A few days from now, we’ll celebrate Independence Day. As I prepared this sermon using candlepower this morning, I thought of our Continental Congress working feverishly to forge the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson wrote the initial draft, which was reworked by the Committee of Five. It was approved on July 4, 1776.

It’s unclear how many of the delegates actually signed the Declaration on July 4th. It was not until August 2nd that all 56 signatories had signed on. One thing’s for certain, John Hancock signed first. You can’t miss his flamboyant signature; it’s five inches in length. John Hancock’s name has become synonymous today with signature. We speak about putting our John Hancock on something.

Some of the signatories on this Declaration are distinguished Americans. Benjamin Franklin, at 70, is the oldest signatory. Two future presidents affixed their signatures to the document, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Benjamin Harrison signed on, also. Not only did Harrison preside over the congress, but his son and grandson also served as U.S. presidents.

There is one Presbyterian clergyman among the 56—John Witherspoon. Incidentally, one of my predecessors in this church, the Rev. Lukens, was married to Lettie Witherspoon Lukens, a direct descendent of John Witherspoon.

The 56 who signed the Declaration of Independence did so at considerable risk to themselves. If America went on to lose the war and these signatories were subsequently captured by the British, they would have been executed for treason. Many of them suffered hardship in the war. John Witherspoon’s eldest son was killed in battle the following year. They put their lives on the line for each other. That’s why the Declaration concludes with the words, “We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

We must be careful not to inflate these first Americans into larger-than-life heroes. I’ve read their biographies, and I can attest to their feet of clay.

What makes a leader? President Obama and Mitt Romney will spend upwards of a half billion dollars to convince us they are capable of
Jesus Christ is the epitome of a level 5 leader.

leading our country these next four years.

Jim Collins described leadership in his book, *Good to Great*, in terms of five ascending levels. A level five leader is one who exemplifies personal humility coupled with a fearless will and a workmanlike diligence. Unlike glitzy, high profile CEOs, who exhibit gargantuan egos and set up successors for failure, level 5 leaders set up their successors for even greater success.

Jesus Christ is the epitome of a level 5 leader. His personal humility and unwavering resolve to do God’s will certainly qualifies him for this distinction. There is no one who works harder to insure the future success of his followers.

The passage read earlier from the gospel of Mark, demonstrates what Jesus can do with 12 unpromising recruits. Their names appear in verses 16-19. You’ll notice that no women appear on this list. I seriously doubt Jesus would have lasted three years had his traveling entourage included women.

It’s no surprise that Peter’s name appears first, since he serves as spokesman for the 12 and as the principle leader for the early church. Brothers James and John, next on the list, comprise with Peter the inner core of Jesus’ disciples. Andrew, the fourth name on the list, is a brother to Peter. Andrew is a Greek name, as is the next name on the list, Philip. Since there are several disciples with Jewish names, it must have been rather testy when Jewish-Roman relations surfaced. Mark identifies Matthew as a tax collector, meaning he works in collusion with the Roman government. The second to last name on the list, Simon the Cananaean, belongs to a political party called the Zealots, bent on the overthrow of Rome. This means one among the 12 works for the government while another seeks its overthrow. They must have fought like cats and dogs! There are also several names on this list for which we know nothing.

It almost seems as though Jesus has gone out of his way to pick ordinary, unexceptional people. None of them are trained leaders of Biblical law. There are no wealthy benefactors or people with prestigious jobs among the 12. Three are common fishermen; one is a reviled tax collector.

On paper, they’re not very promising. Peter, whose name means rock, could hardly be called rock-solid. When it comes time to speak up for Jesus at his trial, Peter denies knowing him. James and John, the so-called Sons of Thunder, have visions of grandeur when they ask to sit at Jesus’ right and left in glory. And one of them, as you well know, utterly betrays Jesus.
Where can you serve as a level 5 leader?

But their very ordinariness could be Jesus’ point. Maybe Jesus picks ordinary people to demonstrate that the power belongs to God and not to them. This passage is proof positive that leaders are made, not born.

This passage is shot through with Jesus’ power and authority. Christ has the power to transform ordinary people into extraordinary witnesses. Jesus does virtually everything for his disciples in this passage. First, he calls them at the outset to come to him. Second, he appoints the 12 to be with him. These 12 go everywhere with Jesus. They eat with Jesus; they sleep with Jesus. They become so well identified with Jesus that Mark simply refers to them as the “the twelve.” They become, in effect, Jesus’ apprentices. And third, Jesus sends them out to proclaim the gospel and exercise authority over demonic forces.

We live with the deception that we have the power to meet every contingency in life. So, how are you coping with the recent loss of power? Under this thin veneer of self-reliance, suddenly we realize how dependent we are on linemen from Dominion Power to restore our electricity.

We take these creature comforts for granted. I had forgotten how dark it is at night and how cold a shower can be. We don’t handle inconveniences well. I was out and about yesterday during other power outage areas and it wasn’t a pretty picture. People were in a foul mood.

If you lack power in your spiritual life, ask Christ to fill you with his power. Let Christ supply you with power for your every need. May we come to the place in our lives when we realize, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Our elders and staff are introducing five strategic goals for your consideration. We’re sharing these goals to generate your feedback. The first goal has to do with spiritual transformation. We want everyone to come up with a personal, concrete spiritual growth plan. The second objective focuses on a more intentional ministry to young adults in our community. The third objective seeks to strengthen marriages and families. The fourth objective strives to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the 146,000 households within a ten-mile radius of our church who do not have a church home. Today, we come to the fifth goal: to implement a program that identifies, recruits and develops spiritual leaders for the building up of the body of Christ at Vienna Presbyterian Church.

Let me caution you not to conceive of leadership in a restricted sense, as though leadership is intended primarily for people who sit on church boards or committees. We want to promote leadership
“Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God.”
- Bob Pierce

everywhere. Where can you exercise leadership in your sphere of influence? Where can you serve as a level 5 leader in your home, workplace or community?

Our church’s call, equip and send mission syncs well with this passage. We call people to faith in much the same way Jesus calls people. We equip people for discipleship utilizing Jesus’ same method of disciple-making. We send people to love and serve the world like Jesus did.

Jesus is calling you. Maybe you’ve never entertained the thought that Jesus is calling you. He calls you to come and follow him.

What do you do if someone calls you? You answer the call, unless, of course, you don’t recognize the call on caller ID. Caller ID gives us the capacity to screen our calls. If a number registers as unavailable, you’re not likely to take the call. But if you don’t have Jesus on caller ID, you’re not going to take the call.

Jesus wants to equip you to live a life of discipleship. We can’t be with Jesus in quite the same way his disciples could be with Jesus. They could be with him in the flesh. Yet Jesus said it is to our advantage for him to go away. For if Jesus doesn’t go away, the Holy Spirit will not come to us.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit is mediated to us is through other people. This is why we urge you to join a class or small group. We want you to seek out people who walk with God, who walk the talk. Spend time with such people.

Jesus is sending you to love and serve the world. If you are having a hard time identifying places where Christ may be sending you, consider those things that break the heart of God. After witnessing suffering children in Korea, Bob Pierce wrote on the margin of his Bible, “Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God.” What are the things that break your heart that break the heart of God?

It is curious how, in the first few chapters of Mark’s gospel, Jesus is doing most of the work while his disciples are watching. It’s the principle, ‘I’ll do it and you watch.’ But in the middle portion of Mark’s gospel, the disciples step up to do the work while Jesus shifts to a support role. Now the pattern is reversed. Jesus is saying, in effect, “You do it and I’ll help.”

Whenever Jesus sends his disciples out, he always sends them two-by-two. They are never sent out alone. There’s a lesson in there somewhere. If you think you can live the Christian life on your own, with all due respect, you are delusional. We need each other in the body of Christ.

This sermon is a call for you to step up to level 5 leadership. We need leaders in this church, young leaders and seasoned leaders, who display a compelling modesty matched with an unwavering resolve to do God’s will.