

Worship Service *“Taking the Call”*

Epiphany 2, Year A, 15th January, 2023

1 Corinthians 1:1-9 NRSV / John 1:29-42 NRSV

Prelude

Opening Music [*Come With Me Come Wander*](#)

written by Graham Maule and John L. Bell, CCLI SONG # 1074773, 1987 WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland (Admin. by Wild Goose Resource Group), video used by permission of Frodsham United Methodist church, performed by Frodsham Methodist Church Cloud Choir accompanied by Andrew Ellams. Produced by Rev'd Andrew Emison, used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Opening Music *Here in this Place - 6*

Call to Worship [responsive]

ONE: I waited patiently for GOD; who turned to me and heard my cry,
who lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
and set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

ALL: We sing a new song! Our mouths are full of the praise of God.

ONE: Blessed are we when we make the Lord our trust;
when we do not turn aside to false gods.

ALL: We sing of all your many wonders, O God, too many to declare them all.

ONE: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but our ears you have
pierced and a body you have prepared for us.

ALL: We sing, "Here I am, I have come— I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is in my heart.

Invocation

O God, you have singled us out.
Our ears have been pierced by your call,
Our bodies are made like polished arrows to serve you,
Our voices to sing your praises.
We acknowledge that you have chosen us.
Meeting you here on this day in this time,
We will listen and walk with you,
As we worship together in the beauty of holiness, Amen.

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 NRSV

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,

for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—

just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—

so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God,
you have enriched and enlightened us by the revelation of your eternal Christ.
Comfort us in our mortality and strengthen us to walk the path of your desire,
so that by word and deed we may manifest the gracious news of your faithfulness
and love.

Holy Father,
Father of Christ who asked the disciples, “What are you looking for,” and who offered
the invitation to “Come and See,” open our hearts to what you reveal and give us the
courage to follow.

By Your Spirit aid us in our journey, so that like John, our words and deeds point to the Lamb of God. For those who are suffering, let us point to Christ through comfort. For those who are hungry, let us point to Christ through bread. For those in the grip of despair, let us point to Christ through hope.

Almighty God,
whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever, Amen

Hymn *For Christ and the Church - 416*

Gospel Reading: John 1:29-42 NRSV

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'

I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel."

And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.

I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,

and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed).

He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Message - *Taking the Call*

When we hear the term "calling," what comes to mind? In the context of one's own calling, most of us would probably think of what we are "called to," that task or vocation that we seemed to be perfectly suited for. Probably more often we hear the reverse of that, in the common phrase, "he or she missed his or her calling," meaning that person shows tremendous talent that they are not using as their vocation or focus in life. Often we think of calling as related to what we do for a living, but it really speaks to those things that we have particular skills for or those things we seem to have a natural talent for. I have known people whose calling is to be parents, who just seem to be inherently good at raising great kids.

This morning we'll be looking at calling from the perspective of faith. In our text from John, a large portion of the story has to do with this concept of calling, or "being called." One's calling, what one has inherent skills at, and what one is being called to, is not necessarily the same. For example, I have pretty natural office administration skills, and could consider that a calling, but that is not, and has not, been what I have been called to.

In our story today, we are introduced to Andrew, and eventually his brother Simon. We know from other gospel stories that they are fishermen. Their father was most likely a fisherman too, and they probably had skills that they either acquired naturally or through a lifetime of tending boats and nets. Most likely, we would consider fishing to be their calling. Yet when we meet Andrew in the story, he's not fishing. He's a disciple of John the Baptist. He's not on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, he's many miles away following John in the desert around the Jordan river. When he meets Jesus, the first question Jesus asks is, "What are you looking for?"

That question has more layers than what appears on the surface. Obviously Andrew's current calling wasn't what he was really seeking. If he's with John, he's walked away from his boat and nets. He is seeking something else, some meaning and purpose that he wasn't finding pulling fish out of the water day in and day out. So he strikes out to follow this prophet in the wilderness.

Maybe he was seeking adventure, some new experiences outside of the sleepy little village of Bethsaida where he had spent all of his life to that point. Maybe he was heading out to the wilds where the Zealots hung out, looking to make a difference in resisting the Roman occupation and the corrupt leadership of Judea. He might have then run into John, and decided to join along with John's cult, imagining that maybe this messianic utopia John spoke of was what he was looking for. Whatever the reason, Andrew and his friend found themselves in the company of the Messiah: not just another prophet like John, but the real deal. John testifies to them as a witness. He was there when the heavens opened; he heard the voice. This is the one he was preparing the way for, the one who is God in human flesh. Here might be the answer to what they are looking for.

John the Baptist telling his story as one human to another. John's gospel differs in that respect, in its directness. The other gospels, like Matthew, go to great length to tie Jesus to the Old Testament prophecies such as those found in Isaiah. But biblical scholarship generally agrees that John was written for the early churches in Asia Minor, such as the one at Ephesus. The audience there would not be as steeped in Jewish scripture and tradition, and a direct approach would be more effective.

Right off the bat, John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the "Lamb of God" that will take away the sins of the world. He relates his own prophecy received directly from the Almighty that who he witnesses anointed by the Spirit in the form of the dove will be the One.

The other gospels tend to be more indirect. They hint around about who Jesus is, but never outright declare it until much later in the story. Instead of drawn out genealogies establishing the birthright of Jesus, John starts by putting him there at the beginning of time, with the Creator, as an integral part of the creation of everything. This is the guy John the Baptist has been preaching about.

So they ask Jesus to see where he is based, where his tent is pitched. And he responds, "Come and see." Again, there are layers to be dug into here. Jesus wasn't just inviting them back for afternoon tea and chit chat. There's a sense of invitation here, of inviting them to tag along and be a witness about him like John the Baptist. They're invited to come and see the change he is making, to be a witness and to share their testimony like John before them. Andrew then went and collected his brother Simon, excited to bring him to meet the Messiah that John had revealed.

When they again caught up with Jesus, he renames Simon to Cephas, or Peter, which means rock or foundation. So not only are Andrew and Simon, now Peter, finding their calling, but being called as well. "Come and see" is an open invitation to join in the journey, to be part of this novel endeavor, of God made flesh starting something new.

We often look with hindsight at Peter's naming and can agree Peter indeed became the rock and foundation of the infant church, living up to his name. But he certainly didn't fit the bill when he got that name. In fact, that is one fact all four gospels agree on. He

struggled to live up to that name. He had major doubts. He failed to live up to that name many times. It was not something we would have had a clue could be his calling, and probably was quite intimidating for him once he had a chance to reflect.. Yet he ultimately grew into the call, it became his calling. If you had told me twenty years ago my calling was in ministry, I'd have thought you were crazy, yet here I am.

A story is told by theologian Fredrick Beuchner. It is a story about a man who was born with an awful facial deformity. He grew up alone and lonely. When reaching adulthood, he decided to move from his town to begin a new life. On his way he discovered a beautiful mask that fit his face, making him look handsome. At first the mask was uncomfortable and he was afraid that people would find out who he really was, but he continued to wear the mask everyday. In his new hometown, he made many friends and fell in love. But one day a woman from his old home came to his town and discovered this man's true identity. In front of his friends and fiancé, she forced him to remove his mask. When he removed the mask, it revealed a handsome face. His face had conformed to the mask.

Like Peter, our calling may not seem like a good fit at the beginning, but we often grow into that call. John's gospel has a heavy emphasis on this sense of God calling us, of being the one who makes the initial action, and the response being ours to make.

Do we heed the call, and follow that calling? There are a lot of seekers out there in the world today, people like Andrew and company who are desperate for meaning, for finding a calling that makes a difference. Some are looking for community, for a real place to belong and really connect with other people in a real, non-internet way. Some are looking for a concrete foundation for their lives, others seek a connection with the Divine. Some seek healing or comfort, others may be seeking redemption, a new life on the other sides of mistakes made or opportunities missed. There are many answers to Jesus' question of "what are you looking for, or seeking?" And the same invitation still stands to "come and see" something that they won't find in what the world has to offer, something more than stuff, something more than popularity and prestige, something that can fill that void inside, a higher purpose and calling that has real meaning.

The questions I have for you this morning are: are we answering the call? Are we finding our calling, as individuals and as a community of faith? Are we coming and seeing the work God is up to in the world today, and more importantly are we witnessing and testifying and participating in that work?

There's an old saying attributed to Christian mystic Teresa of Avila: "Christ has not body on earth now but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which to look out Christ's compassion to the world; Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good; Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now." Are we those hands, feet, and eyes?

There's also an old Brethren saying, "Don't ask me if I'm a Christian, ask my neighbor." Do we witness and testify in how we live our lives, in all we say and do, how we live our lives?

Would a seeker know they can find the answer they are looking for here? We are all called, we all have a calling. My hope and prayer is that we as individuals and as a community, answer that call and follow our calling, as Christ's disciples in this world. Amen.

A Call to Serve

As a sign of hope in the world we recognize and give thanks for these gifts of bread and wine, for the talents, time and gifts we are blessed with. May we take time to reflect on how these blessings may be used to further the ways of love, hope, and justice in our world this week..

A Time for Reflection – *musical interlude*

A Service of Communion

Invitation and Thanksgiving [Responsive]

One: In all the colors and scents and sounds of the world, we see God's signature in the beauty of all of creation. Likewise we recognize the imprint of the Divine in all humankind, all of whom are welcome at God's table.

We gather together conscious that raising our hearts and minds is a gift of the Spirit of Life at work in the depths of our being.

All: For the presence of that Spirit in us, we give thanks.

One: We gather together conscious that our celebration gives the Spirit a way of breaking into word and song unique in all the universe.

All: For the words and songs within each of us, we give thanks.

One: And so we offer our thanks and praise inviting the Spirit of Life, Love and Goodness to move freely in our words and actions.

All: Holy, holy, holy, celebrating God, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

One: Jesus is the story we gather around and give thanks For. Human like us, he discerned where this Spirit of Life is found: in the everyday, in human Interaction, in caring, in sharing, in being neighbor.

He urged people to work together to establish the 'reign of God' by wholehearted generosity, by eliminating boundaries between people, by trust in the goodness of people, and by working for peace and justice in all human endeavors.

All: We remember his total commitment to living fully and loving totally and his faith in a God to be trusted whatever twists life could take in this imperfect world.

Sharing the Bread and Cup

We also remember the tradition...

On the night before he died
Jesus again shared a meal with his friends.
Through grain and grape, bread and wine,
and in fellowship together,
Jesus spoke of his enduring love for each of them.

And they recognized him in the breaking of the bread and the filling of the cup.

Please eat of this bread and cup, remembering the call of he whose commitment we remember, and reflecting on how you can honor that call in the days and weeks ahead.

Blessing

May the life and the teachings of Jesus motivate all that we do, so that what we profess to have seen in his life and heard in his teaching might be evident in our living and loving

HYMN *Bless'd be the tie That Binds* (vs 1-4) **421**

Benediction

As we leave this place, remember: God, who chose you before your birth, who calls you and knows you by name, now sends you out into the world— to bring light to those in darkness, comfort to those who grieve, hope to those who despair.

And may the blessing of God, the love of Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit be among you and within you as you seek to do God's will. Amen.