

Leaving Everything ~ February 7, 2010

Isaiah 6:1-8; I Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11; Psalm 138

When I came to Colebrook, lo, those many years ago, I heard that some of the buzz around town was concerning me coming here and leaving my daughters behind. A few, not of this congregation, wondered “What kind of person would do such a thing?” It seemed to be a case of a mother running away from home instead of the usual course of things in which a child runs away. Obviously, things were not as they should be with me.

Now, Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Never complain and never explain.” Someone else said this before she did but I don’t remember who. I consider that a pretty good one line philosophy of life. So, I didn’t try to explain why I came here. It is complex—many things went into the decision. But, I knew I was not abandoning my children, all of whom were quite grown up and over the age of 27, and two of whom were married. I understood that it was no longer a part of my role as a “mom” to try to order and direct my daughters’ lives. They had made that clear to me long ago.

The only “explanation” for my arrival on your doorstep was, “It’s a God thing,” as one of my colleagues is fond of saying. It was a nudge that moved me from a place in which I had served for seventeen years to a strange new world.

In considering the three “call stories” that are before us this morning in our scriptures, I tried to determine if any was like mine. Not one was. Everyone’s call to serve God comes in a different way and at different times in life. If we are aware of the presence of God, either out there or in here, we find, at one time or another, a steady tug that tells us we are called to help in bringing about God’s kingdom here on earth. Remember Jesus saying, “The kingdom of God is among you?” It is and we are all responsible for creating it.

Prophets, such as Isaiah, always seem to get the most direct hit from God in our Hebrew Scriptures. There is a vision, there is a voice calling in the night, or in the day, there is the temptation to resist—but that is futile. Jonah ran as hard and as fast as he could and, yet, was snared by God and became a very reluctant prophet. It is a scary thing to speak for God, to put oneself into the public eye and to be continually considered and often found wanting. And, yet, they did it.

The simple fishermen beside the sea were enveloped by the ideals and actions of a man who just came along and called them over the restlessness of their lives to follow him. They, according to our beloved stories in the gospels, went, leaving everything, families and homes and jobs. They picked up and simply went. Not sure where they were going, they found themselves in a strange new way of life and a strange new land.

Then there is the case of Paul. Minding his own business as he tracked down Christians and brought them to what he considered as justice. Struck by a blinding light on the road to Damascus, hearing Jesus speaking to him and helped by those he loved to persecute. There is nothing like a convert and Paul is probably the most notable of all in our faith. He was not the most modest of fellows and we can imagine that there must have been a few confrontations with the original disciples, notably Peter, as Paul went

about preaching what he understood as the gospel. I am sure those who knew Jesus regarded Paul, who never did, as an interloper. But, it didn't matter what they considered him, he believed he worked harder than any of them to bring the gospel to many. Most likely he did. Because of his efforts we continue in our tradition.

And, we do continue. We continue to move forward listening for the call God has upon our lives, waiting to see what might come next. We listen to determine what our role might be in this broader movement. Where do we fit in, how do we serve best?

Our faith system is best shown to others by the way we choose to live our lives; by the way we decide to move forward in helping to establish the kingdom of God among us and within us. If we move with love and kindness, putting others before ourselves, accepting people where they are and who they are in life, forgiving past errors in ourselves and others, finding joy in every day, and having hope that what we do matters in the grand scheme of things, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus. That is right where we should be even if it sometimes means leaving everything we have known behind.

Amen