

Come and See

“When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.”

This coming Sunday, we are reminded of what it means to be called; in modern parlance we might say we are invited to discover our purpose in life. I have spoken about this before, but I do believe we all ask, at some point, “Why am I here?” What is my unique contribution to the world—do I *have* a unique contribution to offer the world?” And in answer to our questions, Jesus says, “Come and See.”

Now, if we take a certain stance as we look at the world, it may seem as if the world has become a selfish place full of selfish people who care only for their own needs. But don't be fooled.

We are a people created by a selfless God. We human beings long to connect beyond ourselves. It is in God's great design. We are hard wired for meaning and purpose that lies beyond our own needs and desires.

We discover God's call in many ways. As people who are church-goers we may discover it through our regular worship as we seek to grow through Spiritual Formation, and also in simply experiencing the longing that drives us to discover more. We can discern where our joy and the world's needs converge throughout our lives. And by “the world” I mean our own small worlds. Yes, we are citizens of a global community and that is so important to know, but most often we are touched and moved by the things we see and experience up close in our own daily lives. Life in a faith community like ours is the first and best place to help focus our yearning. No matter what is calling to you outside these walls (or within them), this is where we hear sacred scripture that calls us to work together to love, create, and forgive. Our richest mission field is outside of these walls; the holy and sacred life we live within them is the training ground to go out into the world, courageous and strong in heart.

Wherever we are along life's journey, just as he did with those first disciples, Jesus asks us, “What are you looking for?” Here we are standing in the midst of very ordinary and incredibly flawed lives and quietly comes the question, “What are you looking for?”

Jesus' outwardly simple question seems to strike at that core need that we have for making meaning. Jesus taps into something very deep within us; he calls forth our deepest desires. These early disciples were fishermen and tax collectors—a muddled assortment of individuals who hardly seemed destined to help change the world forever. But Jesus showed them that they could be more than they ever dreamed or imagined.

And “being more” didn't mean having more, making more or knowing more. It simply meant following Jesus, learning from him by being with him, by staying where he stays.

To stay and remain with Jesus means to discover precisely who God formed us to be—to be liberated from all the ways the world might tell us we don't measure up or that we have nothing to offer. Or, perhaps, gain a little humility and learn to empty ourselves to let God in. In a world that often isolates and divides us from one another, Jesus' call brings us into the very heart of community and belonging.

The beauty and the mystery of God's call is that it places us among others who can see our potential, even when we cannot. The very essence of knowing Jesus and thus discovering who we are happens in the midst of community.

Knowing Jesus in this way is essential to discovering how our lives are given purpose and meaning and how that purpose and meaning can lead us back out into the world as partners in Christ's liberating life.

Often, we think that unless we have been called to be the next Great Saint or give up our lives and move to a developing country, or are called to ordained ministry in the church, that we haven't truly been called at all.

But when we look at these early disciples, we see that their call did not suddenly turn them into philosophers or scholars or anything they were not before; it simply amplified the best of what they were and called them into something bigger than themselves.

We can see that for Jesus who and what they were to begin with was plenty. His call simply bound them together as a community and focused their lives in a way that the fullness of who they *already were* could be realized and shared with the world.

For a few weeks now I have been asking you to tell me what you already do out in our community. What calls are you already fulfilling out there where God's mercy and love are so needed? I want to celebrate the wonderful ways God is already alive in and through you in many places.

I have received some responses, but if you have not yet let us know, please email Mary (or me!) as this is the last week we'll be gathering this information. I may already know, but I would like us to recognize your ministries formally; to celebrate within these walls what all of you are doing outside of them!

God's Holy Spirit and the Love of Jesus already abounds. You don't believe me? Well, come and see.

Grace and Peace,
Stephanie+