

The well known scientist, Carl Sagan, late in his life became interested in what was called the "search for extraterrestrial intelligence." Another way to put that is the search for other beings out there in the universe who might be communicating with us. Radio telescopes were set up and they listened to radio waves throughout the universe to see if someone was trying to communicate with Earth.

Seeing that Sagan was so interested in this subject, someone said to Carl Sagan, "What if we never get any messages?" Sagan then responded with these words, "It's a possibility that no one is trying. But it's a depressing thought to me that there might be no one in the universe trying to call us."

Today we begin our summer reading of the gospel of Mark. And we are reading through the gospel of Mark because like all books of the Bible if we just jump around the Bible we miss the nuances of an entire book of the Bible. I hope that by reading it from beginning to end through the summer that we will have a greater appreciation of the life of Jesus, what he taught, what he did, and why he did all that he did.

The gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. Most scholars today think that Mark was the first gospel written and that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark when they wrote their gospels. Mark also begins with a bang. We don't get any details about the birth of Jesus in the gospel of Mark.

Nothing about angels appearing to Mary and Joseph, nothing about a miraculous birth, no shepherds and no wisemen. Instead, Mark begins with an adult John the Baptist and then, bam, Jesus enters into the story calling disciples. Today we begin with the calling of these disciples.

The introduction of Jesus in the gospel of Mark begins with Jesus walking along the Sea of Galilee. He sees two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew. They are casting their net into the sea. And very simply Jesus says to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they drop their nets and they follow.

Jesus goes a little farther and comes upon James and his brother John. They are mending their nets with their father. Jesus calls them and they drop what they are doing, leave their father with the hired help, and follow Jesus. And then we read of Jesus walking along, finding Levi working at his job as a tax collector and once again saying, "follow me." Levi follows. Four fishermen and a tax collector. Follow me, Jesus says to each of them.

Today I want to invite each of us into this story as well. I invite us to hear these same words being said upon us. "Follow me." And with today being the day that we honor graduates I think this text is particularly suitable for each of them. But what does it mean for each of us to come and follow?

I invite you to hear the calling of Christ in a very simple way. As the author Frederick Buechner says it, "Our calling is where our deepest gladness and the world's hunger meet." (repeat)

In other words, match your greatest passion with what you see as a need in the world. Match what you enjoy doing with a real need in the world. If we are going to follow this invitation, then there are three very important elements that must be achieved or agreed upon.

First, we must discover our passion. How do we do that? Some of us already know what our greatest passion is. Our greatest passion may be caring for animals. Our greatest passion may be working out a mathematical problem.

Our greatest passion may be caring for someone who is sick or who is alone. Our greatest passion may be playing a round of golf. Our greatest passion may be playing video games. We all have our passions. Some of us know our passions while others of us may not know.

If you don't know your passion, then you need to get outside your bubble and try some new things. You need to put yourself into places where you can use skills you may not currently be using. You can also take a written spiritual gifts inventory which I can provide for you or maybe even talk to people who care about you. The first thing you need to do is to find your passion.

The second responsibility of answering God's call upon your life is to find where the world is hungering. I have been seeking to discover the world's hunger by walking the roads of the Creek's Edge community next door every day and talking to people and listening to people. I am then going to help them identify their issues and come up with a plan to address their issues.

But you may need to do something else to identify where the world hungers. Pay attention to what is around you. Pay attention to what you see in your neighborhood. Do not ignore what you see on the street. Go to places where you do not normally find yourself and listen. Draw on your own experiences.

To follow Christ we need to match our greatest passion with the world's hunger. But I would add one more item of emphasis. Go out into the world outside of the institutional church and seek to follow Christ.

If we look at the calling of Levi, we find that he was a tax collector. And then we find Jesus eating with Levi and his friends and associates. Jesus does not hang with the church crowd. Jesus hangs with the folks outside the church.

And when the church folks ask him what are you doing, Jesus response is quite simple. "Those that are well do not need a physician."

When you and I talk about ideas around here, let's not forget that we are not called to the ones who are well but to the ones who need a physician. We are not called to maintain the church institution but to live out the kingdom of God on earth. As we talk about ideas and ministries around this church, let us always be mindful that we are called to be reaching outside our own comfort zone and institution.

Identify your passion. Discover where the world is hungering. Match those two. Be creative. Be inventive. Be driven. Be compassionate. The best ideas of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may yet to be invented until you create it.

The other night I was watching the news and saw a story about a woman whose horse died in a tornado. She was distraught at the death of her horse. A vet heard about this. He said he could help. He then received permission to harvest eggs from the dead horse. Friends offered their mares as surrogates and in a miracle, the mare conceived and 2 new colts were born. This vet knew his passion. He saw a hunger. He matched his passion to that hunger.

If we match our passion to a hunger in the world and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, then we have heard the calling into our life from Jesus to come and follow. AMEN.

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-Story on Sagan and quote from Buechner was found from Long, Tom, "Where you never expected to be," 30 Minutes, Chicago Sunday Evening Club, 2006

-Story from NBC Nightly News broadcast in June, 2009. Uncertain of date.

-Text: Mark 1:16-20, 2:13-17

-Given: June 7, 2009 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)