

Third Sunday after the Epiphany ~ January 22, 2017
Sermon preached by the Rev. Deacon Holly Hanback
Readings: Isaiah 49:1-7, Psalm 40:1-12, 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, John 1:29-42

Christ be in the words I speak and Christ be in the ears that hear me. In the name of One God: Creator, Redeemer, Life Giver. Amen.

Our Gospel begins with John the Baptizer being arrested and placed in jail by Herod. With John in jail Jesus moves to Galilee to continue God's work. Jesus mission and ministry is taking place in occupied land. The Roman Empire has destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and rules harshly over the Jewish people. In the midst of this fear and oppression Jesus proclaims the words that *"the kingdom of heaven has come near"*. Jesus is reminding people that God is at work and active and with them no matter their circumstance. And then Jesus begins to call his disciples.

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

Can you imagine your normal daily routine, just doing the laundry, making dinner, working on the computer, and Jesus comes strolling along beside you and shouts out "Follow me, and I will make you feed and clothe and visit and pray for all people, showing them God is with them!"?

What would we do? Would we say "Hold on I just need to finish sorting the socks". "Could you wait while I finish flipping the hamburgers?" Would we barely glance up from the computer and say "Huh! What? Are you talking to me? What did you say? I'm really busy here I didn't hear you." **OR** would we drop our laundry, leave the kitchen, turn off the computer and follow Jesus and live into God's mission and ministry in our lives?

Notice the Disciples response: *"Immediately they left their nets and followed him."*

"Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him." Immediately.

Immediately they dropped their nets. They gave up their way of making money, their security, their families and they followed Jesus. Jesus was teaching and preaching about justice, hope, love, mercy and grace. Jesus was healing the sick and inviting all people into God's kingdom. Jesus was calling them. Jesus is calling us. Jesus was reminding the fishermen and us that we are all Children of God and we are all called by God. God's calling is for every person. Our lives, every word we say and every action we take, is an opportunity to share in God's mission and ministry proclaiming the Good News that God's kingdom has come near for **ALL** people.

What does that look like in our lives? What does that call sound like? I have had moments in my life where I had a good job, a stable future, hopes and dreams and still felt completely restless and wondered what am I supposed to be doing with my life? And then along came

Jesus. And I stopped. I stopped what I was so busy doing and I began to pray. I began to rest in God. I began to realize that our first purpose is to know that God loves us and that God's first call to us is to accept that love, to soak in that love and to rest in that love. And once we know that love, once we feel that love there is nothing left to do except give that love to everyone else. It just pours out of us, we can't even help ourselves. We want everyone to know they are loved and treasured and sacred. We begin to proclaim the Good News of God's kingdom to anyone who will listen.

While I was in Deacon's School one of my teachers gave us a project. We were to meet with three parishioners at their place of work. We were to interview them and ask them questions about how they saw their faith in action at work. This was harder than anticipated. Folks were happy to meet and talk about their work but they seemed to think their work was separate from their God. Most didn't think of their job or vocation as their "calling". They would say to me, "You are called by God that is why you are going to be ordained and work for the church."

However, as we continued discussing their work people began to make the connection that their faith gave them an opportunity to be a disciple of God in the world no matter what they are doing. One of the ladies was a cashier at a grocery store. At first she said "I used to be a lawyer. I didn't really enjoy it and quit when I had kids. I got this job because I needed part time work and money for things my kids needed. There is no correlation between my faith and my work." Then she proceeded to tell me a story about sharing her faith with another cashier and how they agreed to pray for one another. Over time customers would also hear stories of their love for God and the ways they were serving their community such as cooking meals for others. Customers began to ask her to pray for them, and she would invite folks to church and to join her in community mission work. As she finished I said, "You are called as an Evangelist and you chose a job that gives you access to lots of different people going through various things in their life. You are listening to them, caring for them and sharing God's love for them." She smiled and said, "I guess I am called. I can't wait to go back to work!"

Just like the fishermen and my favorite cashier we are all called by Jesus. And just like them we have a choice to make. The question for us becomes will we answer the invitation to Follow Him or will we keep hold of our own nets?

This past Friday in our very divided country the President-elect was sworn into office. Some folks were cheering and some folks were protesting. The very next day a massive March for Women took place not only in Washington D.C. but also in cities all around the U.S. and even on all 7 continents. Tens of thousands of folks felt called to drop their nets and immediately

began an active protest against fear and oppression. A six-year-old girl named Sophie Cruz, a well-known immigration activist, stood up as a speaker and inspired everyone. She said, "Let us fight with Love, Faith and Courage." "Let us keep together." And she ended her eloquent speech with "God is with us!" "Si Se Puede!"

"Yes we can." "God is with us." No matter who we are, no matter our circumstances, no matter what tasks tomorrow brings us, we are all loved and called by God. May we have the courage to recognize the voice of God calling us and realize that now is the time. Now is the time. The world desperately needs us to drop our nets and proclaim God's justice, mercy, hope and love for all of God's people. Amen.