

Isaiah 6:1-8
Luke 5:1-11

Jesus Calling
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Modern technology is great, some of the time. Last summer our cell phone batteries stopped working. Replacement batteries were not available but we could get new phones free if we signed another contract! Our new phones come with features I did not want and do not use. I don't use my phone for a camera nor do I text. And, it announces who is calling before the ring tone starts (not sure if I can turn this off or not). If Diane is calling it will say, "Diane mobile" or "Home calling". If it does not recognize the person it will give the full number before starting the ring tone. After reading our Scripture text for today I wondered what I would do if one day it said, "Jesus calling?"

However, after I thought about this for a moment I realized that I had already answered that call. The moment I accepted Christ, made a confession of faith I answered Jesus' call on my life. I am no different than Isaiah, Peter, James or John in that regard.

The call of God is different for all but given to all. Our texts today record the call of God on the lives of four people. Isaiah is given a glimpse of heaven. He finds himself in the very presence of God. He has seen God's glory and splendor and does not expect to survive the encounter, "I am a man of unclean lips..." (6:5). This experience is a defining moment in Isaiah's life. He will become a spokesperson for God. He will speak words of hope and words of judgment to the people of God. The moment he realizes God's call on his life, "Here am I, send me" he takes a giant leap of faith. He answers God's call and his life is forever changed.

Peter, James and John have spent a long night fishing and have come up empty. They have cleaned their nets, put them back in the boats and long to go home to get rest and prepare for another night of fishing. Jesus comes and asks to borrow one of the boats. A crowd is with him and he desires to teach – we know sound travels better over water, this request makes sense. I imagine somewhat reluctantly Peter agrees and takes Jesus out a ways from the shore. As Jesus teaches maybe he nods off. It has been a long night. The sun is warm. Finally the sermon ends and Jesus suggests they do a little more fishing. They have toiled all night and caught nothing. Everyone knows that you do not fish during the day. If there were no fish at night there will be none in the heat of the day. The nets have already been cleaned. Who wants to clean nets twice in one day? This request does not make sense. But, since Jesus asked, they let down the nets.

The Scripture tells us that they caught more than the nets and boats could handle. This was more than an ordinary catch. Even on the best of nights they would not have had such success. So many fish that the boat begins to sink. Peter suddenly realizes that there is more to Jesus than meets the eye. He longs for Jesus to go away. Like Isaiah he realized his sinfulness (Luke 5:8). Regardless, there is the invitation to Peter, James and John, "follow me". You will now catch men.

The emphasis is not on the call but on the response. We too have been called. How have we responded? None of those involved were forced to make a decision. They were all volunteers, "Here am I, send me." They were able to respond freely to God's call on their lives. Isaiah had seen the glory of God. Peter, James and John were witness to a miracle, a catch of fish none could imagine. This was more than an ordinary vision. More than a normal catch of fish. A decision was called for. They left all to follow God's call.

Other people seldom understand God's call on a life. I remember our announcement of going to the Philippines. There were so many who could not understand why we would leave the luxury of the United States to go to the "jungle." I am not sure if they realized that the Philippines has one of the largest cities in the world, Manila. And the city we were going to,

Iloilo, has a population of around one million. They had us living in a hut in the middle of the jungle cut off from all contact with the outside world. They wanted to know why? What would cause you to make such a decision? In reality the answer was simple: Jesus called.

In the same sense God is calling all of us. It may not be for some great adventure in a foreign land away from family and friends. It may just be to become a part of a local congregation. But regardless of the destination there will be those who do not understand. There will always be those who wonder why. Why are you giving up Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to spend time with a group of kids in “Wings” learning how to read? Why do you go to the soup kitchen? Why do you go to the senior center? Why did you choose politics? Why get up on Sunday morning and go to worship when you could stay home with a hot cup of coffee or tea and the Sunday paper? Why? Why? Why? Again, the explanation is simple: Jesus called.

I was involved in interviewing a candidate for ordination. Part of the process involves asking the person about their “call” to ministry. The individual shared how many of her friends and colleagues did not understand why she would start seminary at 50+. How can you explain God’s call?

Jesus calls us to a variety of tasks. And, most of them involve what could best be described as mundane tasks in local congregations. Someone has to clean the nets. Our first call is to be a Christian, a follower of the living Christ. How we live out that call comes differently to each of us. None of us are called the same way and none of us serve the same way. Each of us is called to work out God’s call on our lives in our own unique way. There may be ones who help us along the way but for the most part, like Isaiah, Peter, James and John the decision is ours. God uses us wherever we are if we allow it.

Jesus’ call is to all to come and follow him. This Table is a reminder to us that we have answered that call. As we come to this Table we are reminded that we said “yes” to God’s call on our lives. As we again take the bread and cup in remembrance of Jesus we are reminded of his answer to God’s call and his commitment to obedience.

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:5b-11 NIV)

Jesus is calling....

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quoted is from NRSV, NCCC/USA 1989
NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1989