

3 Epiphany; January 29, 2020 ← from alt sermon 3 Epiphany '17

Rev Ken Wratten at St Luke's, Hollister, Ca

Isaiah 9:1-4

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

Two sets of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, and James and John were fishermen at Capernaum, a little town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus called all of them to follow him. They instantly dropped the fishing nets they were mending, and left their boats, their hired laborers, and their father; they left everything to follow Jesus.

Mark 1:19-20, 'A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat mending their nets. He called them too, and immediately they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and went with him.' So from Mark's Gospel we see that James, John, and their father had hired day laborers. They were pretty well off local businessmen. Digging into the story tells us something very interesting about what this call by Jesus meant for their father, Zebedee.

Bible scholars have pieced together accounts from Matthew and from Mark to figure out that Zebedee's wife was Salome (Sa-lō'-mē). She was one of the women at the foot of the cross on Good Friday, and Mark 15:40-41 names Salome as one of the women who followed Jesus during his ministry in Galilee. Luke 8:1-3 says these women following Jesus provided financial support for his ministry. Bible scholars believe that one of these women was Salome.

So this is how these interesting pieces fit together. Zebedee was left by his two sons and his wife to follow Jesus full time. They gave up everything to follow Jesus. Zebedee was left behind to operate the family business, and probably to keep finances flowing into Jesus' ministry. There is no indication in the Scriptures that Zebedee actively participated in the ministry of Jesus in the same way that his wife and boys did. So here's the question: clearly James, John and Salome were disciples; **would Zebedee also be considered to be a disciple?**

I would say that he was. Not everybody is called to be Peter and Andrew or James and John or Salome in every situation. Not everybody is living on the road, full time, to preach the Word. Sometimes we need to be a Zebedee.

There are times when the ministry that needs to get done is best done by somebody else; somebody God has provided with just the right set of gifts for that job. Individually, each of us is not expected to be able to do everything God wants done for humankind. What IS intended is that the skills and gifts and capabilities that we DO HAVE, should be used to bring glory to God.

We shouldn't sit on the gifts God gives us; and we shouldn't sit on whatever opportunities God puts in our path. This is true for us as individual followers of Jesus, and it is true for us as a parish family.

Ruth got a message yesterday from her friend Melissa she hadn't heard from in years. She wanted to share how her life had changed. When Ruth met her about ten years ago, she lived in Silicon Valley. Her husband worked for the Sharks and made a lot of money. They lived in Los Gatos. They have two a wonderful sons. But she felt very unhappy, incomplete, and troubled, but didn't know why. She liked Ruth, and somehow they got talking about religion. Melissa was brought up as a Jehovah's Witness (which denies the Trinity and Jesus' divinity, and has their own Bible). So they got into conversations about that. Well, Ruth ended up giving her a children's Bible as a gift for her sons. That Bible taught Melissa the power that is in the message Jesus taught. Love, forgiveness, being children of God, receiving boundless grace. She left Jehovah's Witness. When her grandmother died, Melissa went to the ocean, and asked Jesus if he was there to help her find faith. She looked up and saw angel wings in the clouds... Melissa is now a Christian; her sons are now Christian. The gift Bible was about five years ago. She became a Christian a year ago, and she is hungry now to learn more about our faith. Ruth just used her gifts of honest, sincere caring.

What is your gift inventory? What skills do you have? Admin or finance? Teaching, care giving, languages, arts and crafts, playing sports, making music, cooking?? Are you volunteering these gifts to help other people? To bring honor to God?

Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John were volunteers; but there was no less of an expectation from them because they didn't get a W-2 form at the end of the year. It seems to me that the call from Jesus was **just as real for Zebedee as it was for the rest of his family**. He kept doing what God had equipped him to do; to keep running his fishing business on Lake Galilee, and to use his income to help finance Jesus' ministry.

**What plan do you need to make; what steps do you need to take, so that the gifts God has given you become your ministry?** Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28) calls every one of us to be a disciple; whether as James, John and Salome, or as a Zebedee.

Amen.