

## God's Invitation

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Isaiah 6 and Luke 5:1-11  
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There are several things that strike me about today's readings. Two in particular about how calls are extended and then how the call is received and acted upon.

Both Isaiah and Luke are about a call that is issued to do something different, to do something that seems to us extraordinary. Now many just dismiss these stories with, well this is Isaiah, one of the great prophets or these are the first four principal disciples and we can think, oh well they were special.

However I don't believe they were all that special. In fact if you look at the disciples the men and women that Jesus called, they were anything but extraordinary. Take James, John, Peter and Andrew. Peter and Andrew were simple fishermen. They really were not prosperous or that successful. We know from other accounts that they didn't even own a boat like Zebedee did. James and John the sons of Zebedee were a little better off as they worked with their father and the hired help, but they still lived a day to day existence, where no catch meant not only no food, but also no money that day. There is absolutely no indication that they had any schooling and probably were like 90% of the people of that day who were illiterate. They were hard working class people. Almost everybody in Jesus' circle were, just like Jesus, from the margins. That is important to remember.

Then some will say, but they just got up and left to follow Jesus. I could never do that. Now what makes you think that they didn't know Jesus prior to this? Stop and think for a moment. Jesus had started his ministry in Capernaum, Last week he has returned to Nazareth and they want him to do the same miracles that he did in Capernaum. This week he is back in Capernaum. Capernaum is their hometown! How could Peter, Andrew, James and John not know him. Capernaum is a small town, I know I've seen it. We would call it a small village. Everybody would know everything in that town. No, Jesus was most certainly already known to everybody in town.

Remember there is a crowd gathered to hear him. A crowd so large that he had to get a little distance from them by going out a ways in a boat. This means he has drawn people from outside Capernaum as well. His fame was clearly already spreading. I truly believe that it is very likely in fact probable that the four men knew Jesus and may have listened to him several times.. They didn't just up and runaway with some stranger. The more likely explanation is that Jesus knew he had done the groundwork and it was time to really take his show on the road.

People often look past the scene where after the teaching he tells them to go out to deeper water and cast their nets again. You can hear in their reply that the disciples are

in the we tried this and it didn't work mindset. This calls to mind the seven deadly words for churches. We have always done it that way or We've never done it that way. How many calls from God to respond are killed off by that kind of thinking. Yet, in the end, they do say, "Yet if you say so we will let down the nets." Now if I was telling this gospel I would have said it like this. (repeat the line with great skepticism.) Then Jesus issues his call to them to make them fish for people when the last attempt of the night is wildly successful.

Now just before he issues this call we hear some familiar words. Simon Peter (please note he already has the name Peter which means Jesus had already met him) says to Jesus, "Go away from me Lord for I am a sinful man." How often do we make excuses when we are called. I'm not worthy, I have all these flaws, I'm not good enough, you must have somebody else in mind etc. etc. Isaiah says something almost the same, "I am a man of unclean lips." Notice however God's response. He touches a coal to his lips, he heals him and takes away his excuse. Then he says, "Here I am, send me." Think back to a few weeks ago when I spoke about the Japanese art of Kintsugi where pottery is repaired with gold. What had been broken is repaired and made stronger, more beautiful in the repairing. God will heal, will repair whatever flaws we have and then will use us to move towards the kingdom if we will allow God to heal us. I will remind you of this saying, "God does not call the equipped, God equips those who are called."

So why does God call people maybe even you. Because God needs us to create the world we live in. There was a lecture given by Fr. Martin Smith a member of the Society of John the Evangelist in Boston entitled Co-Creators with God. In this talk he proposes that yes God has a plan, but God works with and through us to put that plan into action. We co-create the world with God. So your response to God's call is critical to you putting your part of the plan into action. The plan will go on without your help, but you miss the chance to be part of the creative process. The plan is missing something without each of your contributions.

Call can be something other than some clear voice from God revelation. A call can come from within in response to what you see happening around you. Someone said to me the other day, "I just can't watch the news anymore. It is too painful, too divisive, too depressing." I certainly understand that since one of my favorite memes recently said, "My desire to stay informed and my desire to stay sane are in direct conflict." However is that really the answer? Is that really what we as Christians are called to do? What are we called to do in response to our baptisms? Richard Rohr wrote on Thursday morning:

Christians are meant to be the visible compassion of God on earth more than "those who are going to heaven." They are the leaven who agree to share the fate of God for the life of the world now, and thus keep the whole batch of dough from falling back on itself. A Christian is invited, not required, to accept and live the cruciform shape of all reality. It is not a duty or even a requirement as much as a *free vocation*. Some people feel called and agree to not hide from the dark

side of things or the rejected group, but in fact draw close to the pain of the world and allow it to radically change their perspective. They agree to embrace the imperfection and even the injustices of our world, allowing these situations to change them from the inside out, which is the only way things are changed anyway.<sup>1</sup>

Now stop and think about the idea of your call from God as being leaven to the dough of the world. Consider this a call to be someone who lifts up our world rather than allowing the world to beat you down. What might it look like for you to be leaven for the dough of our world?

This is a vocation that you are free to choose, but also one you can walk away from. One thing is certain the invitation will come again. Jesus, never gives up on anybody. God is always inviting us to be the leaven.

Always look at a call as an invitation, not a command. Jesus says, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." This is not an or else command, but is an invitation. Come join me, share in my journey. Be willing to embrace the imperfections and injustices of the world to bring change from the inside out as Fr. Rohr says.

Do not be afraid, Jesus is inviting you into something exciting, something wonderful, something holy, something life changing. Do not be afraid to say yes.

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<sup>1</sup><https://email.cac.org/t/ViewEmail/d/604442C60F967B692540EF23F30FEDED/BBC62F1EC1C6D196C68C6A341B5D209E>