

“He Called Them”

Mark 1: 14-20

This is a well known story, the calling of the disciples. We are all inspired by their ability to drop their nets and follow. And yes, when we hear it, often times we wonder if we would have done the same thing. We wonder if we had heard Jesus saying “Follow me”, would we have followed, just like the first disciples did.

To be honest, I have always had a sense of guilt when it came to this story regarding the calling of the disciples. Sure when I hear it, I get inspired and immediately I want to say yes to my Savior’s call. But then real life starts to sink in: Family, work, bills to pay, all the what ifs and unknown details. And I find myself saying, “Jesus, I can’t go this time, but ask me again some other time. Maybe then I’ll be able to follow.” And the guilt starts sinking in and I begin to wonder if I lost my chance to be a part of something more than this life can offer.

I expected this type of reaction again when I was preparing for this sermon, the guilt, the wonderings, the excuses were all there until I realized the presence of God was reminding me of the true meaning of discipleship, was reminding me what the true meaning of being a follower of Jesus really is in regards to calling as disciples.

As followers of Jesus, as Disciples of Christ, our primary calling is to proclaim that the Kingdom of God has come near for all of God's children, and to share the love and grace of God with all of God's creation. It is as simple as that. And the wonderful life giving nature of this calling is that it can happen from anywhere and can occur at any time!

This is the blessings that free us from the guilt and the excuses. Our calling as followers of Jesus doesn't require us to leave our everyday lives behind. The Kingdom of God is already near! And we as disciples are called to proclaim it for all of God's children and we can do that in our very own communities!

Sure our calling as disciples still requires a response. We aren't off the hook, if you will excuse the bad pun! But we don't have to go to the ends of the earth to fulfill our calling. We can do so right here on our very own communities. God is already at work in our communities. God is already at work in the places where we live, in the places where we work, in all the places where we engage others. All we have to do is realize that our response to Jesus' calling is as simple opening our eyes and really seeing where the presence of God is already at work in our lives and in our communities, right here, right now, today and all days.

That is the good news that compels us to respond when Jesus calls. We are given the opportunity to become open to how the Spirit of God is already transforming us and is already calling us to live life differently, is already calling

us to live life according to the principals of God's Kingdom, not according the principals of this world's reality as a part of our everyday lives. The Kingdom of God is meeting us where we are. We don't have to go someplace special to experience. It is happening right here. It is happening right now. It is happening in our own backyards. And Jesus is calling us to respond!

The first disciples did it and so can we as soon as we realize that at the very heard of our calling to be followers of Jesus is an invitation to see the world as God sees it, to see each other as God sees us, to see ourselves as God sees us: people claimed and named by God. When Jesus calls us, it is an invitation to see each other and to see ourselves for the people that we can be, to see each other and see ourselves as the people God created us to be. When Jesus calls us, it is really an invitation to see this world the way God sees its: full of hope, full of potential, full of grace, full of those moments when the ordinary becomes sacred.

Our calling is really a life giving, life transforming invitation to realize that there is more to this life than what this world can offer. And when we truly respond to this invitation in our lives and in our communities that is when we become true followers of Jesus.

It is not the details of the calling, it is not the journey, it is not the wonderings if we are even qualified that compel us to follow. What really compels us to be followers of Jesus, to answer Jesus' call is the invitation to experience the

world as God intended it to be, to see the world as God sees it: full of potential, full of hope, full of promise, full of grace. We follow because we want to become more fully aware of where and how God is moving in our midst, where and how God is working in our communities, where and how God will use us in the work that God is already doing to bring healing and wholeness to this broken world.

That is why Mark's version of this story is such good news for us as people with complicated lives. He doesn't let the message get lost in the details. He gives us just the main points of the story. He fills us with a sense of urgency that compels to respond. The Kingdom of God is happening now, right here on our doorsteps. Jesus is calling us right now to be a part of something more than this world can offer. This is the time to respond. The Kingdom of God is in our midst.

Mark reminds us that Jesus met the first disciples as they were living their everyday lives. He met them where they worked. He met them on the banks of the sea, a place they had been a thousand times. Mark has Jesus become a part of the first disciples ordinary lives and in doing so he took away the what ifs and created an opportunity for the disciples to respond gladly when Jesus called. And he does the same for us today by reminding us that our call as disciples of Jesus is not as complicated as we try to make it. We are to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is near for all of God's children and to open our eyes to where God is already working in our midst.

Mark reminds us that Jesus saw Simon and Andrew by the sea. He saw James and John in their boat, working on their nets. Jesus brought the Kingdom of God near to them as a part of their everyday lives and in doing so, their seemingly ordinary lives became opportunities for the Spirit of God to enter in and bring forth new life. When Jesus called to them, he invited them to become aware of the Spirit of God that was already in their midst. Jesus met them in their own backyards. That is what compelled the first disciples to follow. They realized that there was something more. They realized that Jesus had extended an invitation to see the world, to see themselves, to see others the way God sees this world: full of potential, full of hope, full of grace, alive with promise.

The good news for the first disciples is that Jesus saw them as children of God. He saw them as what they could be. He saw them as the people that God created to be. And that is what compelled them to follow.

The good news for the first disciples is that Jesus didn't see these men as simply fishermen. He didn't see them as society's undesirables. He didn't seem them as stinky, sweaty men who worked at night. He didn't see them as whatever labels this world had placed upon them.

Mark tells us that Jesus saw Simon and Andrew. Mark tells us that Jesus saw James and John. Mark tells us that Jesus saw them as Children of God. Mark tells

us that Jesus saw them as people who had experienced the nearness of the Kingdom of God.

And that is the same good news that was given to us the first time we heard Jesus calling us. Jesus didn't see us as simply ordinary people. Jesus saw us as children of God. Jesus helped us to see where the Spirit of God was already moving and working in our communities. Jesus opened our eyes and invited us to see the world as God sees it: full of hope, full of potential, full of grace, alive with new life.

And as followers of Jesus, this is the same good news that we are to share as we respond to Jesus' call to follow him. We are called to respond as disciples of Christ by seeing this world differently, by seeing each other differently, by seeing that there is something more than this world can offer.

We are called to bring the Kingdom of God near for all of God's children and we don't have to go to the ends of the earth to do so. We can begin in our very own communities. We can do this as a part of our ever day lives. We can do this in the places we work. We can do this in the places we live. We can do this when we gather for a meal. We can do this anywhere and anytime. There are no limits or boundaries to the Kingdom of God. It doesn't just happen in a particular place or available to extraordinary people. The Kingdom of God is a part of our everyday lives. The Kingdom of God is in our midst now, today and all days. It can be found

in the places where we have been a thousand times. The Kingdom of God is happening right here and right now. The Kingdom of God is in our midst and we are called to respond!

We are called to create opportunities for the Spirit of God to enter in and create new life. We are called to open our eyes and really see how God is already transforming us into the people that God created us to be. We are called to see the world the way God sees it: full of potential, full of hope, full of grace, alive and brimming with new life.

That is what compels us to follow. That is what compels us to respond. That is what compels us to be disciples of Christ. We know that there is something more than this world can offer and we realize that we can experience these kingdom moments as a part of our everyday lives.

The what ifs have been taken away. The complications made simple. And we have been given the opportunity to gladly respond when Jesus calls by proclaiming the Kingdom of God has come near for all of God's children, by sharing the love and grace of God with all of God's creation.

And we can do this anywhere and anytime. All we have to do is respond. There is work to be done! And we can start right now in our very own community!

The Kingdom of God is in our midst. How will we respond? May we always feel compelled to answer when Jesus' calls. Amen.