

Will Somebody Answer the Call?

Our gospel reading opens today by telling us that Jesus traveled around to all the cities and villages, proclaiming the presence of God through word and actions. One of the unique characteristics that I like about the nature of Jesus that we find in various readings is that Jesus did not wait for people to come to him. Rather, he went to where the people were to proclaim the good news and to make real the presence of God in the marketplaces and in the synagogues, in the cities and the countryside. Jesus' words helped people to experience the presence of God at the point of their human need, instead of expecting the people to live so that their lives measured up to the expectation of God.

One author has stated that if the presence of God was food, which we all need for nourishment and the instrument that Jesus used to serve it was a fork, the three tines on the fork would be preaching, teaching and healing.

Through preaching, Jesus prevailed on the hearts of those that he came into relationship with, and it was at this level where people begin to change their mind and feeling to a different reality about the realm of God. It was through preaching that Jesus begins to plant seeds of encouragement, empowerment, forgiveness and liberation.

Through teaching, Jesus was able to enlighten individuals, especially those mentioned in our gospel reading today, on the implication and application of the gospel effectiveness in the people's daily lives. It was not by chance that Jesus called those that he did in the gospel reading. Sadly, the only names mentioned are those of men, however, my hermeneutic of suspicion tells me that there were women associated with this calling as well. However, I digress. I believe that those that Jesus chose represented people who were infected or affected by the power structure, common folks, people who were poor, people who worked for the government and felt as if there was no hope and no way out from under the structure that had been handed down to them from generation to generation and from Roman Emperor to Roman Emperor.

Through healing, Jesus offered healing of mind and body that invited individuals into wholeness. Jesus offered words of comfort that left no one out. That you need not wait to experience the presence of God, that it is available to you right here and right now. Do not wait for the overseers of the field to make the situation just right, you can contribute to your own healing by receiving the good news for yourselves, right here and right now.

This three prong message of Jesus moved Matthew to note that when Jesus viewed the crowds of needy people coming to him, he had compassion on them through his preaching, teaching and healing because they were harassed and helpless and many. That is why we can read that Jesus said that the "harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few", revealing to us nothing that is unlike today --- Jesus had empathy for them because they seemed helpless and hopeless. These were peasant people in need of the reality of the presence of God right then and that is what Jesus was offering them.

Our world today is not too much unlike Jesus' time, but with maybe a little more sophistication. Our world today is still filled with hurting people, with people who are in need. People who are in need what of what Maslow's Theory calls the five basic elements of human need, and that being air, water, food, clothing, and shelter. These are the target areas of our fields today where people are affected, and this does not exclude others fields, part of society, that are affected by power and privilege. We need not look further than our own church to find people who are in need, maybe not Maslow markers, but are in need nonetheless and that need might be in the form of developing a deeper sense of spirituality.

Jesus had viewed the human need as an opportunity to bring the people into the presence of God. I believe that when human needs are satisfied doors are opened to a greater reality in that we are able to tell our own stories of liberation, of being set free, tell stories from our own lived experiences of what Jesus has done for me.

We are able to tell our story of what it is has been like to be in the field, in the world, living from day to day; struggling to overcome situations and circumstances that would have us believe that we cannot make in ever-changing world. However, we find the strength and are able to tell our stories from of what it has been like to overcome the isms of our time because of what the presence of Jesus has been like in our lives.

We are able to tell our stories of what it has been like to live with life threatening illnesses and proclaim we are still here, by the grace of God, we are still here to tell our stories of how God has touched our bodies and renewed our faith to something greater than we could image.

We are able to tell our stories are what it felt like to be kicked out, rejected by, and disowned by the church of our childhood or church of our choice because of our sexual orientation, only to discover that the love that God has for us is greater than any denomination or religious affiliation.

When we step out on our faith stories, we step out knowing that we are laborers in the field and in our **communities** telling our stories in hopes that it will bring about equality for all.

When we step out on this kind of faith, we step out knowing that we have been **equipped** for the work that we have been called today. Were the ones that Jesus called in our story equipped to handle every situation? Probably not. Are we equipped to handle every situation that we face today as a church community? certainly not! However, what I do believe without a doubt is that Jesus equips those that are called – and we have been called today, to do the work of the one that has called us forth and I wonder who will answer call today?

When we step out on this kind of faith, we step out knowing that we are working to establish **peace** in our communities. We know that scripture says, “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” and when you know and can

affirm for yourself that you are a child of God, nothing can take that away from you, and I wonder who will answer the call today to be a peacemaker?

When we step out on our faith stories, we step out knowing that our work for **justice among all people** is not yet complete. (If time permits, tell the story of Michael Hayden). There are still too many people in too many places that are faced with daily injustices. I wonder, who will answer the call to be a justice maker today?

When we step out our own faith, we have to ask ourselves, have I done my part in protecting and helping to restore the integrity of all God's creation?

Have I done my part to bring hope to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers? Will you answer the call today, like the ones Jesus called, to do your part to make this a better world?

Amen.