

## Come Follow Me

Jonah 3: 1-5, 10

Mark 1: 14-20

January 18, 2009

United Memorial

Will you join me in a moment of prayer?

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight O God, our strength and our redeemer, amen.

What is your earliest memory of someone calling your name?

What is the most recent?

Was there love in the voice who called you?

Whatever your memories, the impact of someone using your name is profound.

It implies an intimacy that can be intense and powerful.

There is nothing like hearing the sound of your name on the lips of someone with whom you have a deep, powerful connection with. In my experience it doesn't matter if that person is 2 or 82, when they call you by name with love in their voice we respond willingly and readily.

I have a special bond with my nephew Jamie.

My nephew Jamie loves me as only a little boy can love someone who is a favorite aunt.

I don't know if it was because I was present at his birth, the fact that he looks exactly like my own son did many years ago, or something else entirely.

But the fact remains that his whole face lights up when I come into their house.

Catherine was just a little too hard for him to get his tongue around yet.

So he called me Cacky.

In fact I walked in one day and Jamie looked at his mom and said, “Cacky’s home!”

That’s when I knew I had been spending more time over there than I thought.

Now Jamie, if he wants to get my attention, he doesn’t just yell, although he does do that well.

If I don’t respond to him, he comes up to me and reaches out his hand, and says, “Cacky, come, show you.”

Jamie with the wisdom of his 2½ years knows that sometimes hearing a voice is not enough.

We need the hand of someone else reaching out to us, calling to us and showing us.

Our scriptures are full of stories of God and Jesus calling people.

This week we had the story of Jonah and his reluctant response to God’s call.

And also the story of Jesus calling Andrew and Simon, James and John.

When I read these stories, I am always amazed at the response of these men.

Jesus finds them by the sea and simply says, “Come with me and I will teach you to catch people!”

And I think this is a key phrase: Come, I will **teach** you!

Jesus didn’t say, “Hey, go save the world.

He said, “Come with me and I will teach you to fish for people.”

In my mind there is an enormous difference between the two.

Compare that with what we heard of the story of Jonah.

Jonah hears God’s voice saying, “**Go** to Ninevah!”

And what does Jonah do?

He runs away, as far as he can, as quick as he can.

Anyone of us who has children knows how much easier it is to get them to cooperate if we ask them to come and do it with us rather than tell them to go do it.

In fact I wouldn’t limit that characteristic to children.

Don’t we prefer to be invited to take part in something rather than to be told we must go and do something?

But as different as these two stories seem to be on the surface, I think that they share some important realities.

These men all heard a call.

Jonah responded reluctantly.

In fact tried to escape the call.

Ran far away...

While Andrew, Simon, James and John immediately left their nets and their livelihood when they heard the call.

But the important thing in these two stories is that the call was responded to.

Don't we find mirrors of those responses in our own lives and communities?

Some of us respond enthusiastically and some of us respond reluctantly.

But if we are open to hear the call we will eventually respond.

For some of us it may take longer and we may initially run away and try to escape from the call.

And others jump right in, confident that they will learn what is necessary to live out their call.

I think it is interesting that God called Jonah in loud voice and ordered him to warn the people of Nineveh that they would be destroyed unless they changes their ways.

While Jesus asked the fisherman to come and be part of the new way of being God's people.

The way of inclusiveness.

The way of equality.

The way of love.

One was a threat.

One was an invitation to share in the Good News.  
The good news that we are still invited to share in.

Did God choose the right person when he chose Jonah?

I think he must have.

Jonah preached the shortest sermon on record.

He said, “God says to stop doing bad things. If you don’t, God will destroy the city!”

That was it.

And the people stopped and listened to Jonah, and changed their ways.

Did Jesus choose the right people when he asked Andrew and Simon, James and John to follow him?

He didn’t ask what their credentials were.

He didn’t ask if they were prepared to die for what they believed in.

He didn’t ask whether or not they were worthy.  
He simply invited them to follow him...

Accompany him and learn from him as he met people... talked with people...

touched people...

considered what people felt they needed...

and challenged people...

Can we do no less?

Thanks be to God for the all disciples.

And thanks be to God for you. Amen.

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