

**Daring Discipleship**  
**John 1:35-50, John 14:1-14**

**September 18, 2016**

“Come and follow me,” says Jesus, and they do.

It reads so straight-forwardly. As if it were not impossibly strange.

How could such a few words so strike people? Outside the big movie theatre in Silver Spring, a religious group regularly plays their drums and beckons people. I am unmoved, and just walk past, as does most of the crowd that passes by.

So what stirs in in a person that when they are invited “come and follow me,” they do.

There must be some resonance, inside.

That resonance, that inner sense of urgency, that voice we cannot ignore, is vocation.

Why equate vocation and voice?

They sound a little similar. Voc-ation. Voi-sss.

Both have to do with calling, beckoned into action.

Vocation is often confused with career.

The root of the word “career” has meaning like “to race.” For instance, in careers we talk about “getting ahead.” Jesus’ way offers nothing for career advancement.

The cross questions all careers.

Jesus' lifeless body presents a very different image of what it means to truly live what it means to fulfill one's life calling, what it is to be truly human.

The cross intersects all our human plans, social schemes, our efforts and commonly accepted definitions of success. It intersects all these with a question mark.

It's not just mortality that stares at us.

It's not only the injustice of a lynching that stares at us as intrinsic to social life.

It's that utter mystery of Word taking flesh among us to the point of utter self-giving love.

It asks, again and again, how are we becoming love?

Dare we become love?

Calling is not career.

Calling can have a gentle sense of invitation: "you may..."

Calling can feel like being commanded: "you must..."

Calling is relationship, like in the African American style of preaching known as "call and response."

Jesus says, "come and see."

Jesus says, "You will see greater things than these."

An invitation into adventure, a dare to abide in and participate in divine love.

And yet it's possible to refuse this call.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the story of the rich young ruler.

**A man ran up and knelt before Jesus, asking, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

**Jesus replied essentially with the 10 commandments. And the man replies he has done these since his youth.**

**Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>When the man heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.**

**(Mark 10:17-22)**

Maybe "calling" is the voice requires a response, whether that voice arises within us or from the world's great need.

But we can be scared to answer the call.

Buddhism compassionately names the five fears that stand in the way of ourselves and our Freedom. Do you see yourself in any of these five fears – how they have limited your life and freedom? How they have limited your ability to respond to that voice?

- Fear of loss of life
- Fear of loss of livelihood
- Fear of loss of reputation
- Fear of unusual states of mind
- Fear of speaking before an assembly.

My favorite definition of sin is this:

An unwillingness to risk for life.

“Come and see,” says Jesus.

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have life more abundantly,” says Jesus (John 10:10).

Also in the Gospel of John, Jesus says:

You shall know the truth, and truth shall make you....  
[pause for the congregation to say “free.” *John 8:32*]

“Odd.” That’s how the American writer Flannery O’Connor puts it.

“You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you odd.”

And so we hesitate. All too often love asks us to risk for life, to break from what’s expected, and so we hesitate.

Listen, though, to another great American southerner: Dr. Martin Luther King. His sermon “The Transformed Non-Conformist” puts it this way:

**Everybody passionately seeks to be well-adjusted...**

Note: just imagine the amount that is spent by a group like ours in therapy and medicines to be well-adjusted. Not to mock it. It’s a sign of strength to ask for help when you need it! Ask for help when you need it! But rather being “well-adjusted”, perhaps being resilient is a better goal.

Dr. King continues:

**Everywhere and at all times, the love ethic of Jesus is a radiant light revealing the ugliness of our stale conformity...**

**Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.**

<https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2014/07/13/sermon-transformed-nonconformist-by-martin-luther-king-jr/>

If you are willing to have your hands be part of that creative maladjustment which saves, even tentatively, would you be willing to raise that hand of yours, even a little, even now?

Let's hear it for creative maladjustment.!

Jesus' calling an invites an ongoing, life-long conversation, beyond social convention, but within the divine light of love.

If we refuse the conversation, what happens?

There is an ancient saying from a gnostic book. It is attributed to Jesus, but these words are not found in the Bible.

**"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."**  
*(Gospel of Thomas, 70)*

More recently, the psychologist Carl Jung suggested something like this:

**That which we refuse to bring into consciousness or deny comes back to us as fate. Fate strikes us from without when we fail to heed its summons from within.**

<http://timeisabriskwind.blogspot.com/2008/05/synchronicity-part-2-fate-destiny-and.html>

But answering the voice, entering the life-long conversation,  
Walking with Jesus is to be alive in each moment, every moment,  
this moment of your unrepeatable, unique life.

Answering the voice, daring to be a disciple, is to be called into a  
lifetime of becoming love.

Each moment is without precedent, and never repeated.

Truly alive to the here and now in the presence of this God, these  
people, this time, my own life.

Franciscan Richard Rohr puts it this way

**“God comes to us disguised as our life.”**

But to answer this adventure truly, to be truly alive in Jesus, to be  
love, will surprise us and others.

We may think that life-direction questions are especially alive  
when we are young, say when we are juniors in high school,  
wondering about college and major or other steps after high  
school.

But those questions continue. If we have not already fallen in  
love in our teens, often that happens in our twenties, and we  
explore possible life-long covenants. (And blessed that can  
happen in our 30's and 40's, even 80's and 90's.)

In mid-life, the question of vocation, presses with increased urgency.

The poet Rilke expresses it in a distinctly male form. Women does this ring true for you as well?

Rilke puts it this way:

**“sometimes a man stands up during supper  
and walks outdoors, and keeps on walking,  
because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.**

**And his children say blessings on him as if he were dead.**

**And another man, who remains inside his own house,  
stays there, inside the dishes and in the glasses,  
so that his children have to go far out into the world  
toward that same church, which he forgot.”**

When we follow our calling, we are a blessing to others.  
When we do not follow our calling, we burden others.

If we do come and see, says Jesus, not only will we *see* even greater things, we will *do* even greater things.

As we become love, the works of love multiply in and through us.

What's needed is the daring.

Daring to pay attention to that Voice we cannot ignore.

What might you need to leave behind, in order to love?

What must you embrace, in order to love?

Dare and to act on love, especially when others may not understand.

Amen.