

Emails have been coming lately, almost daily, from presidential candidates saying that they need me. Or, at least my vote and if possible, my money. I remember the poster of Uncle Sam with his finger pointed toward me say, "Uncle Sam needs you". Even Smokey the Bear needs me to prevent forest fires. It feels nice to be needed - most of the time. We may even long to be needed. Although, there are some days when I think parents wish they were not needed quite as much.

As I look at Palm Sunday and Holy Week I see the actions of Jesus and those around him. I also see that he had made all the needed preparations for the week ahead. The colt was tied and waiting for the disciples. The Upper Room reservations had been made. The instructions of Jesus to the disciples were simple, "Go and find" and "Go and make ready". They were not to go and find a colt for me to ride or find an upper room for us. He also knew there might be questions, "If anyone asks simply say, 'the Lord needs it'". Or, look for a man carry a jar of water (unheard of in the day - only women would be carrying jars of water). The details have all been arranged. The Upper Rooms would be in demand for the Passover as thousands came to the city to celebrate it. Jesus had the preparations ready - all they needed to do was to follow his instructions. Jesus was ready for the week before him.

I also noted that the use of the colt and the upper room were only temporary. Jesus was not asking for the colt to be given to him for its life but for the use of it for a day. The Upper Room would be needed only for the sharing of the Passover meal. It was an immediate, temporary need.

Sometimes it feels that we are asked to serve forever. We have developed Task Forces to help get away from that need. A Task Force can be formed for one specific action or event. People who have specific talents can be recruited and their talents used where they are most needed. They can serve where they have an interest and when the task is done the Task Force is dissolved. Yes, our call to Christ and our commitment to him is forever, but the _____ Board or Committee, maybe not! We are called to be Christ-like in all that we do - at home, work or play.

We are called to be ready when we are needed. My thoughts wandered to a symphony orchestra (maybe because I was at a concert Monday night). If you pay attention you will notice that often between the pieces, chairs and instruments are added or removed as needed. Not every instrument is used in every piece of music. Now, that does not mean that the performers do not practice and that preparations are not necessary. The orchestra is still performing but with certain instruments for certain numbers and others not needed. Yes, there are some that are almost always there (violins, cellos, etc.) But, others come and go as they are needed. Now you may not play in this piece but in the next one you are highlighted! You are in the spotlight.

This is how I see the call of Christ - the Lord has need of it. As we have noted, we are to be Christ-like in all of our dealings and actions. Our temperament should be growing into Christ's. We should respond to all people in a Christ-like manner whether we are at home, at play, at school, etc. We should treat people the same, love people the same and seek the best in them. We understand that some days they are having bad days too - and we hold them and one another up in prayer. We are to be ready when the call comes and we are called into action.

Now, the hard part for some of us is NOT being in the action. We seem to think that if we are not involved the world will stop rotating (disease of many clergy). We feel that our task, our input is so necessary that it is important that we be there and be involved. I recall preparing for a four month sabbatical and having one of the members call and ask, “What if someone dies while you are away?” My response was that there are plenty of good people who can fill in while I am away. We have retired clergy in congregation and there are some good ones serving in neighboring churches. And, they may do things better than I would.

Our call is to be ready when called. And, we are to give others the opportunity to serve when they are called for a task that they are prepared for. We are now in Spring Training for baseball. Any baseball team needs nine players on the field. Most have double that or more on the bench (major league teams carry 25 players). Some of the players will see little or no action during the game - maybe even during the season. Their task is to be ready when they are called. When the call comes it may be at the most crucial moment in the game.

Our task is to be prepared. A colt, a jar of perfume, an upper room. A rake, a shovel, a computer, a car, a flute. Do you remember God’s question to Moses in Exodus 4:2? As Moses was tossing out excuse after excuse why he could not serve, God asks, “What is that in your hand?” God did not ask Moses for what he did not have. God does not ask us for what we do not have. God asks for us to use what we have when it is needed.

Today, though, we can all raise our voices and shout, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” And, even the stones, **if needed** would have cried out if **the Lord had had need** of them! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!”

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1989