

SERMON 911

January 25, 2015

Third Sunday after Epiphany

982nd Week as Priest

809th Week at St Dunstan's

74th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

THE CALL

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

They were more than that. They were successful in their business. They owned their own boats. They were young and healthy and the whole earth spread out before them. They could have done anything they set their minds to. They were that capable, that gifted.

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Actually here is one of those rare occasions where I think the old words serve us better. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." It was a call to Andrew and Simon

to follow Jesus, clear and direct. It was not really a suggestion or helpful advice. It was a call from God. Those are hard to turn down, believe me.

That is certainly the way I felt in 1999, when the Bishop asked me to come to Auburn to be the priest and chaplain at St. Dunstan's. I didn't hear God's voice, or thunder. I didn't see a burning bush or a great flash of light. But I did answer a call. Things have not been all sweetness and light. There was a time at the end of our first year when I thought I had made a terrible mistake to leave the bank, sell everything we had, and move to Auburn to give our lives, our souls and bodies, to a handful of grumpy college students. But over fifteen-and-a-half years I can say that we were faithful, and we did the right thing, and it has all worked out better than I could have imagined.

Have you ever received something like a call from God? Have you ever felt that you were being called to do something special and purposeful with your life? Do you recall a time, perhaps when you were in your early twenties or thirties, when you felt that the whole earth spread out before you, and that there was so much possibility and opportunity in the world to do good, that you just knew that your life would be important and filled with purpose and meaning?

There is a hymn, 487 in the blue book, that speaks of this call. The words are by George Herbert, an Anglican priest and poet of the very early 17th century. He wrote:

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life;
Such a way as gives us breath,
Such a truth as ends all strife;
Such a life as killeth death.

Herbert is calling on Christ to show him the way. He knows that life in Christ is a way of living in truth. Such is life itself. It inspires us and brings peace and confidence. It is greater than anything we could imagine. Such a way conquers sin and death.

And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

They did not hesitate or count the cost. Andrew and Simon Peter jumped into the water and swam to the shore to follow the Lord. It was a great risk, to be sure. They were leaving everything they knew, everything they had worked for. They were leaving behind family, home, and friends. And yet they followed Jesus.

This is no easy thing to do. In fact, if you think about it too much, chances are you would never do it. There would be a million reasons not to leave everything and follow him.

Plenty of rationale for not answering such a call. Besides, who in their right mind would do such a thing?

As Jesus went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Well, there's your answer. You and your like-minded friends might well do something like this together. Call it irresponsible. Call it hare-brained. Call it crazy.

Or you might just change the world, at least the world you live in, right here. You don't have to leave your family business or leave home. You don't need to become a monk or a nun. You might understand that your calling is to make a difference right where you live and work, right here in River City, or at Lake Martin, or whatever place of your choosing.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength;
Such a light as shows a feast;
Such a feast as mends in length;
Such a strength as makes his guest.

If you don't know what your call might be, or you don't get any sense of what your purpose in life might be, then ask

for it. Pray for it. Ask for strength to do the work you have been give to do. Ask for light to show you the way.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart;
Such a joy as none can move;
Such a love as none can part;
Such a heart as joys in love.

When you answer your calling, there is nothing that can turn you back, nothing that can sidetrack you or throw you off the tracks. Just keep answering your call. Keep following him, follow Jesus, and he will show you the way. **AMEN.**