Callings – Invitations to Trust

Beloved community: I invite us to be together in a spirit of prayer. Holy Loving Spirit, we thank you for the freedom to gather today on our live stream and on this land – loved by the Wahpekute Dakota and others throughout time. **We trust your presence with us now as we wonder about how you are calling us through invitations to trust.** We pray all of this as disciples of our great teacher, Jesus. Amen.

The word vocation comes from its Latin root, *vocare* – to call or to call forth. And theologian Frederick Buechener explained vocation as *"the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."*

Internal and external aspects of calling are important. The internal call is a deeply personal, inner sense of being drawn toward something. The external call is a recognition and naming of a gift or aptitude by one's community. Both internal and external voices can be channels for God's love – inviting us into something more.

Today, as we consider the call story of Moses, we might recognize **deeper trust** as the 'something more' to which God invited Moses. If Moses were to respond to the call (the invitation, the draw) to lead his people out of enslavement, he would need trust in spades – trust in God's presence within him, trust in himself, and trust in his neighbors.

During my early and mid 20s, I worked in outdoor ministry – in camp and retreat settings. In one of those spaces, someone once named aloud that, when it comes to discerning and responding to God's call in our lives, **it can be as much or more about our availability as it is about our ability.**

Last month, we considered how a posture of openness is fundamental to the practice of hospitality. I have experienced that a posture of openness is also essential to being available to respond to a calling – which may have been kindling within us for a while and then finally pops to the surfaces through what I call a holy interruption.

Moses was going about routine tasks of his daily work when something caught his eye and stopped him in his tracks. A bush appeared to be on fire. *"I must turn aside and look,"* Moses said to himself (and possibly out loud to his sheep companions).

We, too, experience holy interruptions from time to time. God's voice may not sound like an angelic messenger or look like a bush on fire. We might be stopped in our tracks by a word spoken softly by a voice we hear every day. Yet maybe we are available to listen in a new way to that loved one – with deeper attention.

God's face might not look like a bush on fire. We might be stopped in our tracks by the beauty of a living growing thing (a person, other animal, or plant) that we assumed we had appreciated but now find we can pause and see it in a new way – with deeper attention to what makes that one beautiful.

When we experience a holy interruption, we might do well to assume God's command was not just for our mythical ancestor in faith, Moses, but also for us: *"Remove the sandals from your feet,"* the voice of God speaks into the moment, *"for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."* In other words, fully pause in this moment of holy interruption. Let your senses take in everything about it. Slow your pace. Quiet your mind. And breathe.

Here is a moment we have often remembered about this story of Moses and the burning bush. Having listened to the nudge of the Holy Spirit telling him that he will be the one to lead his people out of bondage, the core question of his life surfaces – *"Who am I?"*

"Who am I," the shepherd asks, *"that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"* At first brush, we may hear only hesitancy, lack of self-confidence, and doubt in Moses' question. We might assume that he is frightened by the idea of confronting the authoritarian ruler of the land. Sound familiar?

If we look at him more closely, we will notice the truth that brought Moses' question of identity and vocation bubbling to the surface. He and we heard God's voice of truth in these words: *"The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them."*

The cries of his people and the oppressive actions of the Egyptian overseers touched a wound in Moses that may have been healing but was still tender enough to be open to the call. The people's pain resonated with Moses' own pain.

Let's remember how Moses arrived to this wilderness moment. When he was born, it was a time of Pharaoh seeking to kill all of the young boys of the Israelite people so that no one could rise up against him. So Moses' mother ripped him from her chest and put him in a basket in a river, hoping that his fate would be ok. Then Pharaoh's daughter found him floating in the river and raised him in the courts of Pharaoh – the center of power.

Fast forward a couple of decades and he was out in the fields as the Israelite son of the Pharaoh's daughter and witnesses an overseer brutalizing one of the enslaved people. And his wounds and his rage got the best of him and he killed that overseer. Then he ran into hiding. That's what came of the whole person before the moment of the burning bush.

From his wounds, Moses rose up to say 'yes!' God's call to bring healing power to the wounds of others. I wonder how you can bring healing power to the wounds of others from your own wounds.

I'd like to share that, yesterday, I lived the morning at a democracy revival of lay leaders and pastors from a number of churches in St. Paul and the east metro. We were at Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Paul. I know that I will work alongside and on behalf of people who need access. And that is because – many of you may not know this – I grew up in a setting with part-time self-employed parents who paid out the ear to have insurance to ensure the health care of their children and themselves. I had that benefit until I started a first professional job at age 22, I think, and then I had private insurance to cover me as a young adult through all my various professional jobs. And then I had Sam twelve years ago. Sam has an ultra-rare, life-limiting syndrome. When he was born, our society said, 'here, have this medical assistance policy, because you will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars every year and we as a society will pay for that. Sure, I have the privilege of employment with major medical insurance as well (which can say no to whatever it wants to say no to). But my child lives in two home and his parents never have to worry about the financial stress of the hundreds of thousands of dollar of medical bills each year.

That is a huge, huge source of uplift and part of the justice that a society can create together. And so I will work. Although we elect some people who would try to hurt and kill my child in taking that health care away from him, I will work alongside others for access not only to healthcare but o employment opportunities, to dignified housing, to so many forms of justice that we all need.

Let's turn for a moment to the contemporary reading for today - "The Whole of a Person" by Kate Lore. *"I was raised to look for light,"* the poet shared, *"And there is wisdom in that. But age has taught me that goodness is never the whole story… We are all mixtures."*

I love how she shares that, with maturity, we hopefully develop relational generosity that creates and holds space for the whole of each person. Do you hold space for what could surface from within another – their anxiety, their insecurity, their unsteadiness, a wound?

I was struck by these words from Kate Lore: *"Time, trust and hope are precious."* How very true for the creation of relationships.

And, again, she says, *"I catch a glimpse of someone's goodness and mistake it for the whole of them."* She is calling us to seek more depth in our interactions and our relationships with one another.

"Why do I keep wanting the light to be enough?" Enough for what, our Connecting With The Word group asked ourselves on Wednesday? Enough to fuel a meaningful connection. Enough for getting to know and care for another. May we do so within our personal relationships and as we interface with our society as a whole.

Let us be ready for callings that are invitation to trust. Trust in what? Trust in whom? *"I am who I am… I will be with you,"* that divine, empowering mystery tells us. May the love of God empower us on the journey. Amen.

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St. Croix United Church (Bayport, MN)
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Exodus 3:1-14, "The Whole of a Person"