

Sunday, September 14, 2014
Rekindling Our Passion – Jesus’ Calling, Our Calling
John 5: 16-20; John 12: 44-45; Luke 4: 14-21; Mark 1: 1-8

This past weekend I was with St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship and the energy of this community was almost overwhelming.

Over 20 children were there under the age of 12 and they kept things hopping.

One person with whom I ended up connecting with quite a bit over the weekend, commented that he wished he had a way to tap their energy for himself
– the kids just never slowed down.

Often, when we age, life slows down or if it does not slow down, we get slower as life races on all around us
– and in our trying to keep up we inevitably tire.

The same can happen with our Christian discipleship, our walking with Jesus.

When we’ve been at this for a while, we too can tire
– and the warning of the apostle Paul in Galatians 6:9 “do not become weary in doing good” becomes descriptive of us
– as we indeed do become weary.

But we are not unique.

It has been noted that “human beings have a remarkable and sad capacity for getting tired of wonderful things.”
(Piper, August 1983).

We can all think of times when we began with enthusiasm, but then the joy faded.

It could have been on vacation
– the first days wonderful, but by the end, ready to go home, the setting that once took your breath away no longer does.

“Millionaires get tired of money, kids get tired of toys, and [followers of Christ] get tired of doing good”
(Piper).

You used to enjoy participating on the Worship Design team or the Christian Formation team, but now you have grown weary of well-doing.

You’ve served at Waukegan on Wednesday nights, or served with PADS, or gleaned, or taught Sunday School or led youth, but now the thrill is gone
– it’s now a duty, a chore
– you have grown weary in well doing.

And no matter how much we hear Paul express to us in Romans 12:11, “never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” we find it difficult to live out.

And that is perhaps a good place to be

- if we are to become a people filled with the passion of Jesus,
- open to the Spirit of God in joining in with what God is bringing about in our world.

A good place to be

- because we come to a place of not it being about what energy we can drum up from God, **but become dependent upon God to work in us and through us.**

That is the focus of our series on Rekindling Our Passion

- ministry will fail,
- zeal will fail,
- if it is dependent upon our limited store of energy.

Instead, our passion for ministry can only flourish when we find ourselves completely dependent upon the Spirit of God

- leading us and motivating us,
- filling us and energizing us to co-act with God in this world.

Our first focus today is upon Jesus and the call upon his life

- for in so doing we come to rediscover God's call upon our lives.

From the Scriptures that were read, we hear emphatically that Jesus did not have a ministry of his own

- he set out to say and do only what he heard his Father say and do.

“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” John 5:19

Jesus was about doing what God was doing and intended to continue doing in restoring and re-creating humanity and the systems of our world

- Jesus' mission was not his own, but his Fathers
- what he saw God doing.

And yet, rather than tapping into his own energy reserves to do this

- we discover that this is not what Jesus did.

For sure, as the 2nd person of the Trinity his energy reserves would have been endless

- but in becoming human, he made the conscious decision to be human in every way
- and so his energy was the same energy each one of us have
- he did not have a secret stash (just read Philippians 2: 5ff).

[As an aside – this helps us understand Jesus' temptation by Satan in the desert

- he was trying to get Jesus to tap into this divine energy, rather than ministering as a human being].

Yet, Jesus did not rely upon his own energy – if he did, he would have burned out as well

- he would have become weary in doing good,
- his zeal in serving God would have diminished.

So, what was Jesus' secret?

Actually, its not a secret at all
– its visible throughout the Gospels.

We hear about it in Luke 4.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

This is a passage familiar to all of us
– but read it, hear it, slowly
– what do you see, hear?

Jesus did not express his calling as:

“I proclaim good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor”

How did he express it?

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me . . .”

And that is the difference that empowered Jesus' life and ministry.

And that is the difference that empowers our life and ministry, our callings.

We are not called to live out the will of God in the strength of our human energy
– we will fail, its too much for us.

We are called

- like Jesus
- to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit
- so that we live and serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because just as Jesus received the Spirit, he pours out the Spirit on us
– so that we may continue the ministry which Jesus began to do in the world.

This is what John the Baptist was expressing: “And this was his message: ‘After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’”

Which is also what we hear and discover in John's Gospel and the Books of Acts

- the Spirit was breathed out upon his disciples
- “Just as the Father has sent me, I send you
- and Jesus breathed on them and said
- “Receive the Spirit.” Or we witness in reading Acts 2 the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people of God.

So what does all this mean for us?
For rekindling our passion?
For not losing our zeal?
Nor becoming weary in doing good?

**The action that is called of us
– is different than we think it is.**

We are called to do something, but not in the way we think we are called to do.

Ministry is very much a consequence,
- a result of our being inbreathed and impassioned by the Spirit.

In being filled by God's Spirit
– we do not possess the Spirit, but rather possessed by the Spirit
– who lives and acts through us
– as if we are the “incarnation of the Spirit” in the world.

**So what does this mean for us?
Get to the point, Roland.**

What it means is that our first action in ministry
– is the same action of that of Jesus in ministry.

**Opening ourselves, and
Yielding ourselves**
to the Living Spirit of God each and every day.

Begin, your days
– in prayer and meditation,
– in reflection
– in yielding yourself to the Spirit of God having complete access into your life and through your life
– for the Spirit of God to be your energy, your strength, your passion, your zeal.

And this can happen with a simple prayer:

“Lord, I give you myself today
– have your way in me and through me.

Holy Spirit, take possession of me again today and fill me and guide me to walk in the way of Jesus.

Holy Spirit, direct me and lead me that I may do what you desire to do in making all things new.”

I challenge each one of you, all of us, to engage in this prayer experiment
– and as we do,
– **I know we will rediscover a rekindling of ourselves, our passions**
– our participating in what God is doing in the world.