

Mark 1:14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Okay, so last week I told you of my great dilemma as to sermon choice:

I had to choose b/t preaching on fornication or on calling: "Fornication/Calling..."

One reason I chose for-ni-ca-tion is because it's fun to say:

it makes me feel like an old-time tent revival preacher,
though I'm sure I don't put enough syllables in it.

Also, I always hated it when one of the lessons drops a bombshell...

and the pastor plays it safe and pretends like everything's fine.

The tough issues have to be addressed.

Mostly, I felt that supporting marriage in this age is more important...

than the discomfort of speaking about intimate issues.

So, what did I find when I looked at the readings for this week?

Two more lessons on God's call and a 3rd one that says that...

b/c the end times are near, husbands should act as though they aren't married!

Now, as much fun as that topic might be, I had to draw the line somewhere!

Actually, I got a bit spooked by the Jonah passage.

There's Jonah going, "Tarshish/Nineveh, Tarshish..."

He heads for the fun city/Tarshish and look what happens to him!

I figured that maybe God was threatening me w/ becoming fish food...

if I didn't talk about call this week, so that's what you're getting.

As a campus minister, I used to get asked to preach on youth and young adult topics.

I once preached at a Youth Sunday service...

at a huge Congregational Church in downtown Kalamazoo.

I told them that I wanted to think I was asked b/c,

as a campus pastor and college English teacher,

I might have some insight into young people...

and their struggles w/ who they are and where they fit in this world.

But as I told them, the truth is that I was there b/c I myself am a perpetual child.

The world still seems new to me every day, and like most children,

I have little patience w/ gloominess, even in church.

We have a lot of fun here in worship, and I think that's terrific.

Since God created the world good and the world is full of humor/laughter,

then laughter is holy, which means that joyful worship is also pious.

God hears our hosannas as well as our cries and moans.

I've spoken many times, in many places,

about young persons' searches for a sense of who they are.

Trying to discover one's identity is the major crisis of the early teen years.

Today, I want to speak on the great issue of the later teens and early twenties:

the search for meaning, the discovery of one's place in the universe.

H.S. students don't have any idea what they want to be when they grow up...

b/c they don't feel they fit in with their friends/hometowns/families now.

The more teens discover who they are,
the more sure they become that who they are isn't like anyone else.
They feel like they don't belong and can't imagine what God has in mind for them.
After defining themselves, then, teens need to define where they fit.
This is a question of vocation: what they are called to do w/ their lives.
Teens need to learn to listen for God's call.

Of course, the search for identity and meaning is a lifetime endeavor:
changing circumstances (job changes, retirement, the loss of a spouse)...
force us to continue these searches.

In fact, when we stop seeking out who we are and what we are to be doing,
we die inside.

In last week's lessons, we had 3 kinds of calling.

The young Samuel, who could be any of our teens, hears God's call.

Like Samuel's day, we're living in a time when the word of the Lord is rare...
and visions are not widespread.

But God calls, not the priest Eli who is fading fast, but his young assistant.

And Samuel hears his call clearly and answers quickly, "Here I am!"

But, just as Eli lacks young ears, Samuel lacks adult understanding

Three times he runs to Eli asking why he called.

1st 2 times, Samuel sends him back to bed, getting more perturbed each time.

You can hear him mutter to himself, "Kids...always running around.

Maybe we should put him on Ritalin."

This scene is hilarious: it's more proof that humor can be pious, of God.

The 3rd time, though, Eli gets nervous and teaches Samuel how to listen for G.

In all the discussions...

you parents have had with your kids over what they should do for a living,

did you ever attempt to teach them how to listen for God's will on the matter?

I remember my parents giving me lots of advice about job availability/salary/etc.

They wanted me to find a job that would make me happy;

isn't it more important to find a vocation that would make God happy?

And this question of listening to God extends to other choices young people make:

whom they date, what they buy, how they spend their time, where they fit.

Of course, it's hard for parents to teach their children how to listen to God...

if they themselves don't know how to do this.

It's easier to urge children to listen to the cold hard voice of reason,

as we all try to do.

B/c he learned to listen to the right voice, Samuel becomes the next great prophet.

God spoke to Samuel directly through the Spirit.

In last week's Gospel, it is Jesus the teacher who calls Philip,

and Philip who calls Nathanael.

Calls can come through teachers/spiritual leaders/mentors who say, "Follow me,"
and also through peers who say, "Come and see..."

and then take us to those who can help us hear our calling.

This week, Jonah has no problem hearing the call, but he stubbornly refuses to follow it.

We're pretty sure what we're capable and of what our preferences are.

We know what's best for us and know in advance what we like and don't like.

We know what causes interest us and will make us feel good about ourselves.

We know for sure we don't want to go to Nineveh.

They are our enemies and will never listen to us,

and if they do repent and save themselves, why would we want that?

We know what gifts God has given us...

and we also know that God would never want us to be uncomfortable.

Besides, we're too busy to go to Nineveh right now.

We're like the disciples in the boats.

Simon and Andrew are throwing out their nets for fish to eat.

James and John are mending their nets.

We're busy working at our jobs or at school or on other activities.

And when we get a break from these, we have to mend nets:

reestablish the lines back home to our families,

reconnect with our friends, do a little R and R for ourselves.

We don't have time for calls right now:

maybe after we graduate, after we get jobs, after we get married;

maybe after we have kids, after those kids grow up and move away;

maybe after we retire or stop traveling;

or maybe when we're too old or sick to do anything else!

Jesus says, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;
repent, and believe in the good news.*"

The kingdom is all around us, waiting for its fulfillment,

and we think we have time to waste?

We must change, repent, listen and respond to the call,

whether that call comes from the Spirit, our mentors, our peers.

Jesus is calling, *Follow me and I will make you fishers of men and women.*

God knows where you and I fit in this world and calls us to that place again and again.

We all need to learn how to tune out the world's noises and our own stubbornness
and heed that call.

Regardless of your age or where you are in your life,

I'd love to talk to you about your call sometime:

I'm in the office in the afternoons and early evenings.