

## Lenten Devotional February 20, 2024

### Scripture

#### Mark 1:14-28

*14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

*16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea - for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.*

*21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.*

### Devotion

#### The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey D. Sterling '88/'98

I just love call stories! We United Methodists “walk” part of our early journey into ordained ministry as part of a “provisional class” of ministerial candidates with whom we share retreats and training events, so we get to know each other well. And we share our call stories with each other, which is one of the joys of this experience.

Today’s text includes the call stories of Simon, Andrew, James and John. Jesus made it simple for them: “Follow me . . .” and they made their decision. Most of the call stories in my provisional class were not that simple! Some germinated during a crisis, or even a tragedy, of some sort. Others were joyous, occurring during a “mountaintop” experience. Many were multi-faceted and drawn out over a considerable time of “give and take” with the Holy Spirit’s tug.

Lent is a wonderful time to examine or revisit YOUR call story, whether lay or clergy. We are wise to also note that we may have multiple “calls” from God, and to varying ministries or tasks, even within our broader call that got us to our current place in ministry. I am reminded of a line from one of Woody Allen’s movies: “My God, my God, what has thou done LATELY?” All call stories are not permanent; they may have a shelf-life. A good Lenten question for reflection: What is God calling me to do TODAY?

The latter part of today’s text demonstrates for his new followers what Jesus’ call was to: speaking forth God’s word with authority; disarming evil; healing the afflicted; rebuilding lives; and facing the unknown

with the confidence of God's abiding presence. They quickly knew what they were in for, and so should we!

All of God's call stories should have a happy ending, as will our Lenten journey!

### **Prayer**

O God, I've heard your call, and I hear you calling! Give me ears to continually hear the freshness of your call, and courage to act decisively and boldly on where it leads me. As I "drop my nets" and follow you, walk with me, empowering me and comforting me with your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.