

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany
January 26, 2014
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Waiting and Hoping

So much of life is waiting and, then, hoping. What are you waiting for on this day? What are you hoping for? Of course many, especially in Denver and Seattle, are waiting for next Sunday's Super Bowl and hoping their team wins. Our youth group has put up signs all over our building reminding us that they are waiting for us to buy Hoagies and they hope for record sales! I'm waiting for our Annual Meeting later this morning and hoping that all who stand for Vestry election know how much we appreciate their willingness to serve.

In our liturgical year and cycle of Gospel readings for today, we see Jesus waiting to begin his ministry and hoping for others to join him as disciples. We would like to know so much more about Jesus' life. We celebrate his birth, his baptism and now his entry into active ministry, but what of all those other years? What did Jesus wait and hope for? Probably, just like most of us, he waited for some clarity about the future. And he hoped he could find the strength and courage to answer God's call, wherever the call would lead.

Most scholars believe that two events finally pushed Jesus to leave home, go to Capernaum and begin his teaching and preaching. First was the death of Joseph, Jesus' earthly father. As the first and oldest child, Jesus waited for others to care for Mary. Luke tells us that Jesus did not begin his ministry until he was 30 years old. He didn't leave home until he was 30!

We can understand the years Jesus spent in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and his younger brothers and sisters. Jesus learned his trade from his father, the carpenter. Yet Jesus had to wait and hope for his true vocation – preaching and teaching – to begin. It took him a while before he could start.

John the Baptist's arrest was the second event that pushed Jesus into leaving home and starting his ministry. Jesus had been baptized by John. He knew John's courage. Jesus had gone back home to Nazareth after his baptism. He waited and hoped for God's signs to show him the way forward.

We do not know how long Jesus was in Capernaum before he saw Peter and Andrew again. We assume he remembered them from the baptisms in Judea. We assume Jesus found them working for their father and asked them to join in the mission. So, too, he asked the other set of brothers, James and John. It does not seem to take these four very long to leave everything and follow Jesus. It makes me think of our process of discernment, the long journey so many take to serve in ordained ministry, yet lay. And, also the long process that others take to find their professions. It can take a very long time to figure out what God asks of us and how we should respond to God's call.

Fishermen seem to be perfectly suited as the first disciples. The biblical scholar, William Barclay, thinks fishermen had the personalities to follow Jesus and help with the mission. He lists six characteristics of fishermen that would serve them well as they proclaimed the Good News of God in Christ Jesus:

1. Patience – wait and hope for the glory of God to be revealed.
2. Perseverance – never give up. There is more possible.
3. Courage – remember the old saying, “My boat is so small and the sea is so large...”
Take risks for the faith.
4. Know the right moment – timing is everything.
5. “Fit the bait to catch the fish”... what is going to work – go with what works.
6. Keep out of sight...don’t scare off the fish – How can we work in the background to help others see God’s love in Christ?

So we are always waiting and hoping, like those who fish. We know Jesus is with us to help us to persevere and to be active as we wait and hope. We don’t sit still. We are on the move – doing mission – answering the call as we wait and hope all through life.

That is the story of the Church; this is our story at Grace for the last 159 years. We press on, trying to be faithful disciples. There will be “*no gloom*” here – Just a “*great light.*” Jesus helps us to proclaim, to live the “Good News.” So now it’s time for us to go fishing.

Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:1, 5-11
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23