

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 20th 2017

We've all seen children who "don't hear" when their parents call to them. A summons from the next room to come to dinner isn't always heard by a child absorbed in a game. Our teenage son (who often has perfectly normal hearing) sometimes becomes suddenly deaf when when my husband or I interrupt his watching TV to have him clean his room or put away his clothes.

Today's gospel tells us about Jesus calling his apostles. "He summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him." There are two sides to this call: Jesus summoned; they came to him. He calls us, but we have to respond to him. If we ignore that call from him, we can't have the relationship Jesus wants with us so much.

But what is it that keeps us from sometimes "hearing" that call from Jesus? Has my life become so filled with work that I am not aware? Am I so worried about events or honors that I ignore Jesus? Do I worry more about my own reputation than living the gospel life?

I don't always respond because I get busy with my life - and I unconsciously think my "real life" is somehow separate from the life to which Jesus is calling me. But this is the life Jesus calls us to - the life we are leading today. We can ask ourselves: how am I different today because I am a follower of Jesus? Is there someone without dignity that I can recognize today? Is there a person I will meet who needs my kindness? Is there a place I can stand up for justice even though I might be ridiculed? Have I thought about the poor today and what my role is with the poor? Have I prayed today?

Among those in the gospel Jesus beckoned to come closer to him were some of his closest friends - including those he bestowed with playful nicknames, like the Sons of Thunder. But we can't say that we are not worthy to be called. He also called Judas "who betrayed him." Every one of us who are called by Jesus will betray him at times, but he continues to ask for us. Over and over he says our name, holds out his arms in welcome and loves us beyond measure, despite the ways we ignore him. He loves us in ways we can't understand with a love so different than ours. He doesn't have the long, bitter and unforgiving memories that enable us to hold grudges. He doesn't wait for us to "earn" our place in his heart. He simply loves us and accepts us for who we are.

Today we can be alert. We can pay attention. Can we hear his call? Can we feel his love? How is our life different today because we are his followers?

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