

Sunday, January 15, 2017

Isaiah 49:1-7

I Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

Called By God

It was her wedding day and the young woman was finished dressing in her bedroom. She asked one of her bridesmaids as to where her dad was. He was just outside and walking around the yard. The young woman saw him and opened the window and yelled out. "Daddy, come and see." When her father heard her voice, he turned around and having heard those words many times before, knew that it was important. "Come and see" she said again. He went into the house, into her bedroom and when he saw her, the dad cried, "My daughter, I can see." The young bride pointed out her shoes, her dress's special bows and her veil. Her dad, said, "no dear—I see you and the beautiful woman you have become." They talked and he shared how many times, she had called to him, "Come and see" so that he could show him – a special art creation, her science project, a new dress or even how she decorated her room. Each time she had invited him to 'come and see." He would go and see what she had done, what her excitement was all about and what the next steps were for her.

How many times have you heard this invitation? "Come and see." Maybe it was an ad for a show or special hockey game or even an opportunity to see something that you weren't sure about or understand? Maybe the person asking was looking for you to do something different or new. How did you respond? Did you hesitate or did you act right away? Did you even respond or go at all?

In the gospel reading today John tells the story of the change in focus of some of his followers. John had been spending time out in the desert and it was there that he started getting a crowd who listened to his message about the messiah. It was not a new message of one who was to come to save the people. He was telling them again of the prophet Isaiah's message that God would not leave his people to perish. God was to send a servant who would bring about change for His people. A servant who would be king. A servant who would die like a lamb offered for sacrifice. This messiah would be the one who was to follow John. John taught about love, hope and peace and he talked about the One who would save his people from sins. His message was of repentance and changing from an old to a new way of life. John had been baptizing people in the Jordan River and he baptized Jesus whom God revealed as his beloved Son.

Soon after John saw Jesus approaching him and stated to all who were close by, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John again is revealing Jesus as the Saviour, the promised one of God who will save the world. Those gathered around John questioned why he would call Jesus this Lamb of God. So John explains that God told him that the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I have seen and I testify this is the Son of God.

What an introduction John gives to his followers about Jesus. “This lamb of God is the son of God who will take away the sin of the world.” The next day, John with two of his followers sees Jesus and says, “Look the Lamb of God.” The two disciples follow Jesus and when Jesus saw them and that they were following him, he asked, “What do you want?” That probably surprised these fellows. Scrambling for something to say they asked, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” That really wasn’t what they wanted to know. They wanted to know much more. There were questions they didn’t yet know how to ask. But this was the first thing they thought of. So Jesus smiles and says, “Come and you will see. They walked off together and spent the rest of the day talking. This was the beginning of something really big.

Andrew was one of these people and he went with Jesus. Andrew then left Jesus and went to find his brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah, “and he brought Simon to him. When introductions were made, Jesus said. “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas—which is Peter- meaning Rock.

What did Jesus mean when he called Andrew and the other disciple of John, when he called, “Come and you will see?” What did Jesus show them that convinced Andrew that he was the Messiah? Was it a montage of images flashing in the sky? Or stick pictures in the sand? Was it the gifts he had received as a child- gold, frankincense, myrrh? Maybe it wasn’t what Andrew saw at the place where Jesus was staying, but simply the action that he followed which made a difference in his life at that moment. He believed John’s teachings that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour and because of this—he had to tell his brother whom he loved. He went and got Simon and when these two people meet, Jesus looked at him and changed his name to Cephas or Peter—meaning rock.

Follow me or Come and see. Jesus continues to recruit more disciples to follow him. He simply said, “Follow me.” And Philip answered. Philip then tells Nathanael and he responds with a question of Jesus’ being good enough since he grew up in Nazareth. But it through Philip’s invitation to him, that ‘come and see’ is shared. Even though Nathanael questioned Jesus, he did come to believe and followed him. Jesus tells him that he shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Did Nathanael understand this and did he really know what was to come?

What can we learn from this story about Jesus? The invitation to follow Christ comes from another person and you can’t simply follow from the sidelines. You have to get into the action.

To truly understand being a follower of Jesus, means to show up and get active. To grow in one’s faith is to see how God’s Spirit changes lives- from within yourselves and in those whom you serve.

Here we are at the beginning of 2017, our ministry here at Glenwood church is renewing itself because Christ continues to call individuals to serve in new and different ways. We are a community of faith where change occurs—because the Spirit of God is moving us in this place. But there is some hesitancy to serve this church because we might be afraid to make mistakes, upset another person or even be hurt. But when we consider what Jesus did that day with

Andrew, Simon, and later with Philip and Nathanael they showed the same kind of hesitancy. But Jesus said, Come and you will see.

What did he mean by this? What will we be exposed to and experience as we minister one with another? If only we could have a full job description of what our ministries would involve each day. Yet Jesus just said, Come and you will see.

As a minister of the church now in my 26th year since ordination, I have seen many things—weddings, funerals, baptisms but so much more than these ceremonies and rituals and rites of the church. I have seen faith in action, faith being formed and lives of people changed so much that people are excited to say they are Christians. I have experienced the joy of Christ in the lives of others and because of this joy being shared—I too have grown in my faith. But what does your ministry experience show about your faith? We have each answered that simple question/ Do you believe and then responded to Christ's call. But do you have the willingness and ability to grow in faith as you do so?

Andrew, Simon, Philip and Nathanael- left everything and followed Jesus – no job description no plan, no money in the bank, no future direction of where their lives would lead. Would they have followed Jesus had they realized he was going to die and they would fear for their lives? Would they have gone to see and talk with Jesus if they knew that they would be traveling by foot for 3 years and intentionally go into the city of Jerusalem where their teacher would die?

As we minister one with another as a church family we do not know what each day will bring and it is good. All we know is that we have faith that will enable us to meet the challenges of each day. And our faith will increase as needed by God's grace and love and as we serve as witnesses of the presence of Christ's Spirit in our lives.

Through Christ alone we have hope that will sustain us and cause us to wonder, and question about our life here on earth and what receiving the gift of eternal life is all about. As we share in ministry together—we will go through the ups and downs of a community whose needs differ yet offer are similar. But what is most important is that Jesus will lead us to wonders and miracles and people we would never ever think of seeing. And Jesus will open heaven for us and he will receive us one day. We will also experience and see angels ascending and descending with Christ but in order for this to happen, we have to come and see.

John the Baptist told the crowd about the One who was to come after him who would be the Messiah. Jesus was baptized and God revealed his son to those present. When John called Jesus the Lamb of God, people heard this and many were curious. Andrew asked Jesus where he was staying. He went and got his brother because Jesus said, come and you will see.

As followers of Christ—our eyes will be opened to new possibilities, new experiences because the Spirit will show us what we need to do in order to grow. But we have to move into action, to put our feet to the floor and be willing to listen. Not just for one or two months—but every day. Are we willing? Come and you will see.

PRAYER

Holy God we praise you and are grateful that the invitation to follow Christ is still open. Enable us to stop making excuses about sharing in ministry with others—we each have gifts to offer. Help us to discern them, learn together and grow in our faith. Even if it means we have to become uncomfortable until we experience your Spirit speaking to us and calling us to move forward in faith. Call us and/or renew our faith to serve you again. Amen.