

The Rev. Erin Hensley
January 21, 2018
The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Let's Keep Longing (Immediately)

Immediately Jesus called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. Immediately? They didn't check references, inquire of Jesus' business model, or review a bullet point description of their position in Jesus' company? And James and John left their dad Zebedee behind *immediately*. No warning, no transition plan, no, "I love you, Dad, so much. Thank you for this opportunity to learn from you; and now I have to go follow this new opportunity to fish for people. Let me tell you all about it."

In Mark's account of the calling of the disciples, these men don't even have to think about their response to Jesus. Perhaps they were intrigued by this business of fishing for people. Perhaps they had heard people talk of Jesus' proclamation—"the time is now and the Kingdom of God, the power of God is being made manifest now within your midst, wrap your mind around this new reality, and trust this good news"¹. (Mark 1:14-15). Maybe James and John were really unhappy at work, but were afraid to tell their dad.

All of this is mere conjecture, however. I don't think Mark's Gospel is leaving any detail out about the calling of these disciples. Rather, Mark is making a point—this urgent good news calls for an urgent response. This urgent manifestation of God's power who walks and heals and feeds those who are stuck, broken, and hungry calls for an urgent response. Jesus calls and by grace we respond, we follow, and as we follow we wrap our minds around the new reality that God is here.

And immediacy is intentional in the Gospel of Mark, this word occurs over thirty times for a reason. The Kingdom of God is breaking in now. The manifestation of God's power has invaded the cosmos to reclaim the cosmos from the power of sin and death. God is here, God is now, showing a different kind of power for a different kind of kingdom. One that continually unfolds as Jesus goes about our Father's business.

Urgent mission has an immediacy that goes beyond calculations and plans. Call is not so much about thinking or even feeling as call is about desire, longing, being led. The first disciples then and any disciple now find ourselves led, longing for good news, for a purpose that matters, for a sparkle in an eye, for an authentic connection, for touching the very hand of God and following in God's footsteps. Call is when longing for mission outweighs loss.

Call is not simply for people who are ordained. Call is for people. Call is for all y'all and call is for us together. This is our call, St. Alban's: Raising up children and youth in the knowledge and love of the Lord and learning about this love alongside them. Singing and ringing out God's praise so that beauty and joy ripple out through the trees and bless the cars careening on Frontage Rd. Caring for each other in hard times. Reaching out to

¹ This paraphrase of the meaning of "repent" is from Rolf Jacobsen in Working Preacher's Sermon Brainwave podcast #582 for the Third Sunday after Epiphany (https://www.workingpreacher.org/brainwave.aspx?podcast_id=974)

befriend and serve those in need in our wider community. This business makes our heart beat fast, as we drop the nets of our day to day to come together week by week.

Thank you for following, Jesus, beloved people of God. In the year to come, let's keep listening for the beat of our heart. Let's keep longing for good news, for the very manifestation of God. *Amen.*