

Sermon on Luke 1: 46-55

The Blessed Virgin Mary – August 14th 2016

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If you tried to summarize the entire Bible into one sentence, what would it be? I once heard someone say “God in search of humanity.”

They claimed that the entire Bible is a record of God’s search for the lost, continually calling his people to Him. Calling is an interesting term to use.

When we think of God calling people, we may think of Abraham, Moses, David and others whom God called into his service.

Today, I would like to explore three calls in particular.

The first is the call of Moses.

When God called Moses, the Israelites had been enslaved for over four hundred years. Yet even in the midst of their despair, their trials, and their sufferings, God did not forget his people and chose Moses to deliver his people from the bonds of the Egyptians.

Yet how did God call Moses?

One day, while tending his father-in-law’s sheep, God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush and called him to deliver his people.

Yet Moses, even though he saw the miracle before him, was reluctant. Moses did not listen to God at first. He tried to evade God’s call to him.

Moses told God that he was incapable of accomplishing the task God had for him and to that God responded, “I will be with you.”

Again, Moses tried to evade God’s call by saying that the Israelites would not believe him.

To that God allowed Moses to perform signs as proof—the ability to turn his staff into a snake, to turn his hand leprous, and to make the water of the Nile turn to blood.”

Even still, Moses tried to evade God’s call by saying that he was not eloquent and that he was “slow of speech and slow of tongue.” In other words, Moses, the greatest prophet of the Old Testament had a speech impediment.

To that, God told Moses that he would give him the words to speak to Pharaoh and even allowed Moses to bring along his brother Aaron.

Finally, Moses relented and accepted God's call. Can you hear anything of yourself in that story? Saying to God, I know someone has to do it, but please send someone else!

While God's call to Moses was quite dramatic and came to Moses when he was about eighty years old, the second one I want to speak about is quite different from the first and concerns a small boy.

Samuel had been brought to the temple when he was still a child by his mother, Hannah. She had dedicated her son to the Lord and entrusted Samuel to Eli, the priest.

One evening, when Samuel was twelve years old, and both he and Eli were sleeping in their rooms, the Lord called out to Samuel by saying, "Samuel! Samuel!" Thinking that Eli, the priest had called him, Samuel ran into Eli's room and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Eli said to Samuel, "I did not call you, lie down again." So Samuel returned and lay down.

The Lord then called again, "Samuel!" Samuel then got up, and went to Eli again and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, I did not call, my son; lie down again." The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. Again, for a third time, Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me."

When Samuel came for a third time, Eli perceived that it was God who was calling Samuel. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' "

So Samuel went again and lay down in his place. For a fourth time, the Lord returned again and called "Samuel! Samuel!".

This time, Samuel responded, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Samuel responded to God's call and God revealed Himself to Samuel.

Can you recognise something of yourself in that story? God speaking to you repeatedly and perhaps you could not quite believe that it was God speaking? Wondering if you ignore Him long enough he might go away?

The third call, that of Mary, is indeed the calling of all callings.

It could be said that there is no other call in the entire history of the human race as great as this, and there is no response which impacted the fate of the human race as much as this response.

Recorded in the gospel of St. Luke, we hear how the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth. There, the angel Gabriel was sent to a young girl who was probably in her early teens whose name was Mary.

When the angel appeared to Mary he said to her, "Hail, favoured one! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David."

Yet unlike Moses, Mary did not try to evade God's call. Unlike Moses, she did not ask the Lord to choose another. Unlike Samuel, she was not confused as to who was calling her.

No, on the contrary, Mary responded simply, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Today we celebrate the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is through the call and response of one girl that all humanity has the opportunity to know God and to know his love for all people. And this day serves to remind us that God has called us as well.

These three stories show that God calls people just as they are and just where they are.

God does not care about your age.

You could be as old as Moses or as young as Samuel?

Male or female.

It makes no difference.

God calls each one of us.

Regardless of our race, talents, poverty, our wealth.

God calls us regardless of our strengths, regardless of our weaknesses.

As we heard, the way God calls individuals is varied, yet the call is always personal.

On very rare occasions, this is done in a dramatic way as it was to Moses and Mary. More often than not, however, God comes as he did to Samuel. In a quiet whisper.

We sing the hymn "be still and know that I am God."

No matter how God reveals himself, the calling is one and the same. God calls us to serve him. A calling as great as that of Moses, as persistent as that of Samuel, or as profound as that of Mary's.
So, what do we do now?

There is only one response to God's call. Open up our hearts and allow God to enter and to use us as we are to do his will. Praying earnestly and honestly, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

We wait for that still small voice to reveal his will for our lives.

Amen.