

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

**Mark 1:14-20**

**January 21, 2018**

**Installation of Ruling Elder**

*Preached by Philip Gladden at the Wallace Presbyterian Church, Wallace, NC*

## **JESUS CALLS US**

**Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.**

Our closing hymn last Sunday was #720, "Jesus Calls Us."

*Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea;  
day by day his sweet voice soundeth saying, "Christian, follow me."*

*Jesus calls us from the worship of our vain world's golden store,  
from each idol that would keep us, saying, "Christian, love me more."*

*In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures, "Christian, love me more than these."*

*Jesus calls us, by thy mercies, Savior, may we hear thy call,  
give our hearts to thy obedience, serve and love thee best of all.*

The hymn was written in the mid 1800's for use on St. Andrew's Day (November 30). Originally the song had five stanzas. The stanza that is left out of our hymnal is about Andrew, brother of Simon, who was casting the nets into the sea with his brother, because they were fishermen:

*As, of old St. Andrew heard it, By the Galilean lake,  
Turned from home, and toil, and kindred, Leaving all for His dear sake.*

By the way, did you happen to notice the name of the hymn tune down in the lower right hand corner of the hymnal or next to the hymn title in today's bulletin? "GALILEE"

This morning's opening hymn is another song about being Jesus' disciples. Written in 1979, the song became so popular it was translated into more than eighty languages before its composer, Cesáreo Gabaráin, died in 1991. The song tells the story of Jesus calling his first disciples by the Sea of Galilee from the viewpoint of one of those who was called.

*Lord, you have come to the lakeshore,*

*looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones;  
you only asked me to follow humbly.*

*You, who have fished other oceans,  
ever longed for by souls who are waiting,  
my loving friend, as thus you call me:*

Of course, there is the beautiful refrain that describes exactly how Simon and Andrew and James and John reacted to Jesus' call, "Follow me."

*O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me,  
and while smiling have spoken my name;  
now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me.  
By your side I will seek other seas.*

Notice the hymn tune name in today's bulletin, PESCADOR DE HOMBRES, which is taken directly from Jesus' call to Simon and Andrew, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people."<sup>1</sup> One of the first indications I had early on that Wallace Presbyterian Church was a special place happened on Sunday afternoon, May 3, 1998, during my installation service as pastor. The choir sang "Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore" for the anthem that day. The Pastor Nominating Committee knew about my work with churches and the presbytery in Tabasco, Mexico. Somehow the worship planners must have known how much I love this song. What I didn't know was Karla had arranged for someone in the choir to sing the refrain in Spanish while the rest of the choir sang in English. As I sat there basking in the beautiful music and wonderful words, all of a sudden I heard "Señor, me has mirado a los ojos . . ." On top of that, my good friend, Barbara Campbell Davis, who was the Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk of New Hope Presbytery at the time (where Nancy and I had served for fourteen years) delivered a charge to me. The final line of her charge that day was, "Phil, your boat has left the shoreline of New Hope Presbytery and now you seek other seas."

"Now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me. By your side I will seek other seas. . . Jesus calls us: o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea; day by day his sweet voice soundeth saying, 'Christian, follow me' . . . And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. . . Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. . . Jesus calls us: by thy mercies, Savior, may we hear thy call, give our hearts to thy obedience, serve and love thee best of all."

Rev. Randy Jackson is an honorably retired minister who served five churches in the Southeast. Randy is now the Assistant Pastor for Congregational Care at the Roswell Presbyterian Church just north of Atlanta. Randy was a few years ahead of me in school and a leader in our youth fellowship group. The Jacksons and the Gladdens became friends when we all lived in Birmingham, Alabama and reconnected when we all moved to Atlanta. Randy knew from a very early age that he was called to be a Presbyterian minister. I can remember him talking about his call and his plans to go to Pres-

byterian College and on to seminary. He knew Jesus was calling him and Randy said yes.

I wasn't quite as sure about my call. Actually, I was still trying to sort out my call when I packed up my Datsun 610 station wagon with everything I owned and headed to Union Seminary in Richmond in July 1979. Although I had been accepted at Union during my senior year at Davidson, I deferred my enrollment for a year, worked in Atlanta, and began apply to psychology graduate school. But, it was as if o'er the tumult of my life's wild, restless sea, Jesus' voice kept saying, "Phil, follow me." So I said, "O Lord, by your side I will seek other seas."

On a day when we install a ruling elder for active service, it's appropriate to hear about the "call" to service. But the "call" isn't just for ordained ministers and ruling elders. In fact, in our Protestant tradition, it's important that we remember that Jesus' call comes to everyone — "Follow me."

There is a saying often attributed to the great Protestant Reformer Martin Luther. However, many scholars debate whether Luther ever actually said it. Most people agree, though, that even if Luther didn't say it, he should have said it or he could have said it. Martin Luther, we are told, said this about vocation: "The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."<sup>2</sup> In other words, Luther was opposed to the prevailing idea of his day that ordained clergy and members of religious orders somehow had a more honorable or worthy or holy "call" from God. Luther also said, "God himself will milk the cows through him whose vocation that is."

The word "vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means "to call." The dictionary definition of vocation is "a summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action; the work in which a person is regularly employed." When I go to a doctor, I hope she feels "called" to her practice of medicine and the healing arts. When I need a lawyer, I hope he feels "called" to apply the law correctly and honestly. When my tooth hurts, I want a dentist who feels "called" to help people feel better. When I moderate a session meeting, I want to work with elders who feel "called" to be spiritual leaders in our congregation. When I preach and teach and provide pastoral care, I want to be with people who feel "called" to follow Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Another time, Luther spoke of different vocations as "masks of God." One writer says, "On the surface, we see an ordinary human face — our mother, the doctor, the teacher, the waitress, our pastor — but, beneath the appearances, God is ministering to us through them. God is hidden in human vocations."<sup>3</sup>

Back to Simon and Andrew and James and John. We want so much to make them different somehow. Surely they must have heard about Jesus beforehand, even if they hadn't actually heard him in person. They must have been holier or more pious or more religious than the other people around them there by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus

must have vetted them beforehand and knew they were the best candidates for the job. Except — except, Mark doesn't tell us a thing about any of those qualifications. In fact, later in the gospels we read stories about how people wrote the disciples off because they were fishermen from Galilee. And their job performances along the way don't speak too well to their prior qualifications. No, Mark is pretty straightforward in this story. These four guys were working away with their fishing boats and nets when Jesus came along, called them, and they followed him.

In his commentary on the gospel of Mark, Lamar Williamson describes Simon and Andrew and James and John as “ordinary men engaged in routine activities.” That's good news for all of us who hear Jesus call, “Follow me.” It means we don't have to be SuperChristians to qualify for God's service. It's also good news for all of us because, as Dr. Williamson writes about those four men on the shoreline in Galilee, “The disciples are **not** (emphasis added) called to save the world by their heroic performance, but in their subordination to Jesus to bear witness to him.” He says, “the fundamental quality of faithful discipleship is to be found here: ‘Follow me.’”<sup>4</sup>

As we will hear in just a few minutes in Dottie's installation service, “*There are different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives them. There are varieties of ways to serve God, but it is the same Lord who is served. God works through people in different ways, but it is the same God who inspires a faithful response. Each one is given gifts by the Spirit, to use for the common good. Together we are the body of Christ.*”

The challenge, of course, is stated well by Dallas Willard in the margin note on the front page of today's bulletin: “to be authentic disciples of Jesus.” Two thousand years after Jesus called Simon and Andrew and James and John and said to them, “Follow me,” his call stills comes to us. As Dr. Williamson says, “[Jesus'] call speaks to Christians whose lives are humdrum, whose discipleship has degenerated into a preoccupation with things like nets and boats and hired servants.” As we sang last week, “Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea.” Jesus calls us to follow him, to be obedient to him, to do the work he has for us to do, to serve him in everything we do. That's why the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians from prison, “I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” (Ephesians 4:1)

The great musical genius, theologian, philosopher, Nobel peace prize winner, and physician Albert Schweitzer answered Jesus' call and established the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in what is now the country of Gabon in west Africa. In his important book of 1906, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Dr. Schweitzer wrote, “*He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside. He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: ‘Follow thou me!’ and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experiences Who He is.*”<sup>5</sup>

At the end of today's service, we will sing “Will You Come and Follow Me.” The footnote in the hymnal says, “The first four stanzas of this ballad-like hymn are understood to be in the voice of Christ, with the fifth reflecting the individual singer's re-

sponse.” When we get to that part of the service and stand to sing Hymn #726, listen to Jesus’ call in the song and in your life. See if you can’t make the fifth stanza your own:

*Lord, your summons echoes true, when you but call my name.*

*Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.*

*In your company I’ll go where your love and footsteps show.*

*Thus I’ll move and live and grow in you and you in me.*

***Let us pray: Gracious Christ, you came to the fishermen when the prophet John was taken away. Come to us now, as we fear losses of our own. Grant us courage to cast aside the nets that bind us, to follow you into true freedom and newness of life. Help us to be faithful disciples, that we might inspire others to follow in your ways. Amen.***

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Information about Hymn #720 and Hymn #721 is taken from Carl P. Daw, Jr., *Glory to God: A Companion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), pp. 686-688.

<sup>2</sup>Taken from “What Luther *Didn’t* Say about Vocation,” from *Word & World*, Volume 25, Number 4, Fall 2005 (couldn’t find the author’s name), p. 359. Here is the author’s footnote: “Nowhere could I find a website that made reference to any of Luther’s works when quoting this alleged statement. Instead, the reference, if any, is to the September 5, 1994 (Labor Day), usage in “Our Daily Bread,” the daily devotional provided by Radio Bible Class; see <http://www.rbc.org/odb/odb-09-05-94.shtml> (accessed 11 August 2005).

<sup>3</sup>Gene Edward Veith, “MASKS OF GOD God works through you in your vocation, whatever it may be,” *The Lutheran Witness* August 2001.

<sup>4</sup>Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), pp. 44-48.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.