

Sermon Notes



Series: Against the Current

Sermon: On the Move

Luke 9:57-62

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Monday: Read Genesis 12:1-7

The story of Abraham begins with a call to go. Abram, as he is known at this point in the story, is told that he must be willing to go, to leave the places in his life that are safe and comfortable. Leaving the land of his father is both an unexpected directive and a life-altering invitation. He must journey toward a place that is radically different from what he has known. God does not inform him of his destination in advance but asks him for trust and a willingness to head toward the unknown. It is hard to imagine a more radical command: Give up everything and go toward the place that God will show you, with no guarantee of security, no promise of ease or convenience. And Abram goes... Would you? Do you? Where might God be calling you to go? What “comfort” or “security” might be holding you back?

Prayer: Help me, O God, to leave the safe and comfortable and go where you call me.

Tuesday: Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10

We are often taught prayer is a conversation. We share with God our thoughts, our concerns, our joy, and we imagine God's wise counsel and loving response. We learn "when we pray, we talk to God." When I read this text about the young Samuel hearing God's voice for the first time, I wonder if Samuel had been taught to pray this way? If so, it's not at all surprising that when he heard a voice talking back to him, he didn't consider it to be God. Why would he? We rarely speak of prayer as listening to God. When do we learn that God talks back? Father Thomas Keating says, "Silence is God's first language, everything else is a poor translation. In order to hear that language, we must learn to be still and rest in God." Samuel offers us a beautiful, childlike picture of that kind of "talking to God" when he said, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." How might you find silence to listen? What exactly are you listening for? How do you learn to recognize the sound of God's voice?

Prayer: Teach me, Lord to recognize the sound of your voice.

Wednesday: Jeremiah 32:1-17

Last summer the youth of FCC Birmingham traveled to Philadelphia and spent some time working with The Simple Way, an organization in Kensington (on the north side of Philadelphia) that describes itself as a group of friends seeking to live together and reclaim their neighborhood as they love God and love Jesus. We spent time in a grassy field where they were planning a park, picking up hundreds of used needles, and we wondered if they get discouraged because their efforts often seem so fruitless. They reminded us of this story in Jeremiah, and how he follows "the word of the Lord" in this seemingly pointless transaction that becomes a symbol of hope for Israel. Our actions, too, are a reflection of that hope as we seek to faithfully follow Jesus. How can we act today in ways that orient us toward God's kingdom? How can we be faithful to God's call even when our efforts seem pointless or futile? What acts of hope does God require of us so that generations to come will know the love of God?

Prayer: God of hope, write your ways on our hearts so that we may follow faithfully the path you show us.

Thursday: Luke 1:46-55

This is Mary's song of Praise to God after learning that she would give birth to the Son of God. We can read the words to this song called the "Magnificat" and say "Oh, what a beautiful message," but do we really take seriously what she said? These are brave and bold words from this young mother-to-be. Mary's courageous response to the angel Gabriel: "Behold, I am the

servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word," is echoed in the words of her song as she reminds us of the values of God's Kingdom, especially God's tendency to turn everything upside down, even when choosing the mother of Jesus. Mary's "yes" challenges us to live, like Mary, as humble servants of God. What song do you sing to God? How do you respond to these words from Mary? In what ways might you say, "let it be according to your word?"

Prayer: With Mary, my soul praises you, O Lord!

Friday: Mark 1:16-20

In this story, Jesus calls four fishermen from lives they knew by heart into lives they could not have imagined---although at least part of them must have been wondering or they would not have left their nets so quickly to take up after Jesus. I wonder now what it is that Jesus is calling us away from and what Jesus is calling us to? How would our worlds change if we just dropped everything and stepped into the new life before us?

Prayer: Help us, Jesus, like these four fishermen, to follow wherever you lead us.

Saturday: Acts 8:26-39

This passage contains two stories of calling. We first hear an angel calling Phillip to the wilderness road where he encounters an Ethiopian eunuch reading from Isaiah. Phillip, at the nudge of the Spirit, engages with this outcast Jew leaving Jerusalem, where he would not have been allowed to worship. Eunuchs were unclean, forbidden to enter the temple, and yet Phillip climbs into the chariot and shares God's message of grace through Jesus. Can you imagine that conversation? The Good News inspired the eunuch to respond, "Here is water. Why can't I be baptized?" And afterwards, the eunuch went down the road, "as happy as he could be." I wonder how people leave our conversations? Do we leave others as "happy as they could be"? When we walk away are they a little closer to recognizing God, who loves them immeasurably, at work in their lives? Can you recall the joy you experienced in a holy encounter? How does that joy inspire you to share the Good News of Jesus?

Prayer: Loving God, open our hearts to opportunities to share and receive the Good News of the Gospel.