

## God is Calling

### [John 1:29-42](#)

I wonder what the two disciples found when they went to see where Jesus was staying. I imagine he was probably living very simply like Ghandi, but just as likely he was living in a crowded household with no privacy. You can learn a lot about a person from the way they live in their own home, or the way they live in a communal home.

Today's gospel reading is about identity and discipleship. Through the words of John the Baptizer, Jesus is identified as the Lamb of God, as one who is pre-existent, as the one on whom God's Spirit rests, then by John's disciples as a Rabbi, a teacher, and finally in the words of Peter, as the Messiah, the one who has been proclaimed in ancient prophecies such as the one we heard this morning in the first reading from Isaiah. That's a lot to pack into a short passage. It's rather like in a film when the characters have a conversation among themselves which recaps what's happened. They already know, but they have to bring us, the audience, up to speed.

John the gospel writer and John the Baptizer leave us with no doubt. Jesus is the one we have been waiting for. Jesus is the Chosen one in whom God is well-pleased and on whom the redemption of the world depends.

Now to his disciples. To be a disciple means more than to be a student. Disciples in the first century did not take classes, read books and write papers. Disciples hung out with their teachers, day in, day out. Jesus' disciples listened to him, watched him, ate with him, talked with him, walked with him. Their whole life centered around him. So it is not surprising that in John's account of the calling of the first disciples one of the first things they ask is "Rabbi, here are you staying." and he said to them, "Come and see." We are told, they saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. They remained. Disciples stay with their master. We don't know if they liked where he was staying or not, because he was there they stayed there too.

In the Rule of St Benedict, there is a similar emphasis on staying. Benedict calls it stability – staying where God has put you so that you get to be formed by God in the midst of all that is happening, rather than leaving when the going gets tough or

boring and finding somewhere else where things seem better or more attractive. This is one of the ways that we develop our discipleship muscles – we get to stay with what is happening, turning it over to God and responding with the highest level of love that we can manage.

For we are called to be Jesus' disciples. We are called to stay. We are called to remain with Jesus, not just to make weekly visits on a Sunday or touch in when it's convenient. We are called to live and breathe his words, his life, his presence. We are called to be where he is, meeting the people he meets, loving the ones he loves.

Wait, wait there's more.

As disciples of Jesus the ascended Christ, we are called to participate in his life in a mysterious, mystical way. Andrew, Peter and the others got to participate in his mundane daily life. They had breakfast with him, they did all the common things with him and they got to model their lives on his. We don't get to do that in the same way. What we get to do is potentially even more special. We get to participate in the Body of Christ so that we are at one and the same time, living with him and living in him. And in the process Christ gets to participate in our daily mundane lives.

The eucharist is the symbol of the deep connection that we have with one another and with Christ. In the symbolic meal we are joined with one another as we are joined with God by symbolically eating him. As we pray in one of our Eucharistic prayers, "as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed again into you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world." We get to be part of Christ, and as we grow in the spiritual life, as our discipleship deepens so this becomes more and more a reality for us. For discipleship is never a done deal, it is a journey, a pilgrimage, a daily becoming in which we fully participate as we intentionally and purposefully marinate ourselves in the life of Christ.

And how we do that is summarized in our five baptismal vows. All the later ones depend on the first, "Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?" to which we all reply, "I will with God's help."

Being the disciples of Jesus the Christ, participating in the Body of Christ, requires continuing, remaining, staying put. We have been baptized into Christ's death, we have been raised again with him, we are somehow now a part of Christ. Which is astonishing and amazing... yet being the Body of Christ is never passive. In order for it to be true in this reality, in order for us to live as the Body of Christ that we are, we need to keep deeply in touch with Christ, and we do that through our spiritual practices -through continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.

We do it by spending time in the places where Christ is and where Christ may be seen. The former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, describes this as rather like birdwatching. Birdwatchers go to a place where a bird may be seen and then they sit quietly and wait, hopefully, expectantly for a glimpse of the bird or perhaps for a snatch of its song. So too, we go to the places where God may be found, in nature or among her people or among those whom she loves, and there we wait. Hopefully, expectantly. And when we glimpse God or just the branches moving where God has passed, everything is changed.

In his poem *Burnt Norton*, in the *Four Quartets*, poet T.S. Eliot writes of the darkening day when

***Time and the bell have buried the day,  
The black cloud carries the sun away.***

We can read this literally as meaning the evening, but we may also think of it as times which seem very dark and grey - times when our world seems to have gone crazy, times when there is more bad news than good, times when depression eats away at our hope and our stamina. The day is ending, the light is going and then suddenly there is a flash of the bird we have been waiting for,

***... After the kingfisher's wing  
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still  
At the still point of the turning world.***

The flash of the glory of God represented here in kingfisher's wing, makes everything new, everything alright because it reminds us that at the center of the

turning world there is the still point which is God. In Christ the world turns safely on its axis. In Christ all will be made whole.

And we get to be an integral part of that.

We are disciples of Jesus, we are members of the Body of Christ. We are part of the healing that is coming. We are midwives of the new creation. And we step into that calling when we learn to stay, to abide in Christ.

Andrew, Peter and the other disciples spent time with Jesus and they absorbed his teachings and his being into their very souls. They experienced his holiness, his grace and his love every day. That is also available to us.

God is standing here beside each one of us this morning, offering us that holiness, grace and love. It can be hard for us to see it, hard for us to open ourselves to it. There are many things that get in the way, and often the biggest is that we simply don't put out our hands to accept it. We don't realize that the connection with God which we long for is right there waiting for us to be willing. Willing to accept it and willing to do our part.

When you get a phone call from a friend you don't just look at the screen and say, "How wonderful, Joe is calling," and then go on with what you are doing. You stop and take the call. For us to know the joy of discipleship, the holiness, grace and love of Christ then we too have to stop and take the call. In my experience there is often a time lag. It's often like when we call a friend and the call goes to voicemail. There are things that have to change in me before the call goes through.

So much depends on my own willingness. Am I willing to fulfill my discipleship? Am I willing to live my life as an active participant in Christ? Am I willing to let go of my ego attachments, my sins of preference? Am I willing to surrender to God?

Because that is what it takes. That is what it means to be a disciple of Christ. And that is our calling.

