

Palm Sunday
Year A

Matthew 21:1-11
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14 - 27:66

God is calling each of us. In our inner most thoughts, we get a hint that God has a plan for us. How do we know it is really God talking to us and not just some wild idea that pops into our heads? That is a question that has plagued people for centuries. Our reading from the prophet Isaiah seeks to answer it for us.

Actually, we have no idea who wrote this passage of scripture. It is in a section of the Book of Isaiah that is frequently termed “Second Isaiah”, because it appears to deal with a period much later than the first part of this book and, therefore, was probably not written by the same person. We also have no idea who the focal character of this passage might be – a single person or the nation of Israel. However, this really matters not for our purposes. What we do know is that this is the third of four poems, or songs, of “The Servant”.

God has a work for us to do. The prophet says that God has given him the tongue of a teacher. But, God also wakens the ear. Before we can teach, we must listen. It is in this listening that we learn from God, that we are called by God. Last week, in our class, I mentioned prevenient grace. This is the grace by which God initiates our turning toward God. It is in this wakening of our ear that God initiates this movement.

We see examples of this wakening of the ear, this listening to God, throughout scripture. Sometimes it is subtle, frequently it is blatant, as when Saul was knocked to the ground on his way to Damascus. God spoke to Mary through an angel and to Joseph in a dream. In my own life, and I have mentioned this before, it took God many years to get me to respond to the call to ministry. Finally, I got the message when God wakened my ear on that Monday evening in Durango. It wasn't a trumpet fanfare that got my attention, or even the preverbal 2 X 4. It was a subtle nudge that wouldn't let me leave the church until I agreed to talk with my rector about ministry. I think that is the more common experience people have.

We must be open to listening for the voice of God. Listening for God is a spiritual practice that requires us to wait for God. We tend to want an answer yesterday, but we must learn to operate on God's schedule. The Quakers practice this in their traditional worship style. They sit in silence, waiting for the Spirit to speak to them. They learn to discern the moving of the Spirit within them, even if it doesn't happen when they desire it.

Jesus listened for God. Although He stated that He had to be about His Father's work at age twelve, Jesus waited until He heard God waken His ear at His baptism. Then, being aware of God's presence at the River Jordan, Jesus was ready to listen to God. Throughout His ministry,

Jesus sought opportunities to get away to listen to God. God gave Him the tongue of a teacher to proclaim the message of Good News to the weary and downtrodden. He was wakened daily to the message of God. And, He followed through with all God asked of Him.

It is easy to see how this passage from Isaiah has been identified with Jesus. Not only did He wait for God to open His ears, not only did He teach the message God gave Him, but Jesus did not rebel against God, nor turn His back on God when persecution began.

Jesus knew the source of His strength in hour of need. The prophet told that the One who vindicates would be with Him. Thus, Jesus could be strong. He knew that, no matter what people might do to Him, God was His helper.

We also have this same promise. As we wait to hear from God, we know that God has a work for this congregation to do. We wait patiently, prayerfully, with our inner ears tuned to God. Discipleship is a choice according to the prophet and we have made the choice to wait upon the Lord. God will reveal the plan to us as we listen. Jesus waited some twenty years from that visit to the Temple until He heard the voice of God at His baptism. How long will we need to wait? I have no idea, but I DO know that God has more for this congregation to do for the people of Christian County. It is for us all to follow the example of our Quakers brothers and sisters and wait for the Spirit of God to move in our hearts. It may come today, or this week, or next year, but God will honor our willingness as we stand up together in God's sight.