

Epiphany 3A – 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23

Good morning! I have a question for you this morning: How did you become a disciple? How did you come to be a follower of Jesus? Maybe that's not even how you would describe yourself. My question comes from the call of Jesus to the disciples to follow him, and I am wondering, how did you get this far? And where do you sense God is leading you in that following?

If our understanding is that the kingdom of God is the active rule of God, what does that look like? In your home life? In your marriage? In your friendships? In your work life? In your school life? Where are we following God's active leading?

Raj Nadella writes that "Like John, Jesus suggests that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Greek word *engidzo* suggests that the kingdom is about to break in but has yet to arrive. Both John and Jesus make a connection between repentance and arrival of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is a state of affairs that will become a reality when people change their ways and work towards making it possible. People are asked to repent not so much to receive benefits of kingdom but to advance it for the benefit of others. They are invited to become agents of transformation."

Are we being transformed? Can we see it happening?

I also wonder, in the call of his sons, what do you think that Zebedee felt? "Going from" where Jesus called Peter and Andrew who Jesus called to follow him, he sees 2 other brothers, "James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him." One might even consider that the fact that these men abandoned their work and their family to follow Jesus could be truly his first miracle, 'cause really, who does that? Someone standing on the U campus, yelling, "It is time to repent, and to find a new kind of life!" How many people would follow that yeller? Not many, I'm going to guess. But Jesus spoke, and people came.

Rabbis in the time of Jesus did not seek out students, but were sought out by men who wanted to study with them. Here, Jesus is the initiator, the primary actor. Jesus' call to the disciples is both a command and a promise: Follow me, and I will make you fishers for people. Become my disciples, and together, you will experience new life, participating in God's saving work.

My friend Pr. Anne Hokenstad mulls over today's Scripture this way: The word "katartizō (the mending of the nets and the uniting into the same mind and same purpose) conveys the fundamental idea of putting something into its appropriate condition so it will function well." Bible commentaries translate this

word as perfect 2, make perfect 2, mend 2, be perfect 2, fit 1, frame 1, prepare 1, restore 1, perfectly joined together 1. .. This word is used 1 Corinthians 1:10 and in Matthew 4:21. These scripture stories will be read in many worship services this weekend. I hear in these scriptures story a truth about what it means for us as followers of Jesus.”

I wonder if it might look like this:

Proud Mom Packs Two Lunches Every Day for Son Who Secretly Feeds a Friend

By [Cammie Finch](#) on October 24, 2016

“Since the beginning of this school year, [Josette Duran](#) has kept an unusual morning routine at the request of her son, Dylan. Every day, she packs him a lunch of two sandwiches, two bags of chips, two drinks, and two servings of fruit. At first, Duran thought her son had perhaps hit another growth spurt and needed double the fuel. She finally asked him if he was getting enough to eat and received a surprising answer about why Dylan needed the extra food. “It’s for this boy. He only eats a fruit cup for lunch,” Duran shared her son’s response in an [inspiring Facebook post](#). “Can you make him lunch too? I don’t think he has lunch money.”

It turned out that Dylan had befriended a classmate whose family really needed the help. The boy’s single mother had recently lost her job and could no longer afford to buy school lunches. After learning this, Duran was even more eager to help out the boy and his mother because she herself could empathize with their situation. “This hits home to me because a few years ago, me and my son were homeless,” Duran told [KOAT News](#). “I was living in my car and I was washing him in bathrooms. And we didn’t have food.” Now that they had overcome their hardship and were in a stable place, Duran wanted nothing more than to reach out and help others in need.

When the young boy’s mother learned of Duran’s generosity, she called her up and offered to pay her back for everything, but Duran couldn’t accept it. “I don’t think I did anything special,” Duran said in a [live Facebook video](#). “I just think I did what a human being is supposed to do.”¹

“The kindness and compassion doesn’t stop there. The efforts made by Duran, who is also the coach of the local school’s girls’ volleyball team, didn’t go unnoticed by her players. Her team raised \$400 to give to Coach Duran to cover the cost of all the extra lunches she had made out of her own pocket. But Duran refused to keep the cash, and instead, donated it to the cafeteria at her son’s school. The money was enough to pay back the past due accounts of all students who buy school lunch. “Now everyone can eat,” Duran said, proud that it all started with her 11-year-old son’s close observation of someone other than himself—someone he knew could use a helping hand and a PB&J made with lots of love” (© 2020. All rights reserved.)¹ ¹ Story sourced from Facebook posting

The community of the Corinthians was very mixed in terms of what people had; some much money, some little. Some much social capital, some less. Paul is writing to a church where some people came to communion drunk, and some came to a communal meal & ate much more than their share.

Jane Lancaster Patterson – no relation that I know of to our pastor – says “Paul seeks to mend the splits in the community by counseling the Corinthians to be united in the same mindset (Anthony Thistleton’s translation of *nous*) and the same intention (*gnome*).

- *the mindset and intention Paul means are cross-shaped, self-emptying for the sake of something larger than the self.”²*

“Strange logic of the cross

- **Gospel:** According to most English translations, Paul says in verse 17, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel,” whereas the Greek has a simple verb, “to gospel” (*euangelizomai*): “Christ did not send me to baptize but to gospel.”
- The difference between proclaiming something and simply doing it allows us to imagine gospeling as not merely speech, but action. Perhaps Paul’s most significant gospeling happened not when he was speaking at all, but in the ways he treated people when they gathered for the Lord’s supper, or in his care for his co-workers (1 Corinthians 9:6).

The specific actions of gospeling are spelled out in 13:4-6, where Paul speaks of all the activities that constitute love. Where patience, endurance, hope, humility, forgiveness are embodied by people in community over time, then the gospel sounds forth through them.

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- **The *logos* of the cross:** Likewise, translations of the *logos* of the cross as the “message about the cross” misdirect the hearer toward a preoccupation with how the cross might be explained in powerful speech.”²
- “The Greek term *logos* is a way to speak of the deepest forms of wisdom, the wisdom that underlies the making of all that is. The cross, in Paul’s view, is profoundly revelatory of the nature of God, both in God’s willingness to suffer for the benefit of the creation, and also in the power of God to bring life out of death.
- The cross exposes God’s wisdom for all the world to see; but only those who understand the strange logic of God’s power—perfectly revealed in Christ’s weakness—know what it is they’re seeing.

- God’s self-giving power through the cross for newness of life is known tangibly by the community in Corinth, as Gentiles are offered a path from death to life, from brokenness to wholeness, from self-serving chaos to holiness and relationship. They are, in effect, new-born through the cross.

The epiphany of the cross

We might say that Paul removes the cross from the hands of Rome, as an instrument of terror, and gives it over to the power of God to re-knit the fabric of relationship. Where do we see this in our lives and in our world?

- What does it look like, sound like, feel like? *These are the present-day “epiphanies” of Christ in our midst.*²
- Where in your own community do you see people gospeling with their whole way of life? Where do you see the power of God at work among you through the strange logic of the cross?”²

Here’s some of what I see:

- Today is Noah’s Ark Sunday. Our preschool endeavors to teach & practice peacemaking every day. Doesn’t our world need more people who learned at Noah’s Ark?
- I sometimes set myself up for acting patiently. If a cashier or server has been verbally abused or been mean to, when I walk up to them I say, “Don’t worry. Take your time. Do what you need to. I am the most patient person on the planet.” Is that the truth? NO! But for the next 5 or 10 minutes, once I’ve said it aloud in public, I will be.
- Alison Gopnick is a developmental & brain scientist, and her current studies are showing that when we care for someone, it helps us feel love for them. Often, we wait for the feeling before the action; we may never get to embodying or enacting the love for them. Doing first can help us feel.

“First Corinthians 1:18 contains a clue to the hopefulness that undergirds this entire passage: “to us *who are being saved.*” For Paul, salvation is not a once-in-a-lifetime event but an ongoing embodied process of mending the fabric of relationships that stretch across the entire creation, a fabric that is revelatory of God’s grace and power, from end to end.”²

During this season of Epiphany, of watching for God’s presence, may we see and learn & grow, may we be transformed into peacemakers and weavers of the love of God everywhere. Amen.

² Jane L, Patterson @ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4344