mantle upon him. It is important to note that plowing and tilling are not one in the same thing. Tilling is done in the spring, right before planting. It basically involves cutting trenches in the soil to aerate it and allow seeds to sprout and grow. Plowing, on the other hand, is done in the fall, at the end of the harvest. It involves literally turning the soil over 180 degrees so that any vegetation that remains

on the surface after the harvest is buried beneath the soil that is now on the top, and the vegetation decomposes to become natural fertilizer. Elisha, who was plowing his field under, went back home, slaughtered his oxen (his livelihood), fed the meat to those who were there, then followed Elijah as his disciple. The mantle being cast upon him was like the plowing under of a field – all remnants of the life he knew were consumed, and this turned-over field of discipleship that lay before him was primed for him to take root and grow. It is important to note that he began this first stage of his call to a prophetic vocation as a follower of and a servant to Elijah. It was not until later that he would become a prophet in Elijah's place when Elijah was taken up into heaven. Elisha recognized that he first needed to serve.

In Luke's Gospel, we hear another reference to plowing – to turning a field upside down. After various people whom Jesus encounters say they will follow him after they take care of this chore or that chore, Jesus responds by saying, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." In other words, a person who says they will follow Jesus but in the end is not willing to make some hard choices – to turn over the soil of their heart, as it were – is not fit for the kingdom of God. If we continue on with our old ways and habits, no change can come about within us. But if we allow our old, comfortable habits to be plowed under, we will find ourselves in disturbed soil that is rich for nourishing the seeds of God's kingdom. And these seeds produce the fruit of the Spirit that Paul references in his letter to the Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self – control. And when those seeds take root and sprout, we see that our lives look very different.

Like Danny and Sandy, whose old images were no longer relevant to them, God calls us to say goodbye to the irrelevant parts of our lives and step forward together into the kingdom that he is preparing, day by day. He calls us to do this individually, and he calls us to do this as the Body of Christ.

What in your life consumes your time but does not sustain you? Or perhaps a better question to ask is, what things are happening in your life that are preventing the kingdom of God from sprouting and taking root in you? These are questions that we must ask ourselves individually, but these are also questions that this community of Trinity on the Hill must ask

itself collectively. Are we doing things that keep us busy but that don't produce any real results, like the remnant of an old crop in a field after a harvest, or are they in fact the seeds of the kingdom of God that have landed in the plowed soil of our hearts and that are now sprouting and growing in the light of Christ's love?

The old clunker that Danny Zuko and his friends were working on in the auto shop class ran, but it needed work. Some of the parts were good, but some had to be rebuilt or replaced. And the kids had to take the car apart piece by piece to determine what it was going to take to make it run well. They were jarred back to reality in the auto shop after building the custom car of their dreams, but they now had a clear picture of what they needed to do together to make that souped-up car a reality. They saw what they would have to dispose of and the new things that they would need. They understood the time commitment that would be necessary as well as the skills that they would need to acquire.

As we embark on this journey through the season after Pentecost, this is the perfect time to carefully assess the various facets of our lives and ministries to determine which of our old habits and ways are vital, which ones are in need of some adjustment, and which ones are really no longer relevant. To put it another way, what sustains you and fills you with joy? What is burdensome and time-consuming? And what do you need to let go of? We have been entrusted to build up something that is priceless – the kingdom of God – through our service to others. And there is much to be done to plow under the old, dead fields of our lives to allow the seeds of the kingdom of God to take root and the fruits of the Spirit to flourish. So with plow in hand and eyes fixed on the kingdom of God, let us heed the words of Danny Zuko, “Ok, guys, let's get to work here!”

Amen.