

How shall you respond to God's gifts and Jesus' call?

Ephesians 4: 10-16 and John 6: 24-35

I want you to try, I am having trouble myself, imagining that one of the people behind me had said a few weeks ago, 'Oh I probably shouldn't sing. I should be quiet. I don't want to take any attention away from anyone else. Everyone else deserves some time in the spotlight so I just won't sing.' I know, it's very hard to imagine because when those voices sing and listen and pray together, if you are like me you can not help but pray with them. Marian Williamson has a quote that says, 'How dare you not take the spotlight. There is enough spotlight for all of us and we need you to take yours.'

The first sentence of our scripture is not 'I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, therefore beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling you may have received' or a life worthy of the calling to which you could be perhaps if you get another degree, called to...no. It says you are to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called. And yes, you are to live it trying to balance the humility of being open to the Spirit while also stepping into the spotlight when your community calls upon you. You are to share your talents while making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit and the body. This means sometimes backing up so someone else can step forward and sometimes it means stepping up when you are not quite sure you can. But each of us was given grace. It's a done deal. There is nothing you can do that can separate you from God and the gifts in you of the spirit, but we can stymie the spirit.

We each have our own inner voices that help us to stymie ourselves. Some of those voices are just plain old human voices. They call it the reptilian part of your brain; that's the part that freezes or runs and it was great when your ancestors were facing down a mammoth; however, usually at least when the choir stands to sing there is no mammoth and the body might say, 'Eek you should just freeze up', but we have other parts of our brain that say, 'Well actually, I'm not in danger. I am feeling fear, nervousness, anxious and I can continue being.' Now some of us also have unique voices in our heads. Many of us, no matter how our mother or father really talked to us in real life in the past, we have our mothers voice on speed dial and often it is not the things your mom said everyday like, 'I love you' or 'try your hardest and that would be good'.

No, I have things that my mom said once, on a bad day, but I recorded it and I play it. 'Oh, don't think too much of yourself', 'Oh, you'll never look good in that dress', 'Oh, I don't think you should do that.' Now again, my mother rarely said any of those things, but I recorded them and boy oh boy occasionally they get rolling in my mind. Right now, I am reading a book called 'The Happiness Trap' and I really recommend it. I don't usually recommend books that would find themselves on a self-help shelf, but what I love about this is that it's very practical. It doesn't say I can help you be better, it doesn't say I can make sure you never feel sad again. Instead it says, you are going to feel nervous, sad, fear, trembling and happiness. Everyday you will have at least 20 emotions and they will come and go and you don't always have to believe what you think. So my mind this morning said, well I don't know if that dress quite fits and I learned from this book to turn to my mind and say 'Thank you so much for your input.' and then I put on the dress that I wanted to wear today and I walked out the door, and so far the world has kept turning.

One of the beautiful pieces of scripture this morning talks about how we must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, their craftiness. Well one of the craftiest things we have in our lives is our own self doubt. We can trick ourselves sometimes. Or we can think about not taking on roll because it's never been done before; that's a great trick. The fear of change, the fear of being the first to do something in your family or in your church is nerve wracking and I will not tell you today to just not feel nervous, I will tell you, you will probably feel nervous and I invite you to use that nervousness the way we sometimes need to use anger. Use it as the energy to do the 'new'.

Yesterday at the wedding a groom came down the aisle with his mother, he then went back up the aisle and came down with his brides mother, and then I asked everyone to stand and everyone was very concerned because the father of the bride was in the front row and if the father of the bride is in the front row that means he is not with the bride, but that means she is going to walk alone and that means that, and then she was half-way down the aisle and we all realized that this woman had gotten herself through college, found a beautiful man to marry, worked very hard at pre-marriage counselling so they would be ready and her father was beaming because it had been his idea. She was the first of the family and it took us all that entire aisle length to process everything our minds were telling us: Oh, this shouldn't happen, well maybe it should happen, well I don't know, what do you think? Luckily, by the time she got to the front we had all said well thank you so much mind and were able to celebrate with her what that walk had meant for both her and for the marriage.

Deciphering your gift is not always easy harder still is when you know you are called to do something and you haven't learned how to yet. Someone who knows every time they go to fellowship they see the people in the kitchen handing out the coffee cups and they think that is so what I want to do, but I know I'll spill, I know I won't come early enough and that's why one of our jobs, all of us no matter our talents, is to work to equip the Saints. So, it is our work along with saying, I would like to volunteer for fellowship please. Our other job is to, as the fellowship team can, say 'Hi. Welcome. Let me walk you through what we do and then you can choose

what you would like to try today.’ Like, Janet knows not to give me a cup of hot liquid when I am in my alb (minister’s robe). It’s white, the hot liquid is black, it all goes badly. However, I might be able to cut up a cake or even just stand at the fellowship door and smile. This summer we have not one, not two, but three people reading scripture for the first time in this space and it is a blessing to all of us to hear their voices. It is frightening to equip the saints because that means that we sometimes must allow things to be imperfect because someone is trying out their gift and it’s not going to work out the first few times. A new choir member may end up mouthing the words the first time the choir sings in German because they have no idea how to do that. And Tammy-Jo doesn’t say, ‘Well, ughhh.’ Tammy-Jo says, ‘Mouth the words.’ Listen to the words on an iPad and come to every rehearsal and I promise; the next time we sing in German you are going to sing at least half of it if not more. Especially the “hgt” parts. Those are the best parts of a German song.

So, your role is to find that feeling you get when you are living out your dream and find out ways to put that into everything you do, and our other calling is to help people when they find that ‘Ah!’ to say ‘Ah, I see your gift. How can I help equip you?’, so that you know, and you will get through the fear and through the nervousness and the knocking of the knees and bless us. And when each of us takes those little steps to equip and to share, the Holy Spirit is unleashed. I am not sure how you see it from where you are sitting, but from the middle of our new pulpit hanging, can you see the Spirit coming out of the Word of God? That’s what happens when we share and when we equip. Thanks be to God.