

January 14, 2024
Second Sunday after Epiphany

Meditation: "Called"

What was that sound? George wondered. His cellphone vibrating on the bedside table. He hated being woken by it. He hated being on call. But he had to take his turn like the others, and he didn't often get a call waking him. He swung his legs over the side of the bed and sat up. He didn't feel well. He reached for the phone and dialed. Hello, Dr. Boyle, it's George. I've been called in to work but I don't feel well. The symptoms? I feel light headed, like I'm going to faint, and my stomach is aching and growling. Well now that you mention it, I haven't eaten since lunch yesterday. You're right, I'm probably just hungry.... But I can't eat. Call the dentist? Yes, you're right.

Hello, Dr. Kelly, it's George. I got called into work and I don't feel well and I called Dr. Boyle and he suggested that because I can't eat that I call you. No, I don't have any pain in my teeth or gums. No, everything's fine. Well, I can't eat because I can't get dressed and I can't go to the kitchen naked, I mean, the neighbours could see in and what would they think of me wandering around naked? Of course, I shouldn't have bothered you in the middle of the night. I should call my tailor.

Hello, Mr. Zitounis, it's George. I got called into work and I'm not feeling well, so I called my Dr. He suggested that since I was having trouble eating that I call my dentist. When he found out that I was naked, he suggested that I call you. No, I have plenty of clothes in my closet. Well, the reason I'm naked is because I can't shower, and I can't get dressed when I stink of yesterday's sweat. Call the plumber? Of course, why didn't I think of that. Sorry to wake you.

Hello, Mr. Smith, it's George. I got called into work and I'm having problems. I'm not feeling well because I can't eat because I'm naked because I can't shower and Mr. Zitounis, my tailor, suggested I call you. No, there's plenty of water coming out of the tap. No, there's no leak. The problem? The water's cold. I can't get any hot water. The hot water tank? It's electric. I see, you think I should call the electrician? Sorry to have bothered you.

Hello, Mr. Jones, it's George. I'm having problems. I can't shower because the hot water tank is not working and my plumber suggested I call you since it the tank is an electric one. Check the fuse box? I can't see a thing in the basement. Turn on a light? I can't, the power is out. Now, Mr. Jones, there's no need to use that kind of language, I mean, just because it's three in the morning. You're right, I should call Hydro and report the power outage. But I work for Hydro. I've been called out to fix a local outage, but I can't go because I'm not feeling well. Call the doctor? I'll try that.

We call people all of the time. We know what people do and we call the people who have the skills to help us with what we need. We don't call the plumber when we are ill. We don't call the doctor when we are naked. We don't call the tailor for electrical problems. We don't call the dentist when our plumbing doesn't work. We call people who can do what we need help with. The same is true with God. Now God doesn't just know what we do, but God

knows us deeply, intimately. As the psalmist wrote, God knit us together in the womb, God discerns our thoughts, God knows what we will say before the word is even on our tongues. God knows our hearts and our minds. God knows us better than we know ourselves. So when God calls, God is sure that the right person is being called.

Over the years I've learned a thing or three about calls. One thing that God calls us to is to leave our comfort zone. I'm sure Nathanael would much rather have continued resting under that tree than get up and follow Phillip. In 2020 we were called to leave our buildings and to reimagine worship while maintaining physical distancing. It was difficult. We all had to learn something new. I can't imagine how difficult it was for the Jews to reimagine their worship when the Romans demolished the second temple in the year 70 C.E. After all, they didn't have zoom or smartphones or tablets or computers or an internet.

Another thing about calls is that, in leaving our comfort zone, they are a call away from the status quo, a call to something new. Nathanael was called to see someone he had never met before; Jesus. With God, we are constantly on the cusp of something new. The only certainty with God is that there will be change. Things will not always go the way we want them to go. There will be challenges. There will be sacrifices. There will be learning and growing and adapting and adjusting along the way. There will also be advantages and new opportunities. How exciting!

When God needed someone to lead the people out of bondage in Egypt, God called Moses, a murderer who fled to the wilderness of Sinai. When God needed someone to slay the giant Goliath, God called David, a shepherd boy. When God needed someone to anoint Kings, God called Samuel, a servant boy in the service of the priest Eli. When God needed prophets to speak to the Israelites, God called Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, Hosea and Malachi. When Jesus needed disciples, he called Andrew and Simon who is called Peter, and Phillip, who in turn called Nathanael, who, at least initially, was a skeptic.

God calls the unlikeliest of people: murderers, those with speech impediments, the second born, boys, servants, the unwilling, skeptics. And the strangest thing happened. They all responded to their call. Phillip and Nathanael followed Jesus, and learned from him, for that is what disciples do. And when Jesus needed apostles, people who would go take Jesus' teachings to the world, he called Paul. And Paul called others, who called still others, and so on and so forth, until someone called you! That's right, ultimately God calls everyone, even me, even you. The God who knows your innermost thoughts and feelings has called you. Called you to learn God's ways and to take the promise of God's eternal kingdom of justice and peace to the world.

The question is, how will you respond?