

We are All Called To Be Disciples
(Luke 5:1-11, 27-28, 6:12-16, Acts 6:1-7)

What does it mean to be called into discipleship? In the passages of Luke, we hear Jesus calling his 12 disciples into ministry with him. In the Acts reading we hear the 12 disciples choosing seven more disciples to help them do the work and spread the word. The job of the disciples at that time was to go out and continue the work of personal, spiritual, and political transformation within the communities through words, and deeds. Later in this chapter of Luke (9:2) Jesus called the 12 disciples together “and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal”. Jesus warns that this way of life is one of sacrifice, not easy and requires complete dedication, and that there is no place for procrastination.

We sometimes assume that in the Bible, and even today, that it is the very best and brightest of the times that take up the work of God. In reality God calls us all to continue building a world of justice and peace. When we look back throughout the Biblical history, we see that God can and does use anyone. This is clearly highlighted within a sermon, by Rev. Michael Phelps, in which he identifies some of the people God has used. Rev. Phelps said that God chose Moses who stuttered and was known to have a short fuse, Amos’ was trained in pruning fig trees not in theology, David had an affair, Timothy had ulcers, Jonah ran from God, Solomon was too rich, Abraham was too old, Gideon and Thomas both doubted, John was self-righteous, and Jeremiah suffered from depression and was suicidal. As you can see these folks were just like many of us. They were just ordinary human beings with frailties and faults.

Bonnie shares: “I don’t know about you but there was a time that I thought disciples were only found in the stories of the Bible. Then I met the man who would change my life personally, politically and spiritually forever, Rev. Bob Gay. Bob called me to work with him in the Downtown Chaplaincy (DTC), which is now named the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry. I realized very shortly after I started working with Bob that discipleship was not only then, and by then, I mean in biblical times, but more importantly it is also here and now. Bob had a way of inviting all people into carrying on the work God calls us to.

When Bob passed away in 2011, I was asked to give his eulogy. I struggled for a week to control my emotions and to figure out what to say about a man who had taught me so much, but when I got to the pulpit what I needed to say just rolled out of me. I started by saying that Bob was a disciple maker and then introduced the people in the church that day to the disciples he had made. I pointed to and named each disciple who was present that day, and even those who could not be with us. I told of how I watched him transform their individual lives, by empowering them through involvement with the work of the of the DTC. These people were not only transformed personally, so they felt better about themselves, they were also transformed politically. They became very involved in speaking to politicians and calling for social and economic policy change, and overtime have influenced some positive systemic changes.

Although these people may not lay claim to being religious, many would say they were uplifted spiritually. Most of the people Bob empowered to join in the work of this ministry still live in poverty, but they also continue, to this day, to help others in many ways. They all, in one way or another, advocate for other people living in poverty, transport them to doctors appointments or meetings with social workers. They make these people they are helping feel like they are not alone, and they make the lives of others better.

Isn't it strange how we can see in others that which we don't see in ourselves. After the eulogy a friend of mine, a United Church Minister, came up to me and said that I forgot to introduce the first disciple Bob created. I couldn't figure who that was, and my friend pointed to me. Would I have said I was a disciple before then? Definitely not! But we are all called to be disciples!!!

As disciples we may never gain notoriety, like the Jesus' 12, but that doesn't negate the impact we as disciples have on the lives of others, and the role we should be playing in getting closer to Gods vision of a world transformed into one of justice and peace and sharing the word of God.

As we are called to be disciples, are you not curious what discipleship might mean for us? Jesus was an example of a person who did it all; he spoke the words people needed to hear as he invited them into the work of transforming their community, personally and politically. He was a Rabbi

who worshiped and provided spiritual guidance through his preaching that enriched the lives of his followers and others. Jesus also performed deeds that shocked people. He healed the lame, fed the poor and challenged authority by turning over the money tables. How political!

Are we not called to do the same? Oh, we may not be able to perform miracles in the same way Jesus did, like laying his hands on someone and curing them of an affliction, but in our country we can use our power and privilege to reduce and remove the infliction of poverty and all the other ills that come along with poverty, which in turn could cure physical and psychological afflictions as well. Like Jesus, we do have it within our powers, even though it's not the laying on of hands, to ensure no person suffers from illness or goes hungry. Through the words we hear in this house of God, we do have the ability to feed the spiritual needs of those around us, but we must not stop at just the word. We also need to be immersed in the deeds. The deeds of ensuring all have food, housing and we also have the ability to be political, like Jesus, for making the necessary systemic changes.

These passages of creating discipleship also speak to the urgency of now. The urgency was for the disciples to go out and spread the word of God and to do deeds to better the lives of others, now! This urgency of now was real then and is just as real today. Jesus knew the urgency of now and the need for addressing poverty, hunger, homelessness, illness, and the corruption of those in positions of power. That sense of urgency, now, is still with us today as we witness the growing problems of social and economic inequalities, hunger, illness, and the very public displays of government and corporate corruption.

We may not have the same powers that we find in Jesus, but we hold our own power for transforming our communities to being God's vision of just and peaceful places, with the goal that we will live in a world where justice and peace are the norm, not the acceptance.

Let us go out from here with the knowledge that we are called into discipleship and that we can use our power, through the will of God, and the guidance, through example, of Jesus to make a difference in our lives and those around us. So let us Go Make A Difference In This World!!! And with that may all God's Children say, AMEN.

ⁱ Rev. Michael Phelps “The Magic Is not In The Faucet”,
<http://mail.google.com/mail/u/O/?ui=2&ik=a3f7ef422a&view=pt&search=inbox&th=13f...>