

**Called to Go
2nd Week in The Call Series
Acts 13:1-5
Jennie Clark**

Some of my favorite childhood memories are of the lazy days of summer, running through my neighborhood with friends- playing capture the flag, climbing trees, exploring the woods behind our houses, and riding bikes around the block. That was freedom to me! However, the balloon of my summer freedom, was abruptly popped each day when my mother rang the bell on our back porch calling me to come home for dinner or bedtime.

There's nothing worse than being the first one summoned away from your friends. Sometimes I played on as if I heard nothing. But, if the bell rang a second time, I knew it was at my peril to delay any longer. The jig was up. I was called to go.

It's one thing to hear the "call to go" through a clear ringing bell rung by your mother. It's another thing to be "called to go" by the voice of God, as we will consider in today's text from Acts.

Our Lenten series on the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul, began last week with the "*The Call of Christ*", when God's grace and power transformed the young pharisee, Saul (a.k.a.- Paul), from the zealous persecutor of Christ's church- to become the most powerful witness and advocate for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this second week of Lent, our text from Acts, turns us to ponder "*The Call to Go*".

In this scripture passage, the Holy Spirit speaks to the leaders of the church in Syrian Antioch. While they are worshipping and fasting, they hear the Spirit's message say to them: "*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*". And after fasting and praying they lay their hands on Barnabas and Paul and send them off.

So, begins Barnabas and Paul's first missionary journey. The Holy Spirit leads them from the church in Syrian Antioch, to regions of the Roman Empire where they've never been before. Claimed by Christ, they willingly answer the "call to go".

On this journey,

- They will be both embraced by believers and encounter life threatening opposition.
- They will share the message of how God reconciles us, to God, to self and to one another through Jesus Christ and they will experience violence for doing so.
- They will encourage the followers of Christ and train their leaders.
- They will travel approximately 1500 miles over the course of 6-9 months before returning to their home church in Antioch, where they will bear witness to what God did through them along their journey by opening the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Seventeen years prior to this first missionary journey, the wind of God's spirit, swept through new believers in Jerusalem as they heard the message of Jesus Christ boldly shared by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. In a relatively short time, the joy and sense of God's presence and power that filled those first believers in Jerusalem, grew into a movement that spread across the Roman Empire.

Heeding the Holy Spirit's "call to go", Barnabas and Paul become integral agents in the expansion of Christ's gospel message, changing the world forever.

A new age begins to unfurl, as the living God does a new thing in the world through individuals, whose lives are being transformed by the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is true for the first followers of Christ and for Christ's followers living today.

As followers of Christ, we are people of God's story as recorded in the Scriptures. God's story unfolds like a drama with various acts. In God's story is:

Act 1 Eden- when God creates and it's all good. (*Genesis 1-2*)

Act 2 Excuses – when it all falls apart through Adam and Eve's disobedience to God (*Genesis 3-11*)

Act 3a Election – God chooses and uses one to bless all through Abraham and his descendants (*Genesis 12-50*)

Act 3b Exodus, Empire, Exile - God frees the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, leads them through the wilderness to the Promised Land where they rise, fall and led away in exile (***Exodus – Malachi***)

Act 4 Emmanuel - God enters the story in a new way, putting on flesh to redeem the world through Jesus. (***Matthew, Mark, Luke, John***)

Act 5 Enacting - Entrance of the Church (***Acts of the Apostles to Now***)

This is the act in which we find ourselves today as followers of Jesus. We are the continuation of God's story of redemption, reconciliation and love as it unfolds through Christ's church in the world today. In this act of God's story, the church is challenged to fulfill our calling to be instruments of God's re-creation

Like Paul, Barnabas, and the early followers of Christ, we each have a part to play in God's story. The question is: are we hearing God's voice and heeding God's call to go where the Spirit wants to lead us?

It is not insignificant that the Syrian Antioch church leaders heard God's message to set apart Barnabas and Paul for the work to which they are called, when together they are worshipping and fasting. Each week in the sacristy, before the service begins, the worship

leaders pray together. We entrust the congregation and ourselves to God, asking that our worship: our singing, praying, preaching, and sharing in sacraments draw us all ever deeper into God's life and transforming presence.

In community is often the context in which we hear the voice of God speak to us. In the thin place of opening to God's presence through community worship and prayer, God's call sometimes breaks through the distracting noise of our lives to speak to us in a new way. Perhaps that might be true for you today!

As we begin the second week of our Lenten journey, we are invited from where we find ourselves now to where God is calling us to go.

- Perhaps God is calling you to a different place to enact God's love through building water purification systems for communities in need **or** through caring for creation by cleaning up a stream in the watershed of our own community.
- Or maybe God is calling you spiritually to a deeper commitment to Christ and the body of Christ through Bible study, or participating in a small group or praying with and for one another.
- Could it be that God is leading you to become an ally, engaging in advocacy work for the poor and oppressed who bear the wounds of systemic injustice?
- Or might God be calling you to share God's amazing story and the love of Jesus with children in KidsConnect, or WeeConnect, or in the nursery at Westminster?

The possibilities of where God is calling us are many. Christian theologian, Frederick Buechner, wrote: *"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."*¹

The voice of God is calling each of us to the work set apart for us. Let us open our ears to that voice and have confidence that the Holy Spirit goes with us wherever we are sent. As we heed the call, may our lives as individuals and as a community bring glory to Christ as we serve his purposes near and far with faith, hope and love.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Frederick Buechner, [Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC](#)