

Lessons in Calling

Youth Week of Prayer 2017
Southern New England Conference

You have accepted an important call this week to stand before a group of people and share the word of God. This calling is an important one that can make a difference in the lives of many, starting with you. We are so grateful that you have taken this bold stance and we will be praying for you as God uses you to bring inspiration and truth to all those who will hear you.

The theme for this week is “Lessons in Calling.” During this week we want to inform people of what God is calling them to do and inspire them to accept that call. Here are the titles for each day:

- I. Don't Run from the Call
- II. Elijah: Fearful but Faithful
- III. Called to be Bold and Strong
- IV. Samson: The Fight Within the Call
- V. Called to Stand Alone
- VI. Matthew: Who Can be Called
- VII. Called to Win Others
- VIII. Paul: Changing Direction

Preaching can be an intimidating activity. We are confident that you will do a great job. To help you in the process here are a few tips to make things easier.

- I. *Prepare, prepare, prepare.* Even though we are providing you the sermons you will still need to make sure you are clear on the message and your delivery. Don't wait till the last minute. Read through the sermons several times. Take a highlighter and mark the parts of the sermon that you feel are the most important. Add your own thoughts and notes to the sermon to personalize it.
- II. *Practice, practice, practice.* Stand in front of the mirror and deliver your message to yourself. Find a friend or family member that you trust and preach the sermon to them. Get feedback and adjust.
- III. *Pray, pray, pray.* This is a spiritual activity and God is a part of it. Tune your heart to His by seeking Him everyday in prayer. This will bring peace to your heart and help calm some of the nerves.

We praise God for choosing you to be one of our Week of Prayer speakers. Know that “You've Been Called” and God will use you to build His kingdom in your life and the lives of those who will hear you preach. Please contact us if you have any questions or need any support.

-Pastor Josue and Pastor Milton

Don't Run from the Call

Scripture: Jonah 1:1 (Jonah 1:1-17)

What's the Sermon About - Why should we answer the Call?

Preached:

Intro

We missed him. Our chance to change things came and passed and we did not know it was there. A dark-skinned little boy sat through Sunday School classes for three years at a great Baptist Church (First Church, San Antonio) but someone missed him. His name was Sirhan Sirhan, and at age 24 he shot and killed U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy. With the loss of a great man, the persistent thought keeps recurring...someone missed him.

What about us? Do you think that God has Devine appointments for us? Could it be that if we are not careful we could also miss an opportunity with someone? An opportunity to make a difference. An opportunity to help change the course of someone's life.

Situation - God has a heart to save some Gentiles, non Jews. That is no surprise to any of us. God is in the saving business! This should have been standard operating procedure. God's shares the orders of the day to the prophet and he accomplishes the task, but it wasn't. Let's find out why.

1. (1, 2) God's assignments are for the benefit of others

Mother Teresa knew that God's assignments are for the benefit of others. She was a catholic nun who, like other nuns, took the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Unlike other nuns, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, managing homes for people dying of HIV/AIDS, leprosy, and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, and mobile clinics. These jobs were not popular and represented lots of work. But Mother Teresa understood that God's assignments are for the benefit of others.

The people of Nineveh were terrible people and God wanted to reach out to them. Even if they didn't sense their need, God did. Awesome things happen when we trust God and take Him up with opportunities to reach out to others. We need to understand that God's love is for all and that these invitations are to do great things in His name. We also need to know that we don't have the right to determine who to share God's message with and who not to.

2. (3-5) Avoiding God's assignments endangers others

Some problems can be handled later, like cleaning your room, buying those new shoes (the expensive kind), or finishing that tv show.

Some problems can't wait, like keeping your promise to someone else, getting the brakes fixed on your car, or paying your rent. All of these have consequences if you don't get them done. No one wants to lose a friend, get into a car accident, or be evicted from their home.

In this case, the sailors lives were endangered because Jonah chose not to follow God's instructions. That could happen to us. God intends for you to share His saving message with a particular person. In the process of sharing, a person just sitting around minding their own business, hears the message and their life is changed. You see, not hearing God's saving message is a dangerous thing. God want's everyone to have a chance to choose salvation for themselves. Do what you can to help others! Answer God's call for He knows what he is doing.

3. (8, 10, 12, 15, 16) **So those around us can really change**

The other sailors on the boat were in the middle of the storm, concerned for their lives. As incredible as this was, the sailors did not have the opportunity to get to know the Loving God. They were only seeing the actions of what seemed to be a vindictive God, which were the results of Jonah's actions.

On another occasion, Moses found himself in difficult situations, but not ones that he caused, just ones that he was going through. At this time, Moses requested to see God and believed that this would help him through his difficulty.

“And He (God) passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin . . .”
Exodus 34:6-7 NIV

God doesn't work through anger but love, not through fickleness but faithfulness, not through grudges but forgiveness. This is the part of God the sailors didn't get to see. It may be that we are doing the same, not truly allowing God to be seen. If we do allow God to be seen He will cause real change in people's lives.

Conclusion

They thought he was a waisted opportunity. That he wouldn't make it. They tried to kick him out of the military. One of the soldiers even threatened to kill Doss, himself. They were intending to MISS Desmond T. Doss. That was until the battle got thick. On August 17, 1942, Desmond didn't run away. He ran towards danger on the battlefield to help others. That day he saved over 75 men while under heavy fire. God was sure that He would not miss Desmond Doss, because He knew Desmond would answer the Call.

God had plans for him and He has plans for you to make a difference in the lives of others. He wants you to make a big difference. Where does God want you to make a difference? The only way to find out is to answer the call.

Elijah: Fearful but Faithful

Scripture: 1 Kings 17 & 18

What's the Sermon About: Even though the call can be scary we can have courage in the call.

Preached:

Introduction

Today we will look at the calling of Elijah. He was a prophet called by God during a particularly difficult and dangerous time in the history of Israel. To truly understand Elijah's story we must understand the history and the main players in the story.

The nation of Israel was split at this time. Once the nation split things started getting really bad for God's people. Most of the kings that took power during this time turned out to be really bad men. Here are the numbers:

There were 43 kings total. 5 were good. That is 12%. 4 were kinda good. That means they did some good things but also did some bad things. That is 9%. 1 was kinda bad. That means he did some good but mostly bad. That is 2%. And the rest, 33 kings, were just downright bad. That is 77%.

1. **Elijah is called into difficult times**

So this is the era that Elijah comes into. He is facing 2 foes. Let me tell you a little bit about them.

First is King Ahab. He was considered one of the worst kings in the history of Israel. He was a weak man and an evil king. He died in battle trying to hide from the enemy by disguising himself and running away.

Second is his wife, Queen Jezebel. She was the daughter of a king. Also a worshiper of Baal. She was one of the main reasons that King Ahab was so evil. She controlled him. She died being thrown out of the window of her castle by her servants while trying to flirt with a man named Jehu.

And so Elijah was called by God to be a prophet during this awful time of history. This time was defined by a bad monarchy, a bad marriage, a deteriorating culture, and evil religious leadership. Can you imagine trying to be a prophet of God during such an awful time?

One thing that we always must remember is that all of us are called. We are told in Isaiah 43:1, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine". All of us are called to a mission. It isn't enough for you to receive salvation and live the rest of your life warming a pew. You were saved, and now it is time to serve. You may have been baptized but that was just the beginning of your Christian life. Now it is time for you to discover what God's mission for your life is.

We must also remember that we are called into difficult times. The mission from God is one that will have its challenges. People are hurting and angry. Angry at the government. Angry at each other. Hate seems to be on the rise. The family is being attacked by society. The economy seems to be falling apart around us. The world seems to be imploding and God has called us to serve him in these difficult times. Even the church is experiencing its own internal challenges. We must be strong as we face what is ahead of us.

Romans 12:1-2 warns us, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will".

We must give our bodies and minds over to God if we are going to be able to fulfill the mission God has for us.

Elijah knew he was called into a war and that it was going to be dangerous. You can imagine how scared he must have been. He was going to have to face the enemies of God head on. That couldn't have been easy.

2. **Accept your call with courage**

But 1 Kings 17:1 shows us that Elijah was brave and delivered God's message to Ahab even though it would put his life in danger.

Fear can hold us back from doing God's will. But Elijah gives us 3 ways we can combat the fear and still be faithful.

1. *Be obedient:* If we obey God's voice we know that we are putting ourselves in God's hands and that he will take care of us. God told Elijah in chapter 17 of 1 Kings to go to the brook, and God gave Elijah food and water there. Then God told him to go to the house of the widow and God fed Elijah and the widow and her son. As long as we follow God's leading he will take care of us.

2. *Remember you are not alone:* For a time Elijah thought he was the only one that was still loyal to God. But in 1 Kings 18:4 we find out that there were other prophets of God that were still loyal to Him. It is easy to be afraid when we are alone. But it gives us strength to serve God with others. That is why the church is so important. God created the church so that we don't have to fight the enemy alone. We can support one another, pray for one another, listen to one another, comfort one another. We should never live our Christian lives alone.
3. *Ignore the haters:* When Elijah finally confronted Ahab and the prophets of Baal everyone blamed all the troubles the people were facing on Elijah. Whenever you serve God remember that people are going to attack you. Probably not physically but they will try and make you feel foolish for serving God. In those times you need to ask God to help you ignore all the haters. Stay strong and focus on Jesus and the mission God has called you to accomplish in His name.

The call can be challenging. The call can be scary. But when we serve God, and obstacles come our way, that is when great things are about to happen.

Conclusion

When Elijah stayed faithful to his call, God put him in a place to do something amazing. Elijah was responsible for bringing the people back to God when he prayed the prayer we find in 1 Kings 18:36-37. "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

After this prayer, fire came down and burned the sacrifice that Elijah had prepared. All the people now knew that God was the true God and Baal was nothing more than an empty idol. Elijah faced the fear of his call and stayed faithful and God was glorified. That is what will happen in your life if you remain faithful.

Called to be Bold and Strong

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10, 11 (1 Samuel 15:1-35)

What's the Sermon About - How to be bold for Jesus?

Preached:

Intro

One of the scariest things in life is public speaking. Generally people avoid speaking in front of a large crowd because of the anxiety that it causes them. Some methods to overcome anxiety are:

1. Watch yourself in the mirror as you practice
2. Lightly exercise before speaking
3. Don't overthink audience reactions
4. Focus on the material not the audience
5. Practice as if you are the worst

All of this is good for public speaking, but what if you are going to speak for God. That's what prophets did. They were God's mouth piece. Does God want us to be bold for Him? And if so, how do we get to be bold and brave like the prophets in the Bible? Open to 1 Samuel 15.

Situation - The prophets during this time would anoint the person who would be king. But when the king does something wrong, who corrects him? Let's find out together.

1. (3, 8, 9, 13, 14) **Obey everything God asks of you**

A man by the name Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "Only those who obey can believe and only those who believe can obey."

Those who believe in Jesus not only the facts about his deity, atoning death, and resurrection, they believe in his right to direct their lives. True believers follow.

Saul didn't have a heart willing to obey God completely. That can happen when our hearts aren't completely given to Jesus. How is your heart? Obey everything God asks of you.

2. (16, 19, 22) **Communicate what God tell you to others**

A childish game called "Telephone," one person whispers a message to the ear of the next person through a line of people until the last player announces the message to the entire group. The result is a very different message from the original message.

God is not about games, He is about truth. Truth has the ability to impact a person's life. The Bible speaks important things truth.

1. Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth. John 17:17
2. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. John 8:3

We just read that the truth does two things, sanctifies (which means to make clean), and it set you free (meaning from sin). But these things can't happen unless we are communicate God's truth to others. We are not responsible for how the individuals respond, we just communicate what God has given us to share.

Samuel was a bold and brave because he was willing to God told him. Could it be that God touches your heart with the truth preached from the Bible and He wants you to share it today. Samuel told the king, you did wrong. We shouldn't be afraid to speak to truth to others, but share with them God's message, popular or not.

3. (25, 26, 35) **Separate yourself from those not willing to follow God**

A girl caught her hand in a vase. She couldn't get her hand out, and her parents didn't want to break the vase so the doctor was called. He worked for three hours but couldn't get her hand out. he finally said the only way to get her hand out was to break the vase. The father hated to do that so he asked the daughter to relax her hand once more and to try once again to get her hand out.

"But Daddy," she said, "I can't relax my hand. If I do I'll drop the penny I'm holding on to."

There are times that we need to let people go if they are not willing to put God first. Saul was determined to live life as he saw best. Samuel understood that this was wrong. In life bad relationships affect us negatively. We need to be willing to let them go. The relationship is only worth pennies.

Conclusion

God has Called us to do incredible things in His name. In the end Samuel was considered one of the greatest prophets. Not because he had power, but because of his confidence in God. That confidence was seen by his bold actions.

Today, we are His people. Being with Him should give us boldness. Not to be mean to others. But a sense of surety and confidence that comes from Him. And, it should be seen by what we do.

Samson: The Fight Within the Call

Scripture: Judges 13-16

What the sermon about - Even though we are following God's call we will have to battle our own weaknesses.

Preached:

Introduction

One of the most exciting stories in the Bible is the story of Samson. Every little boy who hears the story of Samson can't help but be amazed. The strongest man of his time. He can fight, he's strong, and he's good with the ladies. Oh yeah!

If that wasn't good enough, he was also called by God for a very special mission. Judges 13:5 tells us that Samson's mission was to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." These were people who were oppressing the Israelites. They were making them suffer and stealing their food. God was tired of it and He decided that it was time to do something about it so God chose Samson, before he was even born, to be the savior of the Israelites.

If God chose you for such a special mission you would feel honored. Hopefully you would take your mission seriously. But the most important thing is that you don't take your mission for granted. Unfortunately Samson did just that. But in the life of Samson we can learn what some of the pitfalls are that we need to be careful with so that we don't lose the inner battle while we serve our Lord.

1. (Judges 14) Samson fought his parents.

Samson fell in love with a Philistine girl during his travels. She must have been some kind of beauty because he went home immediately and told his parents to get the girl for him.

Samson's parents didn't like this at all. They wanted Samson to marry one of the nice Israelite girls from their neighborhood. Samson was not in agreement. Can you imagine the argument that they had? But ultimately Samson won the argument and he headed down with his parents to make the marriage arrangements.

The Bible tells us that God wanted Samson to connect with this girl because God was trying to open up an opportunity for Samson to begin his mission of freeing the Israelites from the Philistine rule. So in this case Samson's parents were wrong. They did not have a clear understanding of what God was trying to do.

I know that the young people listening to me today are feeling pretty good right now. A story that actually has the parents on the wrong side of the argument. Yes!

But there is a bigger point here that we can learn from this part of Samson's life. Samson fought his parents and we sometimes do the same, especially those of us who are young. We think that we have all the answers and that no one can tell us what to do. It is a mistake to ignore the wise counsel of our parents and other adults who are filled with years of wisdom that can help us along the way as we serve God. The greatest place you can be inside of God's will is when you walk with God alongside others who are walking with him and having success. You were not called to serve God alone. When youth and adults serve God together, the church is at its strongest and the enemy is at his weakest. We must not fight against the adults who are trying to help us serve God better.

2. (Judges 14) **Samson fought his pride.**

On his way to go marry the Philistine girl, Samson had an encounter with a lion, which he quickly dispatched. Samson left the carcass in the wilderness but the next time he came by it the carcass was filled with bees that had formed a honeycomb inside the lion. Samson saw this as a great moment to show his superiority over the Philistines.

During the wedding feast Samson decided to use his knowledge of the lion carcass and the honey to construct a riddle that could not be broken. After wagering with all the men at the party he shared the riddle with them. "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet."

The men at the party could not solve it and they knew they were going to lose the bet so they went to Samson's wife and threatened her life if she did not tell them the answer to the riddle. She put such a guilt trip on Samson that he finally told her and she, in turn, told the men. Samson lost the bet and his wife as a result of this incident.

Whenever we serve God we must be careful to win the battle over pride. Samson struggled to defeat his own lofty thoughts about himself. He knew he was the smartest. He knew he was the strongest. He knew he was called by God but his pride got in his way.

When you are successfully serving God, good things are going to happen. That is going to make you feel proud of what you are doing. People are going to come up to you and congratulate you on all the successes you are having. It is going to

feel great and you are going to start to believe everything that people are telling you about yourself and slowly forgetting that it all is happening because of God.

Pride can be very dangerous if it is not surrendered to God. Always give God the glory when people recognize your talents. Always praise God for what He is doing in your life. Always pray that God will help you be humble in your service to Him. God deserves all glory and praise in our lives.

3. (Judges 16) **Samson fought his lust.**

The Bible tells us that the biggest battle Samson faced was the battle with his lust for women. We are told in Judges 16 that Samson hired a prostitute for the night. His enemies thought for sure that they would be able to capture Samson while he was in her home but they were mistaken.

But it wasn't much later that Samson got together with another woman, Delilah. Here is where his lust would get the better of him. The Bible tells us that it was Delilah that was able to discover what the secret of Samson's strength was. And she revealed it to the Philistines, cut Samson's hair, and betrayed him to his enemies. When they captured him they put out his eyes and made him a slave and a clown for their entertainment. This was the lowest point in Samson's life. He had a mission to fulfill for God but he failed. He allowed his lust to sidetrack him in his pursuit of God's will.

Sex is a powerful tool the enemy can use to get us off God's path. Today's world with loose morals and pornography has created an environment where our lust is in control and the world thinks its okay. We must fight our lust and put it under God's control. If we allow our sexuality to control us we will not be able to fulfill God's plan for our lives.

Conclusion

The ending of Samson's life is a bittersweet tale. The Philistines brought Samson out during one of their feasts so that he could entertain them. They laughed at him and celebrated their defeat of the enemy. Samson felt as if he could have one last moment of service to his God. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" And with that prayer Samson brought down the building on all the Philistines and destroyed them.

It is sad that Samson had to end his life in such a tragic way. It is also sad that the story of his service to God is filled with so many mistakes. Samson fought himself throughout his service to God and lost. We must also fight ourselves as

we serve God. But unlike Samson we can be successful if we surrender our lives over to God and ask Him to transform us.

The good news in Samson's story is that ultimately God won! God will always have the victory. Both in the world and in us if we are willing to give ourselves over to him. Whenever you are in a fight with yourself and your own limitations and weaknesses, remember that you serve a God who can not lose. He will win every battle for you, both inside and out.

Called to Stand Alone

Scripture: Genesis 8:1 (Genesis 6:9 - 8:21)

What's the Sermon About - How to be faithful to the call?

Preached:

Intro

Eruptions can shoot 3,700 to 8,400 US gallons (14,000 to 32,000 L) of boiling water to a height of 106 to 185 feet (32 to 56 m) lasting from 1.5 to 5 minutes. That is a weight of over 30,800 pounds. The average height of an eruption is 145 feet (44 m). The Geyser Old Faithful was named in 1870. It is located in Yellowstone National Park. It was given its name because it is the most predictable geographical feature on the face of Earth, making it the most studied geyser in the world.

Transition - What does it take to be called "Faithful"? Open to Genesis 6

Situation - The world had become very corrupt. People seemed to be only focused on pleasure and what they could get for themselves stealing, lying, and cheating. This time was not a fun time to live. Every person's focus seem to be just on sinning. That is unless you were Noah. Let's learn how.

1. (9) **Have a daily relationship with God**

Something has always fascinated me, shelter animals. Most people get their pets from the pet store. They walk in to buy the cutest puppy or kitten that they can find. When they find the right color and breed, they purchase the animal and take it home. Shelter animals are different. They have had an owner before, been abused, and sometimes have bad habits. But yet some people have a heart for these animals and they invest into the animal and turn its life around.

So it was with Noah and so it is with us. At some point Noah had to choose to trust God and begin his walk, daily relationship, with Him. Noah wasn't born a righteous man, a person who desires to do the right thing all the time. This came through him spending time with God. So it is with us, we change when we spend time with Him daily.

2. (14, 22) **Do what He says**

A little girl asked her girlfriend if she could go on a picnic with her. "Just a minute. I'll go ask my mother." When she came back she told her that her mother told her she couldn't go. The other little girl then said, "Aw, you probably didn't talk hard enough. Don't let your mother go at that. Go beg her some and then she'll probably let you go." "Oh, no," she answered. "When my mother says 'no' she doesn't change her mind. She knows what's best for me, so I'll do what she says."

It must have been hard for Noah to build the ark all those many years with his sons, daughter in laws, and some friends. It must have been harder to preach day after day, week after week, and year after year, "Get ready there is a flood coming!" But Noah knew God knows what is best! He knew that God would not ask him to do anything without having good intentions. Do you believe that God knows what is best for you? Is it easy for you to do what He says? God is looking for people to do what he says, because they are clear that he knows what is best.

3. (8:1, 21) **Trust God to take care of you**

Stonewall Jackson and his sister were crossing a treacherous torrent just below the mighty Niagara Falls. The current so rocked and tossed the boat that the woman became terrified. Jackson took her firmly by the arm and turning to one of the two boatmen, said, "How often have you crossed here before?" "Continually, sir, for the past twelve years." "Did you ever meet with an accident?" "Never, sir." "Never capsized and lost a life?" "Nothing of the kind, sir." Turning to his sister, Jackson reassuringly replied, "You heard what the boatman said. Unless you think you can row better than he does, just sit still and trust him as I do."

Just like Noah, while we are in the boat of life, the best thing to do is trust God to take care of you. You might look around and only see problems, but remember He has rescued his children from bigger and more terrible problems than you and I have ever faced or will face. We can't row better than God.

Conclusion

On any given day the geyser Old Faithful has 25,000 visitors on a summer day. More than 3,000,000 people come to see Old Faithful a year. But, one day soon more than 3,000,000 angels and Jesus will return to seek those who are faithful and were not fearful to stand alone. Luke 18:8 says, "However, when Jesus comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Faith is held by the Faithful.

Matthew: Who Can Be Called

Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13

What's the sermon about - Everyone is worthy to be called by God.

Preached:

Introduction

Have you ever felt like you don't fit in somewhere?

Have you ever felt like you aren't part of the group?

Have you ever felt rejected, alone, and ignored?

It's like when you go to a store to buy something and they tell you that you can save 15 percent on your purchase if you apply for their credit card. It sounds like a great offer on the surface but what they don't tell you is that there is a catch: you will only get the deal if you qualify. If your credit isn't good enough they will reject you and you won't get the deal.

Is it possible that our church could be the same way?

Of all the places that exist in the world, the church should be the place where people are accepted but it may be possible that in some churches that is not the case. Today we will look at what Jesus has to say about who can be called by God.

1. (9:9) Jesus calls Matthew

Matthew was a tax collector. This was considered one of the worst occupations for a Jewish person to have. Tax collectors were dirty. They could never offer sacrifices because they were ceremonially unclean. Tax collectors were hated by their people. A tax collector would never be chosen to be a disciple.

But Jesus decided to choose Matthew. This was unheard of. Not only because Jesus chose Matthew but because a Rabbi doesn't choose disciples. Disciples are supposed to seek out the Rabbi. Almost like applying for a job. Imagine what it would take to be worthy enough to be Jesus' disciple.

Your GPA would have to be good. Your SAT score would have to be high. You would have to have lots of community service on your resume. You would have to have a good work record. Not just anyone can be Jesus' disciple. A Rabbi was only as good as the disciples that followed him. So why would Jesus choose Matthew? This would be a slap in the face for all the great candidates for disciples that were around.

But Jesus goes even farther.

2. (10-11) Jesus eats with Matthew

It was one thing to choose Matthew as a disciple. It was another thing to eat with him.

If you were an important person like Jesus you didn't just eat with anyone. Only certain people were good enough for you to share your food with. Here is the list of people who weren't worthy to taste your food.

- Women
- Sick
- Elderly
- Sinners
- Tax Collectors
- Poor

There are several reasons that you wouldn't eat with this group of people:

1. When I share my food with these people I am sharing more than just my food. I am sharing the blessings of my home with them. I don't want to share the blessings of my home with just anyone, especially with people of a lower class.
2. When I share my food with people they are also sharing something with me. We both put our hands in the same bowl of food so whatever they have they put in the food and then I take that food and put it in my mouth, so it gets transferred to me. So that dirty tax collector has just passed his filth onto me. I can't be dirtied by a disgusting person like a tax collector.
3. When I share my food with someone I only do it with the expectation that they are going to invite me over to their home soon and share food with me. Then all will look at us sharing food with one another and see that we are important people and want to be like us. I don't share food with people who can't then share it back with me. That is why I would never share food

with a poor person because they are too poor to have me over to their house for a meal.

This was the thinking in the time of Jesus. That is why the Pharisees were so offended that Jesus, an important teacher, would sit and eat with sinners and tax collectors.

3. (12-13) God is calling all people

Jesus demonstrated the truth: God is calling all people to be part of the family of God. All of us need forgiveness and cleansing. We are all dirty and sinners and need Jesus in our lives.

As a church, we have no right to reject anyone entry into the congregation. As individuals, we have no right to reject anyone as a part of God's church.

Some of us have felt rejected at times but you need to know that that rejection did not come from God. God has his arms wide open toward you and he wants you to be part of his family. It may be true that someone in the church may have rejected you in the past but that was a human making a big mistake and it made God sad.

God is ready to make you a part of his family if you will just let Him into your life.

Conclusion

Here is the reality. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." So test scores don't matter. Accomplishments don't matter. Education doesn't matter. Your past doesn't matter. Everyone needs God, both you and I.

Please know that today, and tomorrow and everyday until the end of the world, Jesus is inviting you to be a part of his family and there is nothing that will stop that invitation from reaching you. Please say yes to Jesus today.

Called to Win Others

Scripture: Luke 5:4 (Luke 5:1-11)

What's the Sermon About - How to accept the call?

Preached:

Intro

One summer a lifeguarding class was offered at a summer camp to prepare a group of college students to be lifeguards. There were qualifiers in order to take the lifeguarding course.

1. Swim 300 yards continuously, using various strokes
2. Swim 20 yards and surface dive to a depth of 7 to 10 feet and retrieve a 10-pound object, return to the surface, and swim 20 yards back to the starting point. When returning to the starting point with the object and exit the water without using a ladder of steps, within 1 minute, 40 seconds.

These are basic skills necessary to becoming a lifeguard. Each participant needed to show that they had what it took to take the course.

Situation - When Jesus came to this earth, he came looking for followers called disciples. Just like being a lifeguard there are some qualifiers to becoming a disciple. Let's learn what they are. Open to Luke 5

1. (1-3) **Hear the word**

A beautiful passage in Romans says this:

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”” Romans 10:14-15

Jesus share his Words because he knew that they caused change. If we are going to accept the Call that God has put in our lives it will be hearing the Word. This can't be hearing the word once a week either or only hearing and learning from what other members of that church are sharing. God is trying to prepare you for heaven. Everyday we need to set time aside to learn from the Bible how to have good values, then share what we learn with others.

2. (4-5) **Let God work in you**

A minister, Mr. Spurgeon, who was very poor owned one cow that died, and his ten children were without milk. His wife asked, "What will we do now?" "I cannot tell," he said, "but I know what God will do. We must have milk for the children and He will provide for us."

The next morning a man brought the man brought Spurgeon a gift of twenty pounds from the ministers' relief fund, even though help had not been requested. A few days before, the relief committee had divided the funds for distribution and an amount of five pounds was left over. One of the members said, "There is poor Mr. Spurgeon down in Essex. Suppose we send it to him." "We'd better make it ten," said the chairman, "and I'll give another five." That made it fifteen. Another man added five more pounds. Those men knew nothing about Spurgeon's cow, but God knew

God knows what you need. He knew about Spurgeon's cow, he knew about Peter's need to catch fish. That he had had a full night of catching nothing. God knows about you and your needs. He just wants to work things out in you. Let God work in you. Put your trust in how he wants to solve problems for you.

3. (6-11) **Let go of everything to follow Him**

This hymn was written after traumatic events in Spafford's life. The first was the death of his son at the age of 2 and the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, which ruined him financially. His business interests were further hit by the economic downturn of 1873, at which time he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS Ville du Havre. In a late change of plan, he sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business due to the Great Chicago Fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank rapidly after a collision with a sea vessel, the Loch Earn, and all four of Spafford's daughters died. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone ...". Shortly afterwards, as Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, he was inspired to write these words as his ship passed near where his daughters had died. The hymn is, It Is Well With My Soul.

Peter could let go of everything to follow Jesus because God is awesome. He provides in all circumstances, good and bad. Horatio Spafford also recognized that God's love and care were not limited to only good circumstances. When you have nothing left but God you become aware that He is enough. Let go of everything to follow Him.

Conclusion

Elizabeth, one of the lifeguards taking the class was the only one left to pass the class. She was having trouble getting the 10-pound object from off of the bottom of the lake. It looked like she would not be able to take the course. Determined to accomplish the task she went down one last time. This time she came up with the object. She had determined I will either get the object or drown trying to get it.

She was determined to get it done. We as christians should have the same attitude. We are going to finish the work that God has put before us. God's saving message will go out even if it cost me my life. Peter had this same thing in mind as he continued to be a disciple after Jesus' death and resurrection. He preached and shared the Word whenever he could. He saw many miracle and knew he pleased God, even until the end. That is how our lives are supposed to be, full of meaning and purpose. Full of sharing God's saving message with others.

Paul: Changing Direction

Scripture: Act 8:1-3; 9:1-22

What's the Sermon About - When you are heading in the wrong direction God will call you to change your direction and follow Him.

Preached:

Introduction

Being lost can be a frustrating experience. Have you ever been lost? Can you remember a time where you didn't know where you were going? Imagine when you were a little kid wandering off in a large store and getting separated from your parents. Now all of a sudden you are alone and you don't know where to go. This is one of the scariest moments for a child, thinking they are lost and imagining that he or she will never be found.

But you know what is worst? Being lost and not realizing it. This happens when people make bad decisions in life but think they are okay. Now they are going in a negative direction in life, heading down a path of destruction and not realizing it. This can happen with addiction, relationships, bad habits, and many other areas of life.

The worst thing for anyone is to be lost and not realize it.

Today we will look at the calling of Saul, a man who was lost and didn't realize it. Acts 8:1-3 tells us that Saul was a witness to a murder. Not only that he agreed with that murder. Then the Bible tells us that Saul was persecuting the followers of Jesus, dragging them out of their houses and putting them in jail. And if that wasn't enough, we read in Acts 9:1-2 that Saul asked the religious leaders to give him permission to capture any of Jesus' followers during his journey and bring them to Jerusalem for trial. Saul's life was going in the wrong direction but God was ready to help Saul's life to change.

If our lives are heading in the wrong direction, God will call us, and our lives will change direction. Today we will see how God did that for Saul, and how he will do it for us.

1. (Acts 9:3-5) God will speak in a mighty way.

God needed to get Saul's attention. He needed to show up in a way that Saul couldn't ignore him. God shone such a bright light on Saul that it knocked him over. As if that were not enough, then God speaks to him audibly. There was no

way that Saul was going to be able to ignore God at this time. Saul had to stop on the path and listen. He had no choice.

Many people in the world are running around doing their own thing ignoring God's attempts to reach them. But what many people don't realize is that God doesn't get tired. God is not impatient. God is in it for the long haul and He is never going to give up trying to reach us and help us.

If you are one of those people who is running from God just know that the time will come where God is going to do something drastic to get your attention. I'm not saying that he is going to knock you down with light and speak audibly to you, although he has the ability to do it but it may come in a different manner.

God may need to take away your comforts. Maybe eliminate some of those relationships that are getting in the way. Take away some of those possessions that are distracting you. Allow you to lose that job that has you so busy that you don't have time for God. One way or the other God is going to get your attention and you won't be able to ignore Him anymore.

2. (Acts 9:6) **God will direct you in a mighty way**

Now that God had Saul's attention it was time to give Saul clear instructions on the direction he was supposed to take. Now Saul realized he was in the wrong but he still didn't know what to do. That is why he asked God what He wanted him to do. Saul was ready to receive instruction from God.

Have you ever wished that God would give you clear instructions on living your life? Where should I go to school? Who should I be friends with? Should I move to another state? Should I take that job offer? So many decisions to make in life. How do I know what is the best decision for me?

It can be overwhelming to try and figure all these things out. The beautiful thing is that we don't have to figure it all out. God is willing to guide us, even in the smallest of things. Our problem is that we don't give God enough of the time or attention to allow Him to speak to us and help us in our everyday decisions.

God gave us His word to help us make some of the bigger decisions and a daily relationship with Him will reveal the rest. The better we know God, through prayer and Bible study, the more we will understand His will for our lives and the better we will be at following His direction.

3. (Acts 9:10-18) **God will remove your barriers in a mighty way**

Saul had several days of alone time with God. He really had nothing better to do since he couldn't see. When everything is taken away from you you have no other choice but to turn to God. Now Saul had a huge problem, a handicap that he couldn't fix, he was blind. How was he going to get out of this one.

Well God used a man to help Saul. His name was Ananias. God sent Ananias to lay hands on Saul and help him to see again. The Bible tells us that when Ananias put his hands on Saul, scales fell from his eyes and he was able to see again. This was the beginning of the new direction for Saul.

When God speaks to you and gives you a clear direction for your life there still may be things in your life that need to be taken care of. Don't think you have to have it all together for your life to begin to go in the right direction. God is in the business of cleaning up the things in your life that are stopping you from serving him. What you need to concern yourself with is following the direction from God. He will take care of the rest.

Ananias said that God had sent him to Saul to give him sight and so that Saul could be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is the ultimate power in the life of a Christian. We know from reading the rest of the life of Saul that he became one of the most powerful followers of God.

Conclusion

Saul was a persecutor of God's people. His life was on a path of destruction and murder. But God turned his life around and he became a mighty man of God.

If we allow God to direct our paths and fill us with the Holy Spirit there is nothing that can stand in the way of us doing God's will. Won't you let God set your life in the right direction today?