

This time next week, we'll have been to Thom's graduation. He's our oldest, so this is the first time we've done this as parents – I'm pretty excited. And, we're also very aware that although he's made it to this life milestone, moving on and into what comes next will be the next challenge. I think Thom's pretty confident he'll be able to do what's needed, that he'll be ok, but he's also aware that what the world seems to be asking of him and what he hopes for from life might not be the same.

And this isn't a surprise, this world of ours has been setting him up for this realization his whole life. Learning how to be part of the world, adapting to life in 'the world,' starts early.

He got his first 'norms' really in preschool, as he learned how to be in a structured environment. In elementary school he was faced with 'a way' of learning, and with lots of expectations on how he should show up and how he should behave, and there were the beginnings of social pressures as kids start to form friend groups and explore a sense of belonging.

By the time kids reach middle school, social pressures are in full-force, there's real-life pressure to fit in, and an understanding of the consequences when you don't. This continues on into high school and for some into college, some kids will find their people, and some kids won't, you might fit in in some places and in others you might feel you don't belong... this seems to be just the way it is, it was like that for me, may be it was like that for you, too.

... and then, once school is done, you're out in the world. Each of us now shaped, to an extent, prepped, to an extent, kinda knowing something of the pressure there'll be to fit in to get on.

It'll be different for each of us for sure, but we're all taught from very early on we need to adapt to the world if we're going to make a way for ourselves in it.

But to do that, what kind of compromises do we make along the way? How much of our true selves do we feel compelled to hide from others to fit in? How much of who we were born to be, in our fullness, do we prune to fit the space we've been given?

If we get really good at being a part of the world as it is, conforming our lives to the demands of the world as it is, just how different are we from the people we were created to be?

This matters, because the world we live in is the way it is because we are the way we are, all of us, together. When we live lives limited by and adapted to the world, our lives become part of what keeps the world as it is.

I think we all might agree that the way the world is falls far short of the way it could be or should be, it falls far short of a world where we each live to delight in the truth and reality of God, and live to care for and serve one another. This 'world,' very clearly, exists for reasons other than freedom and fullness of life for all.

So, as followers of Jesus, as lovers of God, each of us just one person, what, in the world, are we to do?

We can look to Scripture. Because when we do, we can see just how many of our stories are stories of folks being called by God, stories of folks called by name to tell a new story by their lives in response to God's call. One person at a time, responding, and changing everything that comes afterwards.

For there to be change, there must be disruption, so God's call always disrupts.

God calls folks away from their lives, asks them to trust and to follow where God is leading. God's call insists each gets free of the hold that the world has on who they are, and live differently.

God's call always disrupts, the disruption revealing just how different the life we're a part of, the life we've learned to fit in with to get on with, to survive in, just how different this is from the life we each were created for, to live fully, that would have us thrive.

God called Abram, told him to leave all that he knew, the place where he lived, his family, everything that was familiar, and go, go where God would lead him. And Abram went, just as God had told him to do.

Jesus sees Matthew, the tax collector, and says "follow me," and Matthew got up, and followed, just as Jesus had told him to do.

Each new chapter of the great story told in Scripture builds off a call, and a single disruptive step taken in response, the choice made to respond to God that pulls someone free from the grasp of the world as it is...

God's call isn't just a detail in the story, a bit of drama to keep the story moving along, God's calling of people by name is a deep truth about the reality of God in each of our lives and in our world: God's influence, God's presence in lives as they're being lived is constant; God's yearning for things to be different, for this world to be different is unrelenting; God's longing for humanity's response and for humanity to choose to participate in the divine life will never end.

And, the transformation of the world depends on us, on our responding to God's call on our lives.

God's call insists that we each are deeply known in our fullness, remembered, even if we've gotten to a point in life where we've forgotten who we were born to be. God's call says that we are known, and that our own glorious fullness of being is precisely what we were created for, and is exactly what's needed, right now, to transform this broken world.

Responding to God's call on our lives is how we, as just one person, participate in the transformation of our reality and the healing of the pain of the world.

But we can't respond if we don't hear the call, or don't want to hear the call because we don't want the disruption to our lives that responding to God's call will inevitably bring, or if we fear the consequences of being fully, entirely, and gloriously the people we were born to be.

And for far too many folks it's just too dangerous to be fully and fabulously themselves, this is certainly the lived experience of our LGBTQ+ siblings.

How we live, how we each live matters, not only because of what's lost when we don't live in our fullness, but also because our lives as part of the world, as we're living them in the world, our speech, our actions, our choices, our lives can make it easier or much harder or even dangerous for others, for others to live as they have been created to live, as they attempt to respond to God's call on their life.

The good news of God in Christ is that each one of us is called by name, each one of us is beloved, each one of us is needed. No exceptions. And we each and together can begin a new story of life in this world, responding to God and changing everything that comes afterwards.

If the young folks of the future are going to live fully, live as the ones they were created to be – we need to listen for God’s call, and respond, take that disruptive step and live fully ourselves.