

What will you do with the rest of your life? Some of us are seriously working on shaping our future, especially those who are younger than, say 40 or fifty years old. Working on security matters I suspect. Most of the rest of us are perhaps thinking “What do you mean, what am I going to do? I’m looking at life as if I’ve been there and done that already. I got my T-Shirt! I’m tired. I just want to relax now. I’ve earned that privilege.”

Well, if you are someone that feels that way, then the answer is: no, you haven’t. You haven’t if you call yourselves a Christian, if you take that label seriously. Whichever age group you fall into, you may need to reassess your goals. You see, God is always calling us. All through the Old and New Testament, all throughout the history of the world, the history of our country, men and women were called and are now being called, each and every day to do the work that God has called us to do.

And we are being called to do more than we ever can imagine doing all by ourselves. We are not only called to do “things” for people in general, we are being called as individuals to come to a deeper, closer relationship with our God.

The stories we read today are in some ways quite charming; at those from the OT and from the Gospel. Jonah or the men in the NT who are

about to become Jesus' disciples are all ordinary people. Jonah of course is the easiest to identify with, perhaps because he is honest about not wanting to go anywhere near anything or anyone who represents any kind of difficulty. Simon and Andrew, later with the others in this Gospel story, simply put down what they were already doing and go wherever Jesus is sending them.

Sometimes we are distracted by this story. We ask ourselves if we really could give up everything we have to follow Jesus. All of us have, over the years, collected some stuff that we have become quite attached to, whether it be material goods, certain friends, or maybe activities that are useful to us in order to help us live our lives in ways that WE think serve us best. But getting rid of things is simply one example, one way in which people are called to lead the Christian life.

Maybe we aren't being asked to give up all that we have, but we are being asked to take on new opportunities. If we review our lives, we probably all can find choices that we have made that no longer serve us well. I don't have all of the same clothing in my closet as I did ten years ago. There are friends that I no longer spend as much time with; even forms of entertainment that interest me have changed over the years.

Hopefully the changes have to do with the conscious decision I made when I felt called to become closer to God.

I'm sure some of the new things that God wants us to do include making some difficult choices, but think of what the rewards can be! There is a certain joy, a certain peace, a certain clearness of direction that is gained by knowing that we can be walking closer to God as we intentionally lead a life that reflects the desires and dictates of Jesus.

It is true that we alone cannot simply decide to become whatever Jesus wants us to become. I believe a good deal of the success belongs to the power of the Spirit in order to make it happen. But we do have to make our choices. There are a lot of things that we have to say no to, things that inhibit our freedom to love, and to really enjoy life without causing fear or harm to ourselves or others. Once we have cleared our minds, bodies, hearts, even our houses of the things that weight us down and clutter our movement forward toward God's light, then we have room to move forward into the light of God. Then we can say yes to things that really matter.

The possibilities to follow Jesus seem endless, even boundless. We may not have clear knowledge of what it is that we are being asked to do next, whether it be in our personal lives or in the life of this church, or in other aspects of the communities that we live in.

I do know, I am certain in fact, that whatever we are being asked to do, we are being asked to do things with love. We are being asked to be generous with our time and our talent and our money, yes, but even more than that we are being asked to be generous with our patience and willingness to understand new things that appear in our lives.

In her book “Home by Another Way,<sup>1</sup>” Barbara Brown Taylor also says that the possibilities are endless. Maybe some people will be asked to do less rather than more, so that they free their time to enjoy aspects of nature “to have time to watch how the light changes on the water at dusk” for example. I think of all the times I remarked that I wish I had the time to read a certain book or to listen to the complete work of a particular piece of music. These are creative ways in which we become more connected to God’s often mysterious and awesome force.

We can rely on the God who calls us to generate the newness of life; this new life allows us the hope that is needed to illuminate this seemingly dreary and dim lit world. I believe that whenever our will and desire meet God’s will and desire *for* us, we are then truly helping to create them reign of God, the Kingdom of Heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, Barbara Brown. Cowley Publications, 1997.

So, what are you going to do with the rest of your life? Now is the time, now is the time to begin. Or begin again. “Come,” Jesus says, “Come follow me.”