

2/9/ 2020 - Ordinary People Doing the Extraordinary

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1 – 11 & Luke 5:1 – 11

Let us open in prayer: Let us turn unto God who is our word; and let us turn unto Jesus, the Son, who is our witness; and let us turn unto the Holy Spirit which is our worship. Let us carry forth into the world as a celebration unto you, O God, with our lives. AMEN.

Have you been asked to do an encore? While my wife and I were on vacation last year in Europe, we traveled to Venice. On my bucket list was this – I would sing ‘That’s Amore!’ to my wife in a gondola in Venice Italy. So, while in Venice we took a gondola ride. Our oarsman did not sing so I took the opportunity to cross something off of my bucket list – I sang with the help of Ted, a friend we meet on the vacation from Canada, the song ‘That’s Amore!’. (sing some of the song) I did a wonderful rendition, at least I thought so. My wife does not agree and you know I did not get asked for an encore!

Typically, in theater productions, an encore is a sign of immense appreciation for an exceptional performance. The gesture signals the desire for the experience to continue. An encore means that the audience does not want the performance to end. Audience members clap as they wait for the performers to reappear on the stage for an additional set.

Those faithful to Christ should both expect and seek out the reappearing of God through Jesus Christ in their lives. We, the faithful ones, should both expect and seek out the reappearance of Christ in our lives.

In our text from 1 Corinthians, Paul unfolds the dimensions of Christ in a series of divine manifestations. Christ shows forth in the message of good news and hope that is alive then and now. Let me repeat that - Christ shows forth in the message of good news and hope that is alive then and now. Christ is visible, not unlike other post resurrection appearances, in the practice of witnessing. Christ is visible in our practice in witnessing. When was the last time you witnessed about Christ?

When you called me as your pastor, your #1 priority was to grow the church. While I was Camp Coordinator at Nordmont CC in northeastern PA, the camp grew from 60 youth campers to 190 youth campers. While I was at Millville CC (DOC) for twenty years, the church grew from 30 to 120. While I started and led a seniors program at Millville CC (DOC), the program grew from 12 seniors to over 30 seniors. You may hear these statistics and say – Pastor Rich will be able to meet our #1 priority. But I did not do any of these things without help from others believers in Christ. It takes ordinary people doing the extraordinary for a church to grow. The people came because the people in the church took on the responsibility to witness to others. Will you take that responsibility? Will you take on the extraordinary? I have already asked several people at Bethany Bay where I live to come to church. I am expecting we will see some of them here. Will you take on the responsibility to witness? The faithful of Christ are revisited in Jesus coming alive through us and through our worship and witness.

Verse 9 of our 1 Corinthian's text says – *For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God.* In this text, we once again see that God's call comes to unexpected people in unexpected places. Paul admits that he is the most unlikely and unworthy to be called by the resurrected Jesus. Remember that Paul use to be called Saul who was a Jew who persecuted the Christians. It is believed that Saul was present at the stoning of our first martyr for Christ, Steven. Saul did not throw a stone at Steven but did help those who did. God's grace and call extend even to Paul! Paul's call serves as a model for reflection on our own response to the reappearance of Christ in our daily lives.

In our Gospel text from Luke, he presents the experience of ordinary persons being encountered by the extraordinary. In that moment, ordinary people are forever transformed. They have an epiphany! It is a story of call.

The fishermen did not do anything meriting such an invitation to enlist into service with Jesus. Neither did they realize the unique skills or depth of understanding they exhibited that were useful to such responsibility. Like in the case of the fishermen, 'calling' is not predicated on familiarity or vocation. In fact, the fishermen were persons who many would not have considered qualified applicants. They did not possess high standing in society. They did do a job with skills that many considered lowly. God call is always unpredictable and unmerited. God calls ordinary people to do the extraordinary!

This text from Luke teaches us that our call can come at unexpected times and in unexpected places. The call of the fishermen does not come on a mountain top or holy space, rather their call comes in the midst of the mundane, daily work of their vocation. God always shows up for us. God always comes in the right place and in the right time. God's voice may come in a booming voice or a still small whisper. Let me repeat that - God's voice may come in a booming voice or a still small whisper!

Jesus' invitation is not just to follow him but instead Jesus' invitation is to commission us to service. Inherent in this call is the responsibility for us to witness to others. Ultimately, Jesus' call is for a reordering of commitments and purposes so that our call will be aligned with God's words and present in our worship. We must witness! We, ordinary people, are call to do extraordinary things in service to Jesus Christ.

The word 'call' is an antagonistic word to our own plans, yet our call is in alignment with God's will and akin to God's promises.

The fishermen must abandon their professional success in favor of their divine call to serve first. The fishermen must abandon their financial commitments and obligations in favor of a divine imperative to serve others. Their new job is to become a fisher of men. Their call is to help others. Their new vocation is to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

I am asking you to consider a new calling in your life. A calling not to abandon your professional success but to use those success to call others to Christ. A calling not to abandon your financial commitments and obligations, even though I know some of you would not mind doing, but to accept a divine imperative to serve others. Your new job in this church, if you wish to accept this calling, is to become fisher of men and women. Your calling is to help others through your love and compassion. Your new calling is to become a reflection of Jesus Christ! Will you accept this calling? That is the big question for us and this church.

To end this message, I would like us to do a responsive litany. I will share some words followed by Now what? And your response will be **'Follow Jesus!'**

*We are here Lord; now what? RESPONSE

*We dedicated our lives to study you O Lord; now what? RESPONSE

*But we all have families, spouses, and friends; now what? RESPONSE

*Our days are filled with hurriedness and important task; now what? RESPONSE

*There are bills to pay, obligations to honor, and aspirations to fulfill; now what?
RESPONSE

*We want to serve you Lord; now what? RESPONSE

*We want to love all your people and glory to your name; now what? RESPONSE

*We are ordinary people seeking to do the extraordinary in this world for your sake O Lord; now what? RESPONSE

*May each of us discern our calling and seek to serve Jesus better each day. AMEN

Let us pray together the pray that Jesus taught us – 'Our Father'