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**The Second Sunday after Epiphany  
John 1:29-41 3 Epiphany A 2010  
The Rev. Stephanie E. Parker**

**Come and See**

Today we are reminded of what it means to be called; in modern parlance we might say we are invited to discover our purpose in life. I think we all ask, at some point, "Why am I here?" What is my unique contribution to the world---do I *have* a unique contribution to offer the world?" And in answer to our questions, Jesus says, "Come and See."

Now, if we take a certain stance as we look at the world, it may seem as if the world has become a selfish place full of selfish people who care only for their own needs. But don't be fooled.

We are a people created by a selfless God---a God who called us before we were born and named us while we were still in our mother's womb. We human beings long to connect beyond ourselves. It is in God's great design. We are hard wired for meaning and purpose that lies beyond our own needs and desires.

Hearing God's call and following Christ is how that yearning is met and focused. We are all called---each and every one of us---is this morning the first time you've been in church for years? Well you might not realize it yet, but you are called too. Do you feel like you have you not yet identified your call? Well simply start thinking and praying about it and it will come because I promise you it is already there within you. Those who will allow themselves to hear this call discover that in fact Jesus calls out the very best in all of us.

Where ever we are along life's journey, just as he did with those first disciples, Jesus asks us, "What are you looking for?" Here we are standing in the midst of very ordinary and incredibly flawed lives and quietly comes the question, "What are you looking for?"

Who me? I don't know, but where are you staying? Jesus' outwardly simple question seems to strike at that core need that we have for making meaning. Jesus taps into something very deep within us; he calls forth our deepest desires.

Hearing this call enables us to do what we do not think is possible. These early disciples were fishermen and tax collectors—a motley assortment of individuals who hardly seemed destined to help change the world forever. But Jesus showed them that they could be more than they ever dreamed or imagined.

And “being more” didn't mean having more, making more or knowing more. It simply meant following Jesus, learning from him by being with him, by staying where he stays.

To stay and remain with Jesus means to discover precisely who God formed us to be—to be liberated from all the ways the world might tell us we don't measure up or that we have nothing to offer.

In a world that often isolates us from one another Jesus' call brings us into the very heart of community and belonging. Jesus does not call us to a life of realized individualism. Jesus teaches us that we are at our best when we seek to help and serve one another.

The beauty and the mystery of God's call is that in its truest incarnation it places us among others who can see our potential--- even when we cannot. The very essence of knowing Jesus and thus discovering who we are happens in the midst of community.

It can and has been said that the *only* way to really know Jesus requires community—for it is within the church, the Body of Christ, that the story of Jesus is told, that Jesus' story gets up and walks around, and eventually makes its way out into the world where it really belongs.<sup>1</sup>

Knowing Jesus in this way is essential to discovering how our lives are given purpose and meaning and how that purpose and meaning can lead us back out into the world as partners in Christ's liberating life.

Often we think that unless we have been called to be the next Mother Teresa or give up our lives and move to a third world country, or are called to ordained ministry in the church, that we haven't truly been called at all.

But when we look at these early disciples we see that their call did not suddenly turn them into philosophers or scholars or anything they were not before--- it simply amplified the best of what they were and called them into something bigger than themselves.

We can see that for Jesus who and what they were to begin with was plenty. His call simply bound them together as a community and focused their lives in a way that the fullness of who they *already were* could be realized and shared with the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Andrews

You see this is true power of Jesus' call. When we follow and remain with Jesus we get a clear sense of purpose that taps into who *we* already are. Jesus' call invites us into deep imagination and helps us to see how our ordinary lives are in fact quite extraordinary when we wed ourselves to God's vision and hope for us as a people.

When we become yoked to God's purposes in this way we are freed from the things that would keep us thinking that a lawyer, a high school student or government employee has nothing significant to offer as ministry and we gain the courage to claim *our* purpose in the world.

As we recognize that we are in fact called by God no matter what our stage of life or profession, then everything we do both in and out of the Church becomes far more than simple *service*, it is then that our whole lives become an offering to God.

And not in some preachy, obnoxious way, but in a deeply internalized way that means that even if the people we might meet have no idea that we are "church folk" they would sense and be drawn by a true integrity and hopefulness in our company.

And I'll say it again, we are *all* called. And often the greatest obstacle to hearing and living out our call is fear. Fear takes many forms. There is fear of being different. Fear of rejection. Fear that we have to offer is not good enough. Fear of failure.

But I think that in our heart of hearts, we all long for the courage to live the way those early lived. We want to live out our call with abandon, without regard for the costs. Our call is compelling because it comes from God and when we live it out, we tap into the wonder and power of God.

And a community of people who are in touch with who they are and who are endeavoring to make God's purpose alive in the world is a beautiful thing to behold. When all that a faith community does together flows out of a shared sense of purpose--- the sky is the limit!

I think that the church of St. Stephens has everything it needs to be just such a community of faith. We have so many wonderful things going on. We are a community with growing life and vitality.

We are not a perfect community by any means---there is no such thing, but I'm told time and again that people are feeling a new energy when they walk in the door. And there is no one person or one program that is making this so---it *is us*---all of us together, receiving that rare and wonderful gift, a new beginning!

In our common life of worship and thanksgiving I believe that together we can put flesh and bone and sinew on our desire to be a vibrant and growing people of God.

It is out of the vibrant and exuberant embrace found in being a member of a *truly connected* community of faith we can face the traumas in this world without losing hope. And in turn we can share that exuberant hope with others.

Empowered by God we can put action to our hopes and dreams for a better world and we can rise Sunday after Sunday as the resurrected Body of Christ and go back out into Seattle as doers of God's peace, compassion, and love. →

United in common purpose and called by God, each and every one of us, the strength we gain in this community gives us everything we need to transform the world we occupy day to day. In our homes, our offices, our schools---all of our ordinary daily routines can take on new dimension and depth when we move through them as people of God.

In the midst of a sometimes crazy and isolating world, we all have one another--- and we have the promises of Christ!

And he is still inviting each and every one of us to come and see. Amen.

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