

Sunday February 6, 2022 Epiphany 5 We are called in Faith

I Corinthians 15:1-11 Luke 5:1-11

It seems that the world is at a crossroads. The pandemic is still upon us as case numbers continue to rise with the omicron variant. The number of people who have died because of this virus continues to rise worldwide. People have been vaccinated not only once, but twice and many have even received booster shots to prevent sickness from spreading. The government has helped us to understand the basics of the problem in front of the world by regularly scheduling press releases as best they can. Last week was a rally of truck drivers to Ottawa against the new rules for those who bring us all that we need from one country to another. Yet many of these people have followed the government rules very keenly. And yet the reality is that two years later we are still battling this virus. At the same time, there is missile testing in North Korea and the Ukraine and Russia and preparing for conflict. People are feeling down, looking at the winter as a down time and lacking hope. For many people anger and frustration are compounding all what is in our hearts as well. Snow days don't exist any longer in the same way as children can connect online to the classroom. On top of it all it is February and the groundhogs famous for predicting spring's arrival do not agree! Spring will come but it could seem like winter will be with us for a while. But there is hope and there is help!

Psalms 71:5 states, "For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. And from Psalm 124:8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. But from where do we receive this hope and help and how might we receive it? Our hope and help comes to us from God but we who know God know him not only as the one who made us, but through his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy spirit who moves amongst us now. And we need God's Spirit in this time because something in us may be missing or needs to be reignited as it is dimly lit. Six weeks ago we were celebrating Jesus birth with much food, plenty of gifts and special moments. But in these intervening weeks we have wondered where Christ has been as we have been locked down, almost hibernating like bears and turtles and waiting for spring. But this is not our nature as people, we are people on the go- called to work, play, share with others.

In the darkness of these winter days it is hard to feel Christ's light, yet when the sun shines into our homes, we know that God is with us. So how do we keep the light shining? We follow the source- Jesus. Why? Because Jesus is the One sent by God to save, lead and teach us how to live.

Our reading from Luke is the story of Jesus calling the first disciples. Jesus had started to build up a following. He was at the beach of Lake Galilee and he saw two boats near the shore. The crowd was pressing him to do something. He got into one of the boats and asked Simon to go away from the shore. Jesus sat down in the boat and taught there. After he was done teaching, he asked Simon to go out further in to the lake. Simon answered that he and his fellow fishers had been dragging nets all night long and caught nothing. But because Simon had Jesus in his boat, he said, "Yet, if you say so, I will let down the nets." They did this and soon the nets were full. their nets were filled. Simon's fishing partners were then signalled to help bring in the catch of the morning. Simon saw that there were so many fish that both boats were full. Then he turned to Jesus and fell down at his knees and confessed. He said "I am a sinful man" Then Simon's partners, James and John realized what had happened. Jesus turned to Simon, "Don't be afraid, From now you will be catching people. They were in awe of Jesus. They lead their boats to shore. Arriving at the beach, these fishers left everything and followed Jesus.

The huge haul of fish was the means by which Jesus showed them what was possible if they followed him. He told them what they would be doing—catching people. There was not further call backs, questions about in-person or online options, no discussion of pay or benefits. They dropped their nets and followed in faith because they believed Jesus was an extraordinary person to get to know and see what he does. They were intrigued by the teacher—we do not know what he taught that day from the boat. But it was worthwhile going further into the lake to see what Jesus really meant.

Simon, James and John saw what Jesus did and followed. He knew them as good people and willing to work. And when he called, they responded immediately. I wonder if you have responded to Christ's call? And have you done this quickly or through c

Paul in writing to the struggling Corinthian church in chapter 15 is telling the people what is known as the Resurrection Story and his personal reflection or story. This passage describes the call of Saul/Paul as a disciple and it is the Gospel in just 6-8 verses. But these words also include the part about Paul's experience of being called by Jesus. Paul states, "I persecuted the church of God." But by the grace of God, he began a new life. For if we remember Paul's story—he was enroute to Damascus to round up Christians who were gathering against the state and his work was to persecute and kill them. One day, Jesus appeared to him and asked him why he was doing this? He did not answer. But in time, he believed in Jesus teachings, death and resurrection so much that he changed his life. It is Paul who states that by

the grace of God he was able to establish churches and tell the good news of Jesus Christ. This was because Jesus called him. There would have been much back lash from his former colleagues and friends but Paul knew that Jesus was real and died for the forgiveness of his sins.

How might hearing Paul's story help us today? One can imagine Saul/Paul's life in the early days of the Christian church. He really did not know about Jesus but knew that his life had changed forever. Paul encountered Jesus- he had to answer that call directly and in that moment. He could not ask Jesus to come back or call later. It was the moment that changed his life—he became blind to his old way of life and had to trust others to guide him to his new life. And because of this, he began his work of sharing Jesus' message with others.

We might be feeling down about the events of the world, or our country or even what is happening in our city with the rise of homelessness and the need for a safe injection site for users. We might be feeling isolated as the current lockdown still has over 15 days to go and dependent upon case number for the next stage to begin. We might be feeling alone because we just cannot see others as often but what is amazing is this invention we all take for granted... the telephone. We need to reach out to each other. We need to make the call to show we care. And we also know that even though he is not going to use the telephone directly, His Spirit might guide others to reach out to you. Are you ready to answer this call? We are reminded that each of us is unique and important to God. God knows us by name and we should not be discouraged. If we draw close to God, God will come to us. God is waiting for you to answer that call.

When Simon, James and John saw the miracle catch of fish that was so heavy in the nets they knew that Jesus was somebody different. They knew he was a teacher but they also believed he was of God. They brought the boats into shore filled with fish. Jesus said, Follow me. And what did they do? They dropped the net and followed. Today our nets are filled with many things we cannot control – what is happening in our world, with the pandemic with uncertain days of political discussions. Christ is still calling us to do what needs to be done—to believe and have faith in God and to tell others of Jesus' resurrection story- like Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. It is up to us now to answer the call, drop the net and follow. Are you willing?

Let us pray: Jesus you still come to us and seek us to answer your call. In these moments of mixed emotions, thoughts and uncertainties in life we hear you and feel your Spirit calling us to let go of those things we cannot do anything about. Help us to know you and rejoice in your presence for we believe. Call us again so that we will answer SILENCE. Amen