

SARW 2008 Worship

Friday Night

Song

Scripture readings

Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11; Mark 1:16-20

Meditation

Last Christmas, my then 2 year old niece made her self right at home with her grandparents, her parents, and her Aunt Karen. With a barrage of toys to entertain her, Samantha never tired of going from one room to the next, pushing a toy stroller with some variety of stuffed animal passenger inside. As Samantha learned her way around Grammie's house, she started her own routine of sorts. She'd push the stroller from the living room, through the dining room and kitchen, back to the family room where she could play my Mom's Hallmark snowmen. All of the snowmen singing together, Samantha made her way back to the living room with her stroller. When she arrived, she made a lap around the sofa and started back toward the family room. But then she stopped. She paused to look back at me and ask, "Are ya comin'?" Just like that, with her head tilted to the side and a look of expectation on her face..."Are ya comin'?" I had no choice. I had to follow her. I had to see where she was headed. I couldn't resist her simple invitation.

That's how I picture the calling of the first disciples. Nothing much was different about the day the disciples first received an invitation from Jesus. Nothing much was different until this man, this man named Jesus, this one being called the Messiah...nothing much was different until he paused with a look of expectation in his eye and issued an invitation. The text does not indicate the disciples gave much thought to their decision to follow and it doesn't indicate that Jesus would have waited if they had hesitated. As I experienced with my niece, the invitation issued was commanding, irresistible, urgent, and sincere. The disciples knew they were being invited into something larger. They were being invited with and for a purpose. They were being invited to move beyond themselves, to walk with our Lord.

I'm willing to guess that many of you were invited to this place. The invitation might not have held the weight of an invitation from Jesus, but you were invited nonetheless. And though the invitation may not have appeared to come from the almighty...you were invited for a holy purpose. Now that you are here, I wonder what you will make of this workshop? I wonder how far you are willing to follow? I wonder..."Are ya comin'?"

(Karen Fleming, February 2008)

Prayer

Gracious, loving, and merciful God, we thank you for calling us together in this place. We pray that you may be our source of strength, hope, and inspiration in the days that follow. Bless each one here as we listen for our unique invitation to follow you. In the name of your most precious son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Song – The Summons

Saturday Morning

Energizers

Song

Call to Worship

This is the day!
This is the day that the Lord has made!
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Song

Prayer of Confession

God of mercy and grace
You know the secrets of our hearts:
How blind we are to our own faults,
Yet harsh in judging others;
How swift we are to take for gain,
Yet slow to give for others;
How proud we are of our successes,
Yet grudging in our praise of others.

Remember, Lord,
Your tender care and love unending.
Do not remember our sins and offences,
But remember us in your goodness,
In accordance with your endless mercy;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

--Church of Scotland, 1994

Assurance of Pardon

Voices from the congregation...
Voice #1: Friends! Hear the good news!
Voice #2: God is merciful and abides with us in steadfast love!
Voice #3: Rejoice! And know that you are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

Song

Prayer for Illumination

Living God,
Help us so to hear your holy Word
That we may truly understand;
That, understanding, we may believe,

And, believing, we may follow in all faithfulness and obedience,
Seeking your honor and glory in all that we do;
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

--BCW

Scripture reading – Matthew 4:18-22

As Jesus walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea – for they were fisherman. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As Jesus went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Meditation

Do you ever wonder just what it was that made the disciples follow? Why did they follow with no hesitation? We know they went. And we know they went immediately. Immediately. No questions about where they were going or who would be there or if there would be cake or if they needed to bring a gift. No inquiry about just what it meant to fish for people. What does that mean? No, “sorry to leave you in the boat Dad, but we’re gonna go with this guy.” What were the disciples thinking? What was poor old Zebedee thinking? What ever possessed these men to literally drop what they were doing and follow?

In the captivating story of a lost fish, an anxious father, and a new friend, I believe Walt Disney and Pixar animation captured the essence of how it looks, feels, sounds to follow immediately. Watch with me, how the characters in this animated feature respond to the invitation to come and follow...

Finding Nemo clip...Chapter 7 through 8 (19:41), after Bruce says, “You wouldn’t want one of them to pop.”

Who can you relate to? Cheerful, trusting Dory? Or Anxious, distrusting Marlin? Marlin doesn’t hesitate to follow Dory the first time she says follow me...after all, he’s in desperate search of his son. But then there is confusion. Short term memory loss. Despair. And finally, Bruce the shark. Notice how Marlin and Dory had very different reactions to the invitation from Bruce. Dory was excited! A party? Why not? Though she probably should have been afraid to follow, she wasn’t. Marlin on the other hand was very afraid. Trying to deny even being out, Marlin feared following the shark would likely end in death. But off they go with Bruce. Dory with childlike faith. Marlin with a racing heartbeat.

What about the first disciples? What about you? The disciples stop what they are doing, drop their nets, leave family behind and follow with a Dory-esque sense of faith and trust in the one bidding them to follow. Just as Marlin and Dory do not know they’re on their way to a sort of AA for sharks, the disciples do not know where they are headed.

But they go. They follow Jesus immediately. The rest of us....well...maybe, not so much.

I venture to guess that most of us relate more closely to Marlin. A call to follow comes and suddenly we are afraid of the shark before us; we hesitate to accept the invitation; we attempt to reason our way out of the call as if we're not even out. I certainly react like Marlin, choosing to complete a degree in marine biology while God persistently called me to ministry. What about you?

If you are like Marlin and myself, do not worry, you are in good company. Think about the prophets of the Old Testament. Consider how they reacted to God's call. Moses said, "But God, I'm not a good public speaker." Jeremiah said, "But I am only a boy." Isaiah said, "But I am a man of unclean lips." Jonah...Jonah literally ran in the other direction.

What would happen if we followed with a trust like Dory? Imagine the places God could take us if we followed with the faith of these first disciples. I wonder where God will take each of us today? I wonder if we will go out in faith and trust? I wonder...Are ya' comin'?
(Karen Fleming, February 2008)

Song – The Summons

Prayers of the People

Almighty God, you have promise to hear when we pray in the name of your Son.
Therefore in confidence and trust we pray for the church. (Pause)

O God, enliven the church for its mission

That we may be salt of the earth and light to the world

Breathe fresh life into your people

Give us power to reveal Christ in word and action.

We pray for the world.

Creator of all,

Lead us and every people into ways of justice and peace

That we may respect one another in freedom and truth

Awaken in us a sense of wonder for the earth and all that is in it

Teach us to care creatively for its resources

We pray for the community.

God of truth,

Inspire with your wisdom those whose decisions affect the lives of others,

That all may act with integrity and courage.

Give grace to all whose lives are linked with ours.

May we serve Christ in one another, and love as we are loved.

We pray for those in need.

God of hope,
Comfort and restore all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit.
May they know the power of your healing love.
Make us willing agents of your compassion.
Strengthen us as we share in making people whole.

Lord, you have called us to serve you.
Grant that we may minister in your name,
With your love in our hearts,
Your truth in our minds,
Your strength in our wills;
Until, at the end of our journey,
We know the joy of our homecoming
And the welcome of your embrace;
In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

--Adapted from the Book of Common Worship

Song

Benediction

Sunday Morning

Gathering music/slide show

Energizer

Call to Worship

Hen's dance class, "God is Good"

Song

Confession

One: Let us acknowledge the ways in which we have failed to respond to the call of Christ. Let us confess our sins and receive God's grace. Please join me in the prayer of confession...

One: Jesus calls us, saying, "Follow me."

All: But we close our ears to God's voice and our hearts to God's love.

One: Jesus calls us, saying, "Follow me."

All: But we do not want to risk stepping out in faith. We prefer the security of our routines and the safety of our own homes. We fail to respond to Christ's call and claim upon our lives. We refuse to hear the cries of our neighbors in need. Forgive us, O God, for withholding our love, for withdrawing in fear, for living for ourselves alone.

Silent prayers of confession...

--North Decatur Presbyterian Church

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! God has forgiven us and calls us to be Christ's faithful disciples!

Thanks be to God!

Song

Passing the Peace

Prayer for Illumination

God our helper, by your Holy Spirit, open our minds, that as the Scriptures are read, and your Word is proclaimed, we may be led into your truth and taught your will, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading –

Matthew 4:18-22

As Jesus walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea – for they were fisherman. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As Jesus went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw Jesus, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sermon

All weekend we've been exploring the call of the first disciples. We've been considering how we are called to follow. We've paid attention to that pesky little word, immediately. Immediately. And we've wondered what it might mean for us to follow God's call with faith and trust.

So now what? Where do we go from here? Let's consider what happens at the end of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus and the disciples have been on quite a journey together. They've stood at his side, while Jesus taught and performed miracles. They've fed 5000 men, women, and children with just 5 loaves and two fish. They've been both fascinated and confused by an abundance of parables. They've been awed and persecuted. They've healed, prayed, debated, fished, traveled, slept, had faith, lost faith, eaten with lepers, listened, learned, and baptized. They have professed their love for Jesus and denied or betrayed him. They've seen their Messiah arrive in Jerusalem on a donkey in splendor. And they've seen their Lord executed like a common criminal. Three days later, these disciples, saw their Savior raised from the dead. Their lives have been turned upside down. They are changed forever. And before Jesus ascends into heaven, he has another call for them. Christ has another call for us.

Go. Go out into the world. Go. Go and baptize. Go. Go and make disciples. Go.

Following our God means going. Following our God requires moving. Following the Holy Spirit involves getting off our butts. Following our call means letting go.

Go. I'm not sure about you, but as with the call to come and follow, the call to go kinda makes me nervous. There is a lot involved in going. Going means that things have to change. Going means something or someone might have to get left behind. Going means losing control of my own environment and maybe being a bit or a lot out of my comfort zone. Going means having faith and trust.

You know who is good at going? Dory. Yes, Dory, the little blue angel fish, Dory has going down pat. With her childlike faith and her trusting soul, Dory knows what it means to follow and to go. Dory has followed with Marlin far across the ocean in search of Marlin's son Nemo. She and Marlin have gone places they never imagined and faced grand obstacles for two little fish from the reef. This morning we find Dory and Marlin in the mouth of a whale, hitching a ride to Sydney, Australia where Nemo is waiting. As we join in on Dory and Marlin's journey once again, pay attention to how Dory models letting go...

Finding Nemo clip...chapter 21 thru chapter 22 (1:13:40) after Marlin says, "Come on Dory, we can do this!"

How do you know something bad isn't going to happen? I don't! How do we know when we choose to follow God's call something bad isn't going to happen? We don't! How do we know that letting go won't lead to hard times? We don't! How do we know what's at the end of the path that lies ahead? We don't! How do you know when you set aside your priorities and your fears about where God is calling you to go, when you quit a dead-end job to take a meaningful position for less pay, when you move far away from your family and loved ones, when you take time for that much need sabbatical...how do you know something bad isn't going to happen? You don't.

Going and letting go come together...a package deal. Whenever we go, we have to leave something behind. Following Christ on paths of righteousness means sacrifice.

Going to new places in the name of God requires stepping out of our comfort zones. Allowing our wills to conform to the will of God demands that we face our call in trust and in faith.

And we can trust. We can trust and have faith because we believe in the God who has known us from the beginning of time. We trust because God created us from dust and breathed life into each one of us. We have faith because God sent Jesus into the world to redeem us from our sins and to conquer death. We trust because we belong to God, God loves us more than we can imagine, God has planned a future for us with intent for good, not for harm.

Dory and Marlin teach us an important lesson. When God says it is time to let go, we do not know that something bad won't happen. Things won't always turn out for the best from where we stand. We will fail sometimes. But when we are told to let go and we choose to hold on, we will never get to Sydney to find Nemo, we will never walk on water, we will never find out what God truly has in store for us. But when we are told to let go and we do, we lean on our faith that our God is merciful and loving, that our God knows the plans laid out for us, that in all things God works for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to God's purpose.

Letting go is not easy. I waited three years to let go of my dream to be a marine biologist to turn to the work of ministry. Letting go takes lots of practice. I still resist my call now and then. Letting go is scary. But when we do. When we can muster the strength, and trust, and faith to let go in the name of God...oh the places we will go. I never dreamed I'd be in seminary. I never wanted to preach. I never wanted to be called pastor. Let me tell you though, the places God has taken me on this journey of mine since I let go of what I want and turn to what God wants...wow. I never could have imagined. Not just the places I have been, but even just how freeing the act of letting go can be. And I know God has the same kind of life-changing, awe-inspiring, truly, deeply, amazing plans in mind for each and every one of you.

So let go. Trust in God and let go. Whatever it is that is hindering your call...let it go. You may have to let go of a dream, a job, an academic major, a top choice college, a relationship... Only you and God know what is getting in your way. Only you and God know how the Spirit is trying to move in your life. Let go. As you go from this place, back into the world... Let go.

Hear now a poem by writer Joyce Rupp...

Heal and proclaim...

Were the twelve afraid?

Did they wonder if they could do those things?

Compared to the quality of your ministry, did they feel inadequate and unworthy?

What persuaded them to go? Your words?

Your friendship? Their enthusiasm?

Your deep belief that they could do it?

And you said:

"Take nothing for the journey."

What did you mean?

Trust or more than trust?

Did you perhaps imply that we can't wait until we have all the possible things we need?

That we can't postpone "doing" until we are positive of our talents?

That we can't hold off our commitment until we are absolutely sure we won't make a mistake?

I think of all the excuses and reasons we can give for not serving and giving:

No time, no talent, no knowledge, no energy, no assured results,

You say, "Take nothing.

Don't worry about your inadequacies.

I will provide for you.

Go! Just go! Go with my power.

Risk the road, risk the work.

Go! I will be with you.

This poet urges us. Dory showed us. Christ commanded us. Come and follow me. Let go. Go.

Amen.

(Karen Fleming, February 2008)

Song – The Summons

Affirmation of Faith

Let us stand and affirm our faith...

In life and in death we belong to God.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit,

We trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,

Whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,

Everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the church.

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

--Adapted from the Brief Statement of Faith

Prayers of the People

Offering

For our offering this morning, I invite you to consider what it is you need to let go of in order to follow God's call in your life. Each of you is receiving a fish and a pen. Please take a few moments and write on your fish something you covenant with God to work on letting go of so that you may follow God more fully. This is an offering between you and God. You will not be asked to share unless you want to, so please be as sincere and honest as possible.

Few minutes to write on fish...

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us offer these gifts of sacrifice to God by joining in the prayer of thanksgiving...

Gracious and merciful God,
Please accept these humble words,
As a promise to strive toward the fulfillment of our call.
So draw our hearts to you,
So guide our minds,
So fill our imaginations,
So control our wills,
That we may be wholly yours,
Utterly dedicated to you.
Use us, we pray, as you will,
Always to your glory and the welfare of your people,
Through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I encourage you to take your fish home and put it somewhere where it will remind you of your holy calling as a blessed child of God.

Song

Benediction