

"Your Phone is Ringing"

January 12, 2014

Matthew 3:13-17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; 17 and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Have you ever been in the grocery line, or any checkout line and the person ahead of you is on their cell phone talking loudly and pretty much ignoring everything about the day except for the phone call. You ever think that if they could have waited two more minutes they could have been free to talk and put all their attention to the person and to the task of checking out? I always feel bad for the cashier because they are not able to do their job either because of being ignored.

Our time is an incredibly valuable commodity. There are only twenty-four hours in a day and we have to sleep and eat. So multi-tasking is often how we try to cram in all we need to do. We can cook dinner and help kids with homework or have a conversation. We can talk on the phone and be on the computer at the same time. We can watch television and have that Family Dinner. We rarely give our whole attention and our whole devotion to any one task or any one thing.

However let us take a look at John. He was singularly devoted and knew his purpose in life. Biblical scholars often refer to John the Baptist as a wild man, he dressed in animal skins the description of him was that he was rough and abrupt. He prophesized about God and about the coming of Christ and from even reading what little we have of him we can suppose and imagine that he had that sort of attitude where he did not care what people thought. He had his tasks to fulfill and he was going to do them. He knew his purpose, and his place, and his role.

He was cousin to Jesus, the son of Elizabeth. As we know from his father Zachariah's prophesy, John was not the Messiah, he was the messenger. The Messiah was the mightier one was coming after him. He was just simply John. Just simply being John does not necessarily sound like a lot does it? There is however great power in accepting who we are in light of God. John knew his purpose and stuck to it. He was happy with his life and served in the way that he could by being John the baptizer. As we know through our scripture today he even, although it took some convincing that this was what he was to do, was blessed enough to baptize Jesus.

We as Christians are often uncomfortable with our purposes in this life. We struggle to reconcile what it means to be a Christian within the society of today, we struggle to find out Christian purpose. It is really hard to remember to be a Christian when someone cuts you off while driving. It can be rather difficult to remember to be a Christian when you are in the middle of an argument. We often forget about God and our identities established through Christ in living out of our day to day.

We are God's children and in that identity was have a purpose and a calling to serve. John identified his purpose and met his calling. We don't hear about the frustrations encountered or the problems that might have arisen. We only hear that John answered the call to do what God called him to do.

That's all we are called to do. We are called to live our lives by serving one another and loving one another as God loves us. We experience a lot in a year's time. A lot changes, we change, we grow, we develop. A lot can happen. Time is a gift and we are called to be good stewards of our time so that we can serve in different ways.

The question often becomes can we do it? Can we serve in the way we are being called? We have to take into consideration all the different parts of our lives and weigh pros and cons and fit it all into our schedules right?

Well, is that what we're asked to do by God? Shouldn't we be putting GOD first and everything else second? We often ignore God's presence in our lives outside of Church on Sunday. We don't normally listen to hymns on the radio. We don't always pray as much as we should or talk about God as much as we should in our daily lives. We don't read our Bibles as often as we should.

We have to re-prioritize our lives in this New Year to put God first and to be comfortable in our callings as Christians. John gives us the example of someone who answered his call and focused his life on his calling to God first and everything else second. While it is a difficult task it is imperative in our spiritual lives and our own well being to focus on God first in our personal lives.

However, there is also the question of our focus and calling as a church body. There sometimes has to be a distinct difference between our individual callings and the calling of the collective. We all recognize this right. Most of us are aware of what it means to put aside our own agendas for another. The difficult thing is in the church, as the church, we really stink at focusing our mission as a body of believers. We have this on this day, this on another. We flit in small ways from thing to thing but can not truly make a lot of impact and sometimes we even get burned out in those small things.

We in our humanness tend to forget sometimes that our collective talents are an amazing and more profound and powerful entity in sharing our faith with the world when they are focused together. This can be a difficult thing particularly for churches today. We have that history as a church to live up to and with do we not? We live with refrains like "we used to", "back when I...was young, first started", "we have been doing it this way for...years, decades, forever" We catch ourselves in those refrains and rest in them as what our mission is and what we should be doing as a church.

We forget to pause even in our check out with the Minister lines to listen to God's call on our hearts for where we are headed as a congregation. Discernment is one of those fantastic and wonderful spiritual gifts that asks us to take a step back, reassess, make changes, and then move forward. We do this so naturally within our personal lives, sometimes we also need to do it as a church and body of believers.

We answer our phones all the time in all sorts of situations and make choices depending on how busy we are or who it is. We make decisions to put that call first or not. What if it was God calling you to do your best in serving out of love those around you? What if it was God calling us to focus our mission in a way we might not be expecting? What if it was just plain God calling to tell you that you are beloved? Your Phone is ringing, answer it. Amen.