

Following Jesus on His Mission

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

Pastor Peterson

The Bible is filled with stories of people who were used by God for extraordinary purposes. It is not because the saints in the Bible were better than other people. Rather it was their trust in God which enabled God to pour His love into their lives and help them do incredible things. Abraham, for instance, came from a family of idol worshippers. He was not seeking God, God sought him and invited him to a future filled with hope. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. When God said to Abraham, ***"Get up and go to the land I will provide for you."*** Abraham gathered up his family and his possessions and he sought out the future God promised him. As a result, God blessed Abraham's name, gave him land, and established a great nation through his descendants. God blessed him beyond his wildest dreams.

God's call always begins with an invitation into a relationship with Him. This invitation to know God is given to people who sometimes least expect it. David was a child; Rahab was a prostitute; Gideon was a coward; Elizabeth was an old woman, and Mary was just a teenager. God in His grace came to them and invited them to know Him and filled their lives with meaning and purpose. Just like He comes to you this morning through His Word and sacraments and joins Himself to your life.

A few weeks ago we celebrated the baptism of Jesus in which God publicly acknowledged Jesus by saying, ***"This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased."*** With Jesus' baptism came a call for Jesus to yield His life to God and die for the salvation of the world. This morning we celebrate Jesus' call to each of us to follow Him and to share God's blessing with the world in His name. Saint Paul wrote, ***"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised***

from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:3-4) In other words, when we were baptized into Christ we were not only invited to share a relationship with Christ and know His salvation but also united with Christ in a new life and given a ministry.

In the Gospel lesson this morning, Matthew tells us that Jesus did not begin His ministry in Jerusalem, the religious center of Israel; nor did He recruit the most religiously qualified to be His disciples. Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, a place the prophets described ***"as a land living in darkness and a people living in the shadow of death."*** This area of Israel was a place of constant turmoil and warfare. It was filled with people whose relatives had been killed or taken away by Israel's enemies and whose neighbors were transplanted there from other countries by force. Therefore Galilee was called "Galilee of the Gentiles." This was a land with a history of broken lives and hurting people. And it was to these broken people that Jesus began to preach: ***"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near."*** (Matthew 4:17)

When we hear the word "repent" our reaction is often negative. The message seems to be saying we are unacceptable to God. But the word "repent" means to stop what you are doing, turn around, and take a good look. The kingdom of God is near you! God is offering you a new life, don't miss it. Jesus described God's invitation to new life this way: ***"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*** (Matthew 11:28-29) The call of God always begins with a relationship with Jesus.

Andrew, Peter, James, and John were introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist. When Jesus saw the disciples in their boat's fishing, they already knew each other and knew Jesus was the Messiah. The call Matthew describes in our Gospel today is a call to deepen their faith in Jesus and experience life with Him. Jesus wanted them to not only know Him but to experience God's transforming love in their lives. He wanted to make their lives new. This is His invitation to each of us this morning. He invites us to grow in our faith so that His love can

transform us into the people God created us to be. This is why getting involved in a small group, attending a bible study, being in Sunday school, singing in the choir, etc., is so powerful. It is transformative.

In our mission statement at OSWLC, we say, “We glorify God and make disciples by forming relationships, experiencing Jesus together, and sharing God’s love.” This statement expresses three dimensions to being a disciple of Jesus. First, forming relationships reminds us of God’s call to be in a relationship with Christ. Second, it reminds us that we are called to experience the fullness of His love so our lives can be transformed. Third, God calls us to share His love and make disciples of those around us. Jesus put it this way, **“I will make you a fisher of men.”** We can never accomplish the purposes of God on our own or with our own strength. Jesus said, **“I will make you.”** God has to equip us for His purposes. When we are blessed with Jesus’ love, His love compels us to love others.

This morning, God is inviting you to go beyond just believing that Jesus died for your sins so you can go to heaven. Jesus is inviting you to follow Him so you can live your life to its fullest potential and to be the blessing God created you to be. The kingdom of God is near you. Do you see it? Will you turn around and turn to Jesus so that He might use your life as a blessing to the world? I invite you to take a step to grow in your faith and follow Jesus.

Service Notes: Following Jesus on His Mission

1. God used people to do extraordinary things because:
 - _ They were better than other people.
 - _ They were smarter and more gifted.
 - _ They trusted in God's promises and love.

2. Abraham believed God and sought the future God prepared for him.
 - _ He worked hard so God blessed him.
 - _ He was lucky not everybody gets blessed.
 - _ He trusted God and did what God said.

3. God's call begins with an invitation into a relationship with God.
 - _ I have never had a call from God.
 - _ I do not know what God wants from me.
 - _ God called me to follow Him when I was baptized.

4. God's call invites us to experience three things:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

5. Jesus is calling you today to follow Him. Name something you can do this week to know Jesus better and to share His love.