

HEARTBEATS – Staying Connected 5/7/2021



*Goodbye to our
office secretary,
Julie.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Things will change a bit with these articles beginning next week. Part of the reason is Julie Gonzalez has left her position at St. Andrew as administrative assistant and partly because of shifting in how the office will operate as we move back toward the office being open more. Also, please be patient and gracious with the good volunteers who will be carrying out those office responsibilities until we are able to fill the administrative assistant position. The change in the Staying Connected articles is this: their will be just two each week (which is what we had during Lent). One will come as an email on Monday, and the second toward the end of the week as part of the Weekly Updates.

Leaving in the Bible is almost always ultimately about leaving the past—traditions, family control or influence, learned ways of thinking, and so on—for a meaningful, life-giving, Kingdom-guided relationship with God. Or not, because there are also many stories in the Bible of those who reject God’s call—the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, and those to whom the prophets spoke, and those who clung to the false gods of

their ancestors, and others. For the most part, however, the stories that the Bible raises up are about those who turn to God and find new purpose in serving God for the spread of God's Kingdom.

Perhaps the most obvious story of leaving for God is that of Jesus' twelve disciples, and particularly the call of the fishermen to "Come and follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." We are often surprised by those four fishers who left behind nets and family to follow Jesus. It may be helpful to understand the bigger picture of what that call was about for them.

For the Jews of Jesus' day, there was no greater calling than to be God's messenger or to guide God's people in their relationship with God. That's why the religious leaders and Pharisees carried so much sway with the people, both with respect to their faith practices but also in their political beliefs. Every mother hoped her son would grow up to be a rabbi or other such religious teacher. Many rabbis had their own rabbinic schools to teach students their yoke—the unique interpretation of each rabbi's understanding of Scripture.

A bit of an aside: Ever wonder what happened to Jesus for eighteen years, between the time His parents lost track of Him and then found Him in the Temple talking with the religious teachers, and then when He began His public ministry following His baptism? Well, every Jewish son at about age five or six was sent to the synagogue each day for a couple of years to memorize the first five books of the Moses—the first five books of the Bible. The ones who couldn't do it were dismissed to go home and learn the family trade. The ones who could, continued with their studies, starting about age eight memorizing the rest of Scripture—the rest of the Old Testament—for the next four or five years. Again, those who couldn't were sent home to learn the family trade. But those who could were then interviewed by rabbis who wanted to see if the child could grasp the rabbi's yoke. If the rabbi felt they could, they were invited to join the rabbi's school and learn from the rabbi. That study would take eighteen years and then, upon completion, the student would become a

rabbi himself. When Jesus at age twelve was in the Temple talking with the rabbis, I think He was being interviewed for and was subsequently invited into a rabbinic school. Eighteen years later, at age thirty, Jesus the rabbi is starting His own rabbinic school. So, He calls twelve to become part of His school and to learn His yoke of teaching. Remember, though, His “yoke is easy” and His “burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30). That yoke is simply about God’s love for everyone and God’s call to love one another. But Jesus chooses twelve who are working in trades like fishing, so they aren’t the very best students. They’re just average, like us. Yet Jesus chooses them, just like He chooses us.

Now they twelve had probably already heard Jesus’ teaching before He called them, so they are somewhat familiar with what He has to say about God. He wasn’t completely unknown to them when He extended the call to follow. And when that call came—the opportunity to join a rabbinic school and study with a rabbi—these average, not-the-best-students, working-in-the-trades fellows dropped everything and followed Him. And in doing so, they left behind what they had known, what was familiar, even family, to go and study about God, and have a leading role in God’s Kingdom. Again, they weren’t the smartest, or the top of the class, or the cream of the crop. They were average—like most of us. Yet these were the ones that Jesus called to carry His yoke, to teach about God’s love, and to serve in the Kingdom of God.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey