

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/19/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

The beginning of Epiphany features gospel readings of the calling of the first disciples. These narratives may challenge us to think about what we would give up to fully follow JESUS. The first disciples left jobs, homes, and families to learn from HIM as HE traveled from place to place. It's hard to imagine doing such a thing today.

From time to time, though, we may be asked to serve the LORD in some specific way, often in or through the church. For many, these invitations to ministry also create dilemmas about our desire and willingness to follow JESUS into service. Each of us may find ourselves struggling with whether or not we can or should agree to take on some new tasks in JESUS' name. Frequently the reason for hesitation when asked is a sense of our own weakness.

We know our limitations. We are pretty confident of what we can or cannot do. This includes an awareness of what we have done in the past and consideration of what we might be able to do in the future. We know our strengths and we know our weaknesses. And it is those weaknesses that hold us back from saying, "Yes," when called upon.

There is a flaw in that thinking, however. We overlook a key factor that can make a significant difference in our ability to serve. We make the mistake of thinking that any service we do is on us...alone. First, we neglect to recognize that others will help us and train us in our new calling. Of course, there are times when we might be invited or feel called to start a new ministry. But more often, the work to which we are tasked has already been done by others who will help us to learn and grow in this new effort. We are not alone.

Second, though, and more importantly, we have GOD. II Corinthians tells us of a mystery GOD promises whenever we seek to contribute to GOD's vision for GOD's Kingdom. Verse 12:9 GOD says, "*MY grace is sufficient for you, for MY power is made perfect in weakness.*" GOD's gracious support to us is shown more fully by what we do in our weakness because of the strength that GOD provides. That's why Paul continues, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that CHRIST's power may rest on me...For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Our willingness to serve in the midst of and despite our weaknesses are occasions for GOD's strength to be demonstrated as GOD allows and empowers us to do what we are sure we could not do otherwise. More than this, those times when we offer our service knowing our weaknesses, we are showing our faith in the GOD who promises to give us strength beyond what we could do alone. And this, in turn, will cause us to grow in faith and in our willingness to try and do even greater things.

Our greatest mistake in life is overlooking what GOD has to offer. GOD promises to walk with us and grant us what we need so that we can do tremendous things for GOD's Kingdom. It is only when we fail to trust when GOD calls that we are truly weak. Our failure is that we have rejected GOD's promise that when we are weak, GOD is strong.

In CHRIST's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey