

4 Epiphany B Mark 1:14-20

Well, it is the third Sunday after the Epiphany and Jesus is on the move. In Mark's Gospel it is always that way. He uses the words like "immediatey, straightaway and "just then" a lot. Now, last week I spoke about how important the buddy system is when Jesus chooses us to be a disciple and today I think it's all about the call itself. This week "calling" has been on my mind a lot. I remember the precise time I said "yes" to God's call to the ordained priesthood after experiencing a personal, profound Epiphany at a foot washing ceremony. The incredible, indescribable love I felt that broke open my reluctant heart was life changing and incredibly scary. It took me three years of saying "no" to get to that "yes" to God's calling. Because I dwelled too much on what I was giving up in that saying "yes" to this particular ministry.

Today we hear the immediate reaction from some of the disciples to Jesus' "follow me" call. And it is so interesting that the beginning of the story starts with John the Baptist being arrested. Now remember Andrew knew and was a disciple of John the Baptist. And I am sure most of the other fishermen knew John. In fact we heard John the Baptist brought people to him from many nations so I believe these men had seen Jesus in line with many folks on the banks of the Jordan river.

John was Jesus' cousin and I know his being arrested must had been a great, heart wrenching tragedy for all who knew him. And today I am wondering if John's arrest brought a greater focus and meaning to Jesus about his own calling. Could the arrest of John been a way in which God worked to bring focus to Jesus?

What effect did it have upon Jesus' decision to say "yes", to God and proclaim the Good News?

The immediacy of which Jesus responds to God calling him, moves out and calls others is almost palpable in Mark. We get this sense of immediacy also when circumstances hurl us out of our comfortable lives while mending nets (so to speak) and making a living.

And this account really helps me see that there are events (sometimes as sorrowful as the arrest of godly persons) which help us to understand the significance, and or the meaning, of our calling. In other words, tragedy makes us move. All of us have been in the same position as Jesus and his future disciples. An arrest, an illness, a loss of employment, an accident, a death, a deadly virus and perhaps civil unrest pries us out of our comfort zones and makes us take stock of our lives , what does

this all mean, what is God saying to me? Why is this happening and what does it mean for my life?

And there is a great feeling of “time is of the essence” when waiting for these answers. I have to know now, I have to respond now. And in these men’s (including Jesus’) responses—Throwing down their nets and not looking back- we see that responding to a call brought on by tragedy can also be joyous.

I think it is significant, especially to the immediacy of their response, that these men who now chose to follow Jesus had also known John’s ministry. I think they were primed – ready to take up the Truth. Especially having seen the potential cost...we all know that they did not ‘understand Jesus and his message’ “right off the bat” and that their ministry was not always rosy but they were the sort of people who dared to dream , as they saw

and heard, this new thing Jesus was was true and through disaster Jesus calling them was really good and joyful news.

It's like we realize within our own hearts that there is nothing else we can do, but respond. And our lives are changed.

My Father died in a Tractor Accident in 1995. I was a graduate student on my way to becoming a Park Ranger. Stunned by grief and I started to ask myself those questions I mentioned earlier. What does it all mean. Howdy I make meaning of his death and my own life with two very young boys.

I began going to church a lot right after my Father died to help me answer some of these big, life questions and when we moved to Alaska shortly after, I began hearing God's call to ordained ministry and as I prayed more and become active at St.Peter's

-by-the Sea Church I realized BECAUSE of my Father's death , God was changing me and without it happening I think the scary things that prevent us from saying "Yes", the cost of calling, like sacrifice and dedication and faithfulness would have prevented me from saying a joyful "yes" to "follow me" and in so doing, I would have missed the most joyous, meaningful, sacred moments of my life .

The great Good News today is that Jesus calls us, in the midst of our dark times, these times, to use the talent, the skills, we have to achieve a new purpose. He calls us to risk leaving the known we have done for ourselves, our families and friends, and embark on the unknown we will do with God. But what you (along with the fishing disciples) accomplish with God, touches all of us for ever. And It's the crucial call out of our ordinary lives that is our glorious, joyous, blessing. Amen.

