

## **When I'm Calling You—000-000-000-000 ~ January 16, 2011**

**Isaiah 49:1-7; I Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42 Psalm 40:1-11**

My mother, who would have been 101 years old this year, used to tell me about one of her piano recitals and the piece she had to play. It was the “Indian Love Call.” The first two lines of which are, “When I’m calling you, ooo, ooo, Will you answer too, ooo,ooo.” She told me she didn’t play it very well and never appreciated her lessons. She was far better at softball.

When I was thinking about the sermon for this morning the “Indian Love Call” kept playing over and over in my head. I could almost hear Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy trilling away at this oldie from a 1924 musical, “Rosemarie.” Those of you who know me, understand that it is not at all odd for me to have a song playing in my brain. This is a blessing and a curse. Perhaps, a blessing this time.

All of our readings for this morning refer to individuals and a nation being called into the service of God: the members of the church in Corinth, the nation Israel, and the first fishermen. These calls are, in effect, “love calls”—God calling to God’s creatures and hoping for a response, too. Hoping that people will hear and heed the call and rise up in service to their fellow humans and to their Maker.

The subject of being “called” is near and dear to every pastor’s heart. Each one of us has a “call story.” Some are a little unusual, like the person who heard God calling him through a television commercial. But, being called into the service of God is a special thing for all of us no matter how we might discern the voice of God and no matter how we might resist.

I resisted for a couple of years thinking that God had certainly knocked on the wrong door and that my neighbor was a far better candidate. I was simply too old at 37 and had many responsibilities with my three children. I had never driven on a freeway and the seminary I would attend would require that I travel through the Loop in Chicago on a 220 mile round trip often leaving home at 4:30 in the morning and returning home at midnight. I could not see any way to manage this added dimension to my life and I did not want to do it. I had seen the long and lonely hours my own pastor put in at our church. It took a few discussions with the men I knew in seminary to finally understand that I was being called. I think they couldn’t believe how dense I was.

Often, we do not realize that all of us who believe are called to serve God whether we are clergypersons or laypersons. We are all asked to use our gifts and talents to further the kingdom of God on this earth and to try to make things better for everyone. It takes time for us to discover the best way for us to do this. For some it is being set aside as pastors, for many others it is working within the organized church to help spread the gospel and for others it is finding worthwhile work to do outside the church. There are many avenues open to us to serve God.

Recently, in the news, there has been a little story about a woman who decided to make some dresses for girls in Africa, girls who live in grinding poverty. She thought it would be nice if they could have something pretty and new that was all their own. She had decided to make the dresses out of pillowcases. Her project started out slowly but has grown into something much larger. So far, over 100,000 dresses have been created for and delivered to girls all around the world. The little seed she planted grew and grew and people all across the U.S have become involved in this effort from donating fabric to sewing to making sure the dresses are delivered. It has become something far beyond her dream. There was a video of some of the girls in their new dresses dancing and smiling in their small village.

We never know what we might start when we plant a little seed. Our actions do not have to be on a grand scale to have an effect on many others. Sometimes the smallest kindness and gentlest word can help someone move along in life. In turn the person helped may consider using the same approach when he or she reaches out to someone. In the very best scenario, this kindness inspires others and grows and grows. It is that old “ripple effect.”

Paul reminded those in that troubled church in Corinth that God had called them into the fellowship of Christ and that they were to do something good. He told them that they all had spiritual gifts that would help build their community of faith and secure a future for the mission of Christ. No one person had to do this alone—all of them would support one another to get the job done.

Jesus called those first fishermen into service and they, we are told, dropped everything to follow him. Their lives were changed forever and so was the world.

That is the way it is for those of us who hear the call and claim God has on our lives, everything changes, our lives become different when we seek to serve God before ourselves. It is never easy to answer such a call, but once we do, we want to follow no other way.

There is a hymn in our hymnal, “The Summons” that sums up what it means to answer the call:

*Will you come and follow me If I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown, Will you let my name be known,  
Will you let my life be grown in You and You in Me?*

*Will you leave yourself behind If I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in You and You in me?*

*Will you let the blinded see If I but call your name?  
Will you set the prison'rs free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean, And do such as this unseen  
And admit to what I mean in You and You in me?*

*Will you love the 'you' you hide If I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,  
Through my sight and touch and sound in You and You in me?*

*Lord, your summons echoes true When you but call my name,  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go Where your love and footsteps show  
Thus I'll live and move and grow in You and You in me.*

-- Amen