

A friend posted on Facebook that they had just received a post from Jesus. They wondered when Jesus began using Facebook. There are days when I get “religious” messages too. Occasionally they have different interpretations of the same event — each coming from a different theological angle. Both claim that their message is right and comes directly from God/Christ/Holy Spirit. This leads me to ask, “How do we know the Spirit’s call?” Who is hearing correctly?

One thought, If it is what we want to hear, it is probably wrong!

We celebrate two calls of the Spirit today. John and Jesus were born months apart and were both a part of God’s eternal plan. Now we are not sure if they had much contact with each other during their growing years. John stood out. He lived in the wilderness with a Nazarite lifestyle. He dressed far outside the norm and ate a strange diet - locust and wild honey. He was a voice in the wilderness - he came in the tradition of some of the prophets.

Jesus was more normal. He grew up with his parents and tradition tells us that he worked with his father in the family carpenter’s shop. His dress was like everyone else. He was the boy down the street. Both are called by the Spirit to begin ministry.

John came calling Israel to repent of their sins and get back to being the people of God. He wants Israel to get back to being the very people of God. We need to remember that the prophets called Israel back to God. They condemned Israel for their actions and cried how far they strayed from God. The people came to see John and hear his message. Many of those who came out to hear him were baptized by him. These are the people of Israel, John’s call and message was not for those outside of Israel. John’s message was one of fire and brimstone. If you don’t get your act together God is coming, watch out.

It is to this scene that God quietly comes. There is no fanfare. No trumpets blowing. The last person John expected to be standing before him was Jesus. He knows that it is he who should be baptized by Jesus and tells him so. Jesus’ simple response was, “*Let it be so for now...*” This too, is part of the Spirit’s call. As Jesus is baptized the Spirit comes and a voice from heaven affirms his decision, “*This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.*” Then Jesus is led into the wilderness for forty days to prepare for the next years.

Echoes of Isaiah come to our mind. Is this who Isaiah was referring to? John? Jesus? Who is the servant Isaiah was speaking of? What if we have it wrong when we make a determination? Is there a wider vision that we need to be looking at? Isn’t it easier when it is someone else’s job? If Isaiah was referring to John’s calling in the wilderness we can say, job well done. Or, if he was referring to Jesus we can nod in agreement and be satisfied that the job was done. But, did not Paul often call himself a “servant of Christ?” Doesn’t it take us off the hook when it is not our job? What if it is our job???

I recall making a statement in a congregational meeting many years ago. There was a task that needed to be done. One of the members quickly responded, “Isn’t that what we pay you for?” I gave my favorite response, “Yes and no.” It is not my job, it is our job. We are in this together. One of our Baptist principles is the priesthood of ALL believers. It is our job - we are all called to minister in the Spirit of Isaiah 42. The Spirit’s call is on all of us who would follow after Christ.

Jesus sends his disciples out into the world in Matthew 28:20 - to make disciples of all nations. Thus, it is our task to bring peace, justice, love and grace to the whole world. We are to seek the Spirit’s call each day. We are called to work together to bring hope to the nations of the world. Yes, we all have different gifts and abilities but we are to use the gifts we have for the same purpose - to bring Christ to the world.

Or, to use Isaiah's images: to bring sight to a world lost in darkness. To seek release from bondage those who are bound by sin and darkness. To be a light to the world. Whatever gift or ability we have, it is to be used to make the world a better place. Whether it is building homes, making sandwiches, caring for the sick, teaching kids to read, walking to the store with a neighbor, listening, laughing, crying with a friend we are to do it for the glory of God. The Spirit's call is on all of us — the whole people of God. We are servants of Isaiah.

My cousin posted a picture of a tall young African man walking a tiny, short petite white woman down a snowy sidewalk. They are hand in hand. The post said that one icy day she asked him to help her get home safely (keep from falling). Since then he has walked her home every day!

This is close to one of the images that have emerged from this reading of Isaiah that I can't quite shake. It is the sixth verse, "*I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you.*" (NRSV) God walking hand and hand with us.

It was a beautiful morning. We had spent the week-end in Dumaguete, Philippines at Silliman University. We are heading for worship at the campus church and as we walked I had two little girls with me, one holding left hand and the other holding my right. One was American, the other Filipino. Both were about 4 years old and I don't think either understood the language of the other - but they were friends. They held on tight, the area was strange to them. Mom and dad were nearby but still they seemed to want the assurance of hands being held. As long as they had a hand to hold - all was well.

Can you see God walking with you, holding your hand? This is the promise of Isaiah - we have been called, we are servants of the Living God and the promise is that God will hold our hand. This is our call - this is the spirit of Isaiah - this is the Spirit's call.

John came calling, Jesus came fulfilling and we are called to serve.

I was touched this week by [The Mood Of Christmas](#), by Howard Thomas - appropriate for this Sunday after Epiphany - coming of the kings:

**When the songs of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins;
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among people,
 To make music in the heart.**

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988