

A Beckoning

Wayne Waibel – 01/25/2026

It's hard for us to imagine how someone could deliberately drop everything, including family and livelihood, and embark on a call to adventure. That is essentially what Jesus is asking of Peter, Andrew, James, and John as He beckons them to follow Him.

But in a sense, that is precisely what we are doing when we baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are calling the baptized into the immersive life ordained to us as followers of Jesus Christ. It is of no less a calling than the original disciples.

Although the typical infant is not being asked to literally forsake all creature comforts in the pursuit of the great adventure a life in Christ may involve, there is a beckoning. And it will follow the child all the days of their life.

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The trajectory of Christ's public ministry begins on the road to Galilee, the land of the Gentiles. The good news of the gospel is to be proclaimed in the land of the unclean and the very poor of the world. As much because that has been God's intent from the beginning, as the children of Israel are not seeking the kind of Messiah that Jesus embodies.

He is not a warrior king sent to vanquish imperial Rome for the oppressed and brutalized. His mission, and His ministry is driven by an entirely radical concept. You want to vanquish your foe? Love your enemy. It is of little wonder that Jesus' methods of recruitment follow the same radical dynamic.

Nobody asked how much they were getting paid, or where they were to call home, or even if they could first bid their families farewell. They threw down their nets and followed. How utterly profound this Jesus must have been.

Paul, on the other hand, was dealing with an entirely different sort of calling in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth. These people were fractured into different cliques based on who had officiated at their baptism. We do this all the time as humans – try to find the points of contention. And if none are readily available, we find a way to manufacture them.

The problem of division is quite intentional. If no clear markers are available that orient demarcation between segments of a society – the learned and powerful members of that society take it upon themselves to define the lines – hold the lines – then broaden the spaces between them.

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That's how you arrive at the state we are in now as a culture. Being governed by those who would intentionally waste our time and our resources in pursuit of expanding that which divides us.

While that sentiment is uncomfortable to hear, I don't apologize for the expression, as a church that joins hands with empire or remains silent in the face of it runs precariously close to being complicit with it. Even in times of solid faith and confident hope, the problems of life do not disappear.

We do assume some personal risk in following God. That point gets driven home hard when it comes to being called. Jesus expects us to do no less than He in the proclamation that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Not down the road. Not on the horizon. It is here and it shall prevail over all. And that kingdom is for all. No exceptions. No exclusions. It is He who hath made us, and not we ourselves.

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God's saving love is not in human wisdom, but in the cross of Christ. Though it is not untrue to say that Jesus came to earth to die, it is truer to say that He came first to live. His death takes on its true significance only in connection with that for which He lived and proclaimed – God's Kingdom.

It's far too easy for us to interpret that proclamation as a prophetic message, when in reality it has always been and continues to be a contemporary message. One that rings as true on this day as it did two thousand years ago.

And the callings that issue forth from that proclamation have changed very little over time. Occasionally the message gets a little distorted in translation, but that's only because Christ alone was able to remove "self" from the equation – allowing for the more perfect emphasis.

Deliverance of the oppressed from bondage, the true meaning of the gospel, is the work of the Lord. Jesus seeks out followers who do not have to qualify for such a relationship, save the willingness to lay down everything else, and follow Him.

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I'm choosing to believe that this land of the free is slowly being transformed into the home of the enlightened. The calling of our Lord is being heeded again and again by those who are learning just how capable they are of laying down everything, that they may fully engage in a sincere response to that calling.

And the family of faith in this place continues to defy convention and remain a vibrant outreaching beacon of hope in a very troubled world. Of this you may be quite certain. In the shadows of empire, God is at work in the world bringing about salvation through the restoration of a compassionate order of justice. Amen.