

We have been having a great time at our Luke/Acts Bible Study on Wednesday nights. This week we talked a lot about the cost of discipleship and how when Jesus was calling other people, he called them to respond immediately.

We really spent time asking questions like, “Why couldn’t Jesus give people just a little time to respond?” And yet, reading the Scripture further we saw that Jesus called people to action immediately because he only had a short time to equip them and send them out.

Our lectionary text for today is the retelling of all our call stories because it is Jesus calling the disciples of Christ.

The moment of our profession of faith in Jesus Christ we are called to serve and follow Christ wherever God takes us. God calls, and we are called to respond! **Through this Scripture we are reminded once again that we are all being called by God to serve.**

The past couple of weeks we have been reviewing the call stories of many people in the Bible. We started first with the call of Jacob who wrestled with God until he received a blessing. We heard Samuel’s call story and how Eli, his mentor, helped him to respond. Last week we heard the second call of Jonah, where Jonah first ran away and then responded to God only after being hand delivered to Nineveh via a large fish.

It is amazing to see how each disciple was called in the various gospels and to see that immediately they dropped everything and followed Christ.

Peter and Andrew were the first to be called by the sea of Galilee in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of people” (Matthew 4:19). The Bible tells us *immediately they followed him*.

Next Jesus saw James and John in a boat with their father mending their nets and he called them and again *immediately* they followed him.

It is amazing to me to read over and over again about the faith of these first disciples and how they left everything to follow Jesus Christ. There must have been something amazing about him where they just knew that he was who he said he was, and they wanted to be part of his ministry of good news.

These men came to work not expecting their lives to change. They were simply there to do another day’s work. They were not expecting Christ to show up.

It makes sense that Jesus would call fishermen. Surely, they would be people who were strong and patient. People who had weathered storms and persevered. I have often asked myself, but why fisherman?

They too were in the life saving business. They had to entrust their lives to one another when they were out to sea so they could be trusted to take care of each other and listen to their leader on what needed to be done.

Yet we also know as fishermen, these men were not eloquent. They were not the people you would call on to lead a healing service, and yet Jesus chose them anyway to continue to build the kingdom of God.

You see Jesus was in a hurry. He started his ministry when he was 30 (Luke 3:23) and when he died, he was thirty-three years old. Jesus knew he did not have a long time to train and send out the disciples to continue his work.

Jesus spent time equipping the disciples. He took them with him from place to place, showed them how to rely on the community, taught them the kind of ministry to which they had been called to spread good news to the poor and uplift the oppressed. He taught them how to heal others. He helped dispel their fear being with different subsets of people they had never been with before.

He had faith for them when they had none, he helped them remain humble when they felt prideful. He showed them that their power did not come from within themselves, but their power came through God.

He empowered them and he sent them out. We see that they were sent out earlier than the Great Commission, our gospel lesson for today.

In Luke 9 we see Jesus send the disciples out for the first time on their own:

“Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,<sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.”

Through the disciple’s ministry many were healed and many heard the good news. We see the disciples come back to be with Jesus and share all that had happened. The next thing we see in Scripture is the feeding of the 5,000.

What is interesting in this Scripture is that again Jesus called his disciples to serve. He told them they were responsible for helping to feed the 5,000 people. So, they gathered anything they could find and Jesus blessed it creating enough for the people there.

This is what Jesus does with us. He takes us, imperfect in our humanity, and blesses us to do the work of God.

So often people are afraid to serve because the only mission they have seen done is through missionaries. They think if they say yes to God’s calling to serve, that they may have to leave everything they love and start over in an unfamiliar place.

While there is a special calling for missionaries, so often God calls us to serve right where we are. God uses us for God’s glory in our personal lives, in our work lives, and in our spiritual lives. We only must be open to God’s calling upon our lives to serve.

In our Gospel lesson for today, we see this Great Commission was different than the first time Jesus sent out his disciples. This time Jesus was not coming back. This time the responsibility of building up the kingdom of God would be square on the shoulders of the disciples.

Again Jesus bestowed power and authority upon the disciples to work in His name. Then he told them and “...surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Jesus had done what he came to do. He shared the love of God to all he encountered and he trained and equipped disciples to serve so that people would continue to hear about the good news of Jesus Christ in the world.

We too have been called to respond immediately like the first disciples. What is one thing you can do this week to serve God and serve other people?

Maybe it is volunteering at the food pantry or donating items for UMCOR. Maybe it is building a relationship with someone you see often or don’t know very well. Maybe it is writing down your testimony and working up the courage to share it.

This next week, Denise Mattison is going to share her testimony and how God has continued to give her hope even in the midst of tragedy.

We are all called in different ways, but for the same purpose: “To make disciples of Jesus Christ.”

This past week, our District adopted a new logo. It is in a handout in your bulletin. The Charlottesville District logo shows a large cross and Methodist flame. In the shadow of the cross are four roads all leading away from the cross to share the good news.

I love this logo because again it reminds us of our calling. I hope you will put it somewhere in your house to help encourage you to serve.

**The good news for our lives today is that we have been called to serve and as we serve God will be with us.**

As we go forward in service to God, we go with the courage of the saints. As we lift up the Food Pantry in our Community today in every church, this week I had Mother Theresa on my heart: a women who wanted to feed the poor literally and spiritually.

This is a woman who felt called by God at a young age to be in mission. She responded to God’s call to go and serve the poor. Leaving her family never to see them again. I wanted to share her words this morning as an ending to my sermon as she reflected on Jesus’ Christ words from the cross: “I Thirst:

“While Jesus had a physical thirst, Mother Teresa perceived that Jesus’ thirst was spiritual as well. He thirsted for love and longed for souls to come to know Him. In her own words: “Why does Jesus say ‘I thirst? What does it mean? Something so hard to explain in words...’ I thirst is something much deeper than just Jesus saying, ‘I love you.’ Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you – you can’t begin to know who He wants to be for you. Or who He wants you to be for Him.”<sup>i</sup>

As we talked about last Sunday with the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus still thirsts for lost souls to come to Him and we are called to be part of that holy work. We help bring people to Christ when we embody the love and grace of God. We help bring people to Christ when we respond immediately when we feel the movement of the Holy Spirit. We help bring people to Christ when we too feel Jesus’ urgency to proclaim the good news.

May we respond immediately to God’s calling to go. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://focusoncampus.org/content/how-mother-teresa-was-called-to-serve-the-poorest-of-the-poor>