

“What Is Jesus Calling You?”
A Epiphany Two; John 1:29-42
January 15, 2017
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
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I. A TALE OF TWO (MORE) CALLS

Have you ever heard a “call story?” Even know what that is? A “Call Story.” Ministers in training, as we go through our hoops toward authorized ministry: ordination, licensure, etc., along with seminary, have a Hoop called “Able to articulate a Call Story”.

The examining body of whatever kind wants to know how you got here. What was the God-moment—the divine inspiration or epiphany (otherwise known as the light-bulb coming on over your head) that led you to quit your day job and pursue a vocation of ministry.

Helen Duncan, myself and many others of you have been on those adjudicating committees and probably have asked that question of candidates. Or, on a Search Committee might ask something like this when interviewing potential called pastors.

A Call Story is an animal all its own. Some of us are called in a shazaam! moment. Others, in a gentle nudging, over a long time perhaps, via a variety of pathways. (Homework for you—talk to each other after church about this. Ask each other, “What’s your call story?” If you want to start with the easy ones, find the reverends among us, and they’re probably pre-primed to answer that!)

When have you been called by God? To what? What have you been called by the Holy? Free treats at Coffee Hour for whoever can tell me what we said last week that we were called by the Holy?

(yes, uh-oh, might be an answer!) “Beloved.”

II. WHAT’S THE BUZZ?

Today we hear the “Calling of the disciples” story. You know the one: you’ve heard it many times: The disciples are fishing and Jesus comes walking along and says, “Whoa there, put down your nets! Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men; instead!” And they dropped their nets, and followed him –without hesitation, of course!

But whoa! Today’s telling of that story from John’s Gospel doesn’t *quite* read like that. Listen again to this account. What’s missing here? What’s different—does or doesn’t happen—in this story compared to the traditional one we’re so familiar with? There’s a twist! Or three.

29-31 The very next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, “Here he is, God’s Passover Lamb! He forgives the sins of the world! This is the man I’ve been talking about, ‘the One who comes after me but is really ahead of me.’ I knew nothing about who he was—only this: that my task has been to get Israel ready to recognize him as the God-Revealer. That is why I came here baptizing with water, giving you a good bath and scrubbing sins from your life so you can get a fresh start with God.”

32-34 John clinched his witness with this: “I watched the Spirit, like a dove flying down out of the sky, making himself at home in him. I repeat, I know nothing about him except this: The One who authorized me to baptize with water told me, ‘The One on whom you see the Spirit come down and stay, this One will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ That’s exactly what I saw happen, and I’m telling you, there’s no question

about it: *This* is the Son of God.”

35-36 The next day John was back at his post with two disciples, who were watching. He looked up, saw Jesus walking nearby, and said, “Here he is, God’s Passover Lamb.”

37-38 The two disciples heard him and went after Jesus. Jesus looked over his shoulder and said to them, “What are you after?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

39 He replied, “Come along and see for yourself.”

They came, saw where he was living, and ended up staying with him for the day. It was late afternoon when this happened.

40-42 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John’s witness and followed Jesus. The first thing he did after finding where Jesus lived was find his own brother, Simon, telling him, “We’ve found the Messiah” (that is, “Christ”). He immediately led him to Jesus.

Jesus took one look up and said, “You’re John’s son, Simon? From now on your name is **Cephas**” (or Peter, which means “Rock”).

III. WHERE ARE THE FISH? THE NETS?

What did you notice? Catch anything?

There’s no catching! In fact, there are no fish! Or fishing—in this story.

But there’s another kind of animal we talk about in church sometimes—to be precise: sheep stealing!

Two of John the Baptist’s disciples are standing by watching John do his thing at the river. Supervising, perhaps? John looks up and sees Jesus walking by. Declares, “Here he is, The Lamb of God!”

The two disciples hop to it and follow after Jesus. He gives a quick and even slightly unclear invitation and off they go! To what they are not sure. “Come along and see for yourself” is all he says. And poor John? His dearly beloved staff have deserted him!

IV. HOW DID THEY KNOW TO TRUST?

Another thing to catch here is there’s no “Meet n Greet”; reference checks or Introductory period. The disciples heard John call Jesus, “Lamb of God” and bam! They immediately followed! Just by the name! “You had me at hello.” “You had me at “Lamb of God?!”

That’s not something we’re inclined to do in our day, and probably with good reason. We need to be careful, about just following someone based on hearsay. (That’s an “uh-oh” area!) It can get us into trouble; down a path we don’t want to be on. But these guys?

They jumped in with both feet, just on John’s report. They didn’t check their sources, didn’t go to FactCheck.com. Didn’t wonder if John was a credible news source.

But.....John had *seen* the Spirit Dove descend on Jesus. *That’s* where he got his news! Eyewitness news! And the disciples saw John so transformed and inspired by what he had seen—God’s presence and blessing alighting on and filling Jesus so profoundly—that *he* could convey that without hesitation, and *they* could believe enough to drop everything and follow.

V. SIMON GETS A NEW NAME!

And then, *another* twist! You've heard of the game Simon Says? Simon doesn't get to say *anything* in *this* game. Doesn't even have time to get a word in edgewise. For this is not *just* a game!

Jesus asks him if he is named Simon, and before the brand-new disciple even has a chance to answer, he bestows upon him a new and different **name!** You are Cephas. Rocky!

“Not just good ‘ol Simon anymore. And that’s not up for discussion. “You are Cephas. You are the Rock.”

VI. JESUS CALLS US –WHAT DO WE HEAR?

Jesus calls **us**—o'er the tumult
Of our lives
In the middle of the sea, in the “eye of the storm.”

HENRY NOUWEN and our scripture and reaffirmation of Baptism last week remind us:

“Many voices ask for our attention. There is a voice that says, “Prove that you are a good person.” Another voice says, “You'd better be ashamed of yourself.” There also is a voice that says, “Nobody really cares about you,” and one that says, “Be sure to become successful, popular, and powerful.”

“But underneath all these often very noisy voices is a still, small voice that says, “You are my Beloved, my favor rests on you.” That's the voice we need most of all to hear. To hear that voice, however, requires special effort; it requires solitude, silence, and a strong determination to listen.

That's what prayer is. It is listening to the voice that calls us “my Beloved.”

VII. JESUS CALLS US AS A CHURCH

Jesus calls **us**—as a Beloved Community. To be more fully ourselves.

Jesus calls *to us*—when things are different in some ways –not

what they used to be
When we are resistant to change
When the laborers are few
But there is much work and harvest to do

Jesus calls us to reach out to our community
Not to try to be all things to all people. Or to
cookie-cutter what other churches are being and doing, but to
be unique—to live into our *own* character and identity. Our
own new name.

Jesus calls *us*, CUCC.

To be a light. A different “animal” than so many of the churches in America and the world. Those churches who are shrinking, declining, finding themselves more and more irrelevant and unable to relate to the neighbors and communities around them. Unable to appeal to young adults, youth, young families—as a place where they can belong, be heard, worship and fellowship together across the generations.

To be different than those who give up and shut down, because the change is just too hard. To be a place where disciples of all ages, faith experiences and walks of life can feed their souls.

Jesus calls us to care for our souls and one another. In deeper, more intentional ways than we have before.

Jesus calls US. You and me. CUCC. He calls us to leave behind the way we've been doing some things—tending our nets—and follow him on a new path. Same faith, same absolutely essential core beliefs—“to love the lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength. And, Love your neighbor as yourself. “

But, called on a new path, in a new way—to fish for people. To invite and welcome and gather in –people who are different from us; who worship and serve and experience life differently from the way we've always done it.

Our Worship has been given a new name. This sea we've been fishing in is changing. We've lost something and we're uncomfortable at times with that. But, we've found something too. We've found ourselves *together*—formed into a stretching and connecting community with one another—many ages and life experiences. We are creating something altogether new—together!

And, like with Simon Peter, Jesus might just want to be giving *us* a new name. Giving us as a community in worship a new name. Beyond the labels. Not traditional, not old-school, not contemporary, not praise music or hymns, not early service and late; young people and seniors. Not even “blended!”

“You are no longer who you were, Simon. Now you are Cephas. The Rock. And you know what? On you and with you I'm going to build my Church. My beloved community in this place, for this time. Because that's what the world needs here.

VIII. WHAT'S YOUR CALL STORY?

Have you ever heard a call story? Have you ever had a call story of your own? What might your story be today? Could you be in line for a new name today? “Beloved” is all of our first name. We reconfirmed that last week. But a second name—uniquely yours comes after Beloved. Remember when the CB Radio language got popular and people—not just truckers!—were calling out, “What's your Handle?!”

What's your Handle from Jesus?

It might be: Beloved Caretaker, Beloved Teacher, Custodian, Pray-er. Beloved Board member, Beloved Coach, Beloved Choir Singer, Beloved Sunday School Teacher, Beloved Drummer in the Band, Beloved Moderator. Beloved pianist, organist, Choir Director.

And it might be a stretching, this new name. Calling you out of your comfort zone into new territory: Beloved Community Leader, Beloved HOA Officer, Beloved mission volunteer.....

The disciples did not know what they were signing-on for. Did not have a road map, or a Resume on this guy they chose to follow. They had John's Testimony—a personal reference for Jesus that was so compelling they didn't hesitate. They saw something in him—saw the Spirit at work in and upon him.

Peter didn't know what his new name meant or would come to mean—in that moment. But, like us, he trusted that the One who promised was faithful to fulfill the purposes of God in him; with him; through him.

What is Jesus calling you?

What is Jesus calling you to, on this day?

“Come along and see for yourself,” he says.

“You, who will have a new name!”

What is Jesus calling you to today? This week? This new year? This week, it might be snow-plowing! Many of you have been absolute angels this week—answering the call in very down-to-earth and down-to-snow ways! Going the extra mile—helping out a neighbor, a friend, a church family member, the church campus itself.

John Buchanan, 21st century

"[T]he world and the church are changing more rapidly than we can comprehend. Some things are the same: the world and the church desperately need [our] energy, imagination, passion, impatience, intelligence, and love. One of the great biblical themes is that God calls all of us to walk into the future without knowing exactly where we are headed, to let go of old securities and certainties and trust the God who promises to be with us wherever we go."

JESUS CALLS US O'ER THE TUMULT

1 Jesus calls us: o'er the tumult

of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day his sweet voice soundeth
saying, "Christian, follow me."

4 Jesus calls us: by thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear thy call,
give our hearts to thy obedience,
serve and love thee best of all.

How will *we* answer the call of Jesus?
What is Jesus calling *us*? Amen.

Let us sing! "Jesus Calls us o'er the Tumult" # 345