

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

One of my favorite movies in Lord of the Rings, the Fellowship of the Ring. This film and its sequels are loaded with theological themes. Call is one of these themes that the film presents. Frodo the hobbit receives a "call" to destroy the evil "one ring" before its power is able to corrupt and destroy all of Middle Earth. This call involves a long and extremely dangerous journey, and the likelihood that Frodo will not return alive. In one scene, Frodo expresses his fear and his wish that the ring had never come to him. Gandalf the wizard tells Frodo, "We cannot choose the time we live in. We can only choose what we do with the time we are given."

All of today's texts focus on call. The Old Testament lesson focuses on the call of Isaiah. Isaiah sees himself as one who is lost because he is unclean and lives among unclean people. Isaiah's unclean lips aren't a barrier for God. God has an angel touch Isaiah's lips with a hot coal which blotted out his sin. God asks for someone to send. Isaiah responds here am I; send me.

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians reminds Corinth that they have received the gospel from him, the least of the apostles. Paul recalled his former life. He persecuted the church until God called him on the Road to Damascus. Paul remarked that he was the least of the apostles because of his actions against the church. He also recognizes that by God's grace he is an apostle and has been called to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Finally, we reach our gospel lesson. The call of the first disciples is usually a text that is well known by many. However, one significant difference in Luke is the focus on Simon Peter. Jesus seems to single out Simon. Jesus gets into his boat and when he is done teaching the crowd he tells Simon to throw his nets into the deep water. And as we all know Simon does this and has the catch of his lifetime. Simon Peter's response to Jesus may not be the one we expect. It isn't the response of a fisherman who may have questioned his skill in not being able to catch any fish throughout the previous night. Instead, he fell down in front of Jesus and told him to get away from him because he was a sinful man. Jesus tells Peter not to be afraid because from now on he will catch people. And Simon Peter follows Jesus when they brought the boats back to shore. Fred Craddock comments on Peter's reaction:

“Notice also that Simon's response to the power and knowledge of Jesus is not a fisherman's response; that is, he did not say, why did I not know where the fish were? Rather, his response is that of a human being in the presence of one he now calls Lord. Simon's skill isn't the issue; the issue is his life. Yet in Jesus' eyes his sin does not disqualify him; the same power that prompted Simon to fall at Jesus' knees now lifts him into God's Service.”

Craddock points out that Jesus is Simon Peter's Lord who has power and knowledge. Power and knowledge that knew where the fish were, power and knowledge that also knew that Peter was a sinful man. Jesus lifts Peter to his service. Peter's sin isn't an issue for Jesus.

I'm always amazed when I read these and other call stories in the Bible. These stories are a reminder to me, and I think to all of us, that God uses sinners to do his ministry. Isaiah was a

man of unclean lips, Paul persecuted the church, and Simon Peter was a sinful man. We are sinful people and yet God chooses us. God trusts us to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

I often wonder how we feel about God choosing us knowing that we are sinners. Do we feel adequate enough to share the good news? Do we have the same reaction as Simon Peter and ask God to leave us because we are sinful beings and therefore we can't share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection with others? Are we reluctant to evangelize because we fear failure?

Two weeks ago, I attended Metro DC's *Together in Mission* event at King of Kings in Fairfax, VA. The keynote speaker, Pastor David Berg challenged those in attendance to think about what ministry and outreach ideas we would do if we knew that we could not fail. He was trying to get us to think outside of the box. Pastor Berg explained that God calls us to share the message. The good news of Jesus Christ doesn't change, but the medium of how it's passed does. He had the best example of how a message is passed by using a Bob Marley song. He began by playing this song on a record, and then on a cassette tape, and then on a CD player, and finally on an I pod. The song didn't change, but the medium did.

The good news of Jesus Christ is the same. Jesus Christ came to earth; preached to humanity; healed many; performed miracles; and stretched out his arms on the cross, died, and overcame death on Easter morning. This message is still that same beautiful story that we all have heard and love. It's the story that gives us hope. It's a story that needs to be shared.

God calls sinners to proclaim this message. God calls us, a broken and flawed people to do his work in the world. Sharing this message of love and hope is part of calling that we receive in baptism. What ways can we share the good news of Jesus Christ?

I ask us to think about the following questions that Pastor Berg presented to those gathered at Together in Mission:

1. What ministries would we attempt to do if we could not fail?
2. Outside of this congregation who would we work with? Why?
3. What gifts will we commit to using ministry with new generations in our context?
4. How would we articulate the message of grace in our context?

Pastor Berg also challenged us to remember the 4 C's while thinking about possibilities for evangelism and outreach: Creative, Collegial, Committed, and Contextual.

We should try to be creative; we should try to find different mediums to share the gospel with those who haven't heard. We need to work together as a congregation and with our ecumenical partners. We need to be committed and follow through with our ideas, even if they change and evolve throughout the process. Finally, we need to think of our context. Some ideas that work great in other congregations won't work here and vice versa.

Think, pray, and share your ideas of how to share the gospel message. We are all called by God to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We are called even though we are sinners. God trusts us

and loves us even if we make mistakes. God challenges us to become the net that catches people and brings them into his family.

Frederick Niedner reminds us that: “We don’t mend, tend or haul the net; rather, by God’s grace we *become* the net.”

We are the net that catches new people and brings them into the body of Christ. Through prayer, creative ideas, collegiality, commitment, and remembering our context we share that love and hope of the gospel with others. God is with us in each step of the way, in all of ideas whether they are a success or not. What ministries and outreach opportunities will we try if we know that no matter what the outcome is that God loves us for who we are and for sharing the gospel?

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.