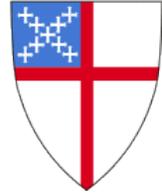


The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Second Sunday after Epiphany

Year A
RCL



Isaiah 49:1-7
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42
Psalm 40:1-12

Call:

Have you ever had that undeniable feeling that you are compelled to follow a path? It doesn't feel like there is a choice. There is a draw, a command, that you must follow. Isaiah was called even before birth to return the exiles held in Babylon to their home. And he was named as the one to carry the light of God to the world.

Second Isaiah is thought to be prophetic of Christ's life and ministry. He too was chosen, not only before birth, but from the very beginning of time to be the light to the world, and the sacrifice that would reconcile humanity to God.

John the Baptist recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, and proclaims this fact to his own disciples. At his encouragement, they leave John to follow Christ. John makes it very clear that he is not the messiah, but was sent to make the path straight, and "to testify to the light." Day after day for four days, John first

baptizes Jesus, then testifies that he knows He is the Son of God because of events at the baptism. John knows that his role has been completed, and he must diminish as Christ increases in influence and authority.

It is Andrew who turns to follow Christ, and goes to bring his brother Simon, declaring “We have found the messiah.” Jesus sees something special in Simon, and gives him a new name, Cephas, translated as Peter. As each of these men encounter Christ, they are called to follow Him. They have been on the path, but are now powerfully called to leave all their former commitments, and to follow this Jesus, the Messiah.

They didn’t know how difficult it would be, or what the costs would be. They only knew that they were being drawn to Christ. Saying “No” wasn’t a choice, perhaps they didn’t even give it a thought. And the rewards to humankind, are beyond measure. Salvation, reconciliation with God. Jesus, sent to forgive sins, to heal the sick, and to proclaim the love of God to and for all.

As Christians, we are drawn to Christ. We come here Sunday after Sunday as we follow Him, hope to be the people He would have us be, and to accomplish the things He needs us to do.

What is it?

During the time of my formation as a priest, I heard many stories about what forms calls took. Some described a sudden, high energy, almost physical impact that gave direction – okay, he described being hit over the head with a two by four. I felt like I was picked up by the nape of the neck, thrown into the river and told not to come out until I had acted on my call. Each person described something different. Throughout our Christian lives we receive calls, to serve on Vestry, to work on the altar, to be in choir, or be an acolyte. The bottom line is we are each called to minister in some way.

Where does it come from?

Jesus made it clear that his call to his disciples was from God. They would be fishers of people, they would preach and teach, heal, and love God's people. And our modern calls are no different.

How do you know?

Would it be just a little funny to say you just know? Sometimes you're sure because once you make the decision, the time for Vestry meetings opens up, or you run into someone who supports you and is willing to work with you. And sometimes you know it's the right thing because of the opposition. It feels like the "other side" is not of God. Perhaps there is too much anger or hate in the

fight. Life isn't cooperating. Obstacles crop up that make no sense. But you feel you are doing the right thing.

At what cost?

Remember the young man that wanted to follow Christ and he was told to sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Jesus? He turned away, very sad because he had so much. He just couldn't imagine giving it all away. The Bible and Church history is full of folks that have given up their jobs, or homes to become missionaries or clergy. We aren't always expected to walk away from our lives. We may be called to volunteer at a camp, or lead a study group at church, or help fill back packs for kids to have food on the weekends.

We know that Jesus disciples were called, and at what appears to be a moment's notice walked away from their lives, their families, their jobs to follow Him. Many of them lived to witness to Jesus love, and to bring the word of love to the whole world. And many of them died in pursuit of that mission.

We are called, as Jesus followers in this time, to stand up against prejudice, to stand for love and tolerance. To reach out to our neighbors and embrace them.

This church should be a place where everyone who comes in our doors feels safe. Safe to be exactly who they are. Safe to express their beliefs and feelings.

In conversation over the past weeks, I have asked what is it that keeps people from wanting to be a part of a church community. They answer shocked me. Fear. Fear of being criticized or even ostracized for expressing their beliefs. Strong feelings of faith, in human equality, and who they are and how they believe. Fear of being ridiculed for having an opinion that is different from someone else. Fear of being discounted because of their youth. These aren't empty fears. Many have experienced this criticism.

We, here at Trinity, hold ourselves up as being welcoming. We reach out to people who need support, and love. I know that we represent the best actions to those within our community, and those who come in our doors. But we need to find a way to stop keeping that a secret. We as loving followers of Christ, must find ways to let those who share our world, that we here are faithful witnesses to Christ. That we have taken vows to: "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being".

It's an important part of our baptismal covenant. It is our identity. It is who we are, followers of Christ.

Amen