

Called to Follow – Serving Others

It is said that our true worth is found in giving ourselves in the service of others. How we choose to spend our time, where we choose to give our effort for the benefit of others is the line that will show up in the account of our lives on the last day.

We have many options in life, and any route we take means that we have chosen not to take another, or even many other, different routes.

It might be our route to church this morning, whether to stay in school, whether to marry this person. It might be the decision to move town or even country, or to stay where I am.

Each option comes with both costs and benefits. Some are immediately apparent ... others we learn along the way ... welcome to the journey of life.

Moses is at one of those points. Last week we met Moses, born during a time of persecution after Pharaoh ordered the killing of all small Hebrew boys. His mother placed him in a waterproof basket and hid him on the edge of the river among the reeds. He is rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and raised as her son. A Hebrew slave boy raised as an Egyptian prince in the royal household.

A lot has happened since the day the princess found Moses and today. Moses, as a grown up, saw an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew. Moses looked around, presumably to be sure that no one was watching, killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. The next day he sees two Hebrew men fighting and decides to intervene. His intervention was not welcome, and one of the men made it clear that he, Moses, was no prince over the Hebrew people, whatever his exalted status in Pharaoh's household might be. What is more, he made it clear that Moses' murder of the Egyptian was no secret. Even Pharaoh heard of the crime and sought to kill Moses. So, Moses fled to Midian, entered the house of the priest of Midian, and married his daughter. So it was that a member of Pharaoh's household and a man under Pharaoh's protection came to be in Midian, tending his father-in-law's flock.

Moses is living in a safe and comfortable place, doing his best to be independent and self-reliant.

Seeking pasture for the sheep, Moses has led them to Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai. We will come back to Mount Sinai later in the story, but now Moses comes upon this incredible sight of a bush that appears to be burning ... yet without being consumed.

God calls to Moses from the bush, tells him to remove his sandals as he is on holy ground, then God identifies God's self, saying, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

God has heard of the suffering of the Hebrews at the hands of the Egyptians, is going to rescue them from their taskmasters and bring them to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And God is sending Moses to lead them.

Moses protests that he is not welcome in either the Egyptian or Hebrew community, he is wanted for murder and distrusted by all.

God assures him, saying "I will be with you."
Moses will not be alone.

Called by God, Moses gives up the safety and comfort of life in Midian, gives up his ambitions for a peaceful, safe and reasonably normal life and risks losing control of his life, and possibly risks losing his life. Moses gives his life into the hands of God, not knowing what is going to come next.

By contrast, Jesus knows that the direction that he is going, the literal and metaphorical walk to Jerusalem and that it is going to end his earthly ministry.

Jesus is pretty direct with the disciples in his description of what his journey will be like. Peter, being Peter, and likely speaking for all the disciples' protests.

Pushing aside Peter's protests, Jesus invites his disciples to come with him, to make the way of the cross the way of life.

Following Jesus, believing in God, means giving up control of our lives but it does not come with a death sentence.

Following Jesus is moving from a self-centred life to a Christ-centred life,
from a life where ambitions and goals are set by self,
to a life where ambitions and goals are set by Christ.

It is not always easy to live a Christ-centred life,
we like to be in control of our lives,
we like to think that what we have accomplished is through our own skills and abilities,
we like to work towards our own goals,
to be safe and comfortable with our families and friends.

Following Jesus is not necessarily giving up the good things in life.
And it is certainly not allowing anyone else to control our lives or to abuse us in any way.
We give our lives to Jesus,
not to another human being.

The suffering and death of Jesus on the cross demonstrates the depth of God's love and compassion for us.

Moses gave up his life to lead his people the Hebrew people to safety.

Jesus gave up his life to lead us to safety and the promise of eternal life.

Our call, when we heed to call of Jesus to take up our cross and follow Jesus is to give of
ourselves for the service of others,
to stand with and for those who have no voice,
to care for neglected children,
to build homes for those with none,
to lift our voices and move our feet to support those in need.

Thanks be to God for the gift of Jesus, that we can answer his call to be his follower, as we serve others. Amen.

Readings: Matthew 16:21-28
 Exodus 3:1-15