When God Calls Your Name!
(Matthew 10)

When I was 9 years old I tried out with 70 other boys for little league baseball. The officials of the league tested our throwing, catching, hitting, fielding, and base running. The try out lasted three days, after which they had us sit on the bleachers and one by one our names were called out to tell us which team chose us. I can still remember the thrill I felt when my name was called. I felt as if somebody wanted me… a good feeling indeed.

In his 10th chapter Matthew tells of Jesus choosing His 12 disciples. The Scripture simply says:

“And He called to Him His twelve disciples…”
(Matthew 10:1)

The names of the disciples were:

“Peter and his brother Andrew; James and his brother John… Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.” (Matt. 10:1-4)

The first observation we can make about Jesus’ choice of disciples is that they were all ordinary men. They were not princes or priests. They were not educated, wealthy, nor were they particularly religious. They were fishermen, taxcollectors, and soldiers. Not one had distinguished himself before meeting Jesus. Some of them were of questionable character. Matthew was a taxcollector which meant he was likely extorted money from those who paid him taxes. Simon the zealot was a rebel/terrorist who likely killed more than his share of men. Peter and his brother Andrew were small business men who were doing their best to grow their enterprise without cutting too many corners. These disciples were not men of high and noble character when Jesus called them. History shows their greatness lay only in their association with the Lord. Without Jesus Peter and Andrew, James, John and the rest would have lived and died anonymously. We would have never heard nor read of them. They likely would have lived lives of quiet
desperation; scratching out a living, and dying like a dog in some forgotten corner of Palestine.

But after Jesus called them these ordinary men literally changed the world. They testified before kings. They traveled the known world healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and offering the light of the world to those who lived in darkness. They wrote books of God inspired wisdom which we still have today. In the end they even stood before Caeser himself to tell their story of what Christ had done for them.

The message here is clear. God chooses the ordinary to do His extraordinary work. When God calls your name for His service He is not interested in whether or not you feel worthy, He only wants to know if you are willing. God can work through ordinary men to accomplish extraordinary things if only we are willing to let Him work through us!

Who was Billy Graham when God called him? He was only a 16 year old son of a poor North Carolina dairy farmer. He had no special gifts or talents, but God called him by name, and Billy accepted. Who was Mother Teresa when God called her? She was a young 4’11’’ school girl living in an obscure town of Albania. She had no special gifts or talents, but when God called her by name, she accepted. Who was Pope John Paul II when God called him? He was a boy living in Nazi occupied Poland, in the dirty forgotten industrial town of Krackow. He had no special talents, but when God called him by name, he accepted.

The Bible tells us that when God called David he was a shepherd boy in the fields. When God called Jacob he was a lost and lonely boy in the wilderness. When God called Gideon he was the son of the poorest family in town.

It’s easy to assume God’s call is like West Point or Harvard… calling only the best and the brightest. But this has never been the way God operates. God always chooses the humble to do His greatest work. The Scripture says:

“God purposely chose… what the world considers weak in order to put powerful men to shame… that no one can boast in God’s presence.” (1 Cor. 1:27-29)

God called Moses out of a burning bush to lead the Hebrew people out of their Egyptian slavery, but Moses’ first response was to say, “But who am I?” as if to say ‘God, I am nobody; I can’t do what you are asking!’” To paraphrase God’s response to Moses, He said, “You’re right you’re nobody,
which is exactly why I am calling you… I am calling you, weak as you are, so that no one can boast… to make it obvious to everyone that it is really I who am doing it.” God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things because He wants it to be obvious who it is who is getting the job done.

When God first called me into His ministry I assumed He was calling me because He thought I was so special. But in the 20 years since His call I have proven to myself that I am not so wonderful. I have failed countless times when I have relied upon my own strength. But when I welcome God to work in and through me, then it is that I am priviledged to witness extraordinary things happen.

When God calls your name He is not calling because He needs you. He doesn’t need anyone to accomplish His high purposes. He is calling to give you the priviledge of witnessing Him work in the world. He calls to offer you a front row seat for His next miracle.

II.

God Does The Extraordinary With The Ordinary

So how does God do this? How does He do the extraordinary with the ordinary? Well the first thing He does is to give us a couple new body parts.

Several weeks ago Public Radio reported doctors have successfully performed a cornea transplant with tissue grown synthetically in a laboratory. In other words, the new cornea was not donated from someone else, it was grown in lab! The implications of this are incredible. Human tissue is now being grown in the laboratory so that in the future we may not be dependent upon donors… we may be able to grow new hearts and lungs in the lab!!! Right now there is a huge business in body parts. The Sun Sentinel ran an article which documented that the value of a human in parts is over $200,000. The world is desperate for heart transplants, livers, kidneys, and corneas.

The Bible promises that God will give us a new heart, a new mind and a new spirit, so that what was ordinary becomes extraordinary.

When I was growing up there was a very popular television program called the Six Million Dollar Man starring Lee Majors. The basic story line was that a navy pilot was involved in a terrible accident, and surgeons were given the task of doing more than restoring him, but of making him better, stronger, faster… The Scripture promises that God will give us new body parts when we yield to Him. The scripture says:

“A new heart I will give you…” (Ezekiel 36:26)
“…a new spirit I will put within you.” (Ezekiel 36:26)

**Power over Evil**

Just as soon as Jesus calls His disciples He does something that I think defies common sense… He gives them power. The Scripture says:

“And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits.” (Matthew 10:1)

Most leaders are careful with how much power they give to their followers. But Jesus doesn’t show this concern. In most organizations you have to wait a long time and do a lot of training before you receive any real power. But Jesus gives His followers power right away. Notice, He doesn’t give them political power, economic power, social power or religious power. Instead He gives them power over evil spirits!

Many modern people don’t believe evil spirits exist. But for a culture that claims not to believe in evil spirits it sure does an excellent job representing them in films, books, videos, and magazines. Everywhere one looks there are images and references to evil. I can’t help but wonder why if we don’t believe in the devil, why is it we are so good at describing him? But the Bible is absolutely clear that there is not only a devil, but that this devil commands an array of evil spirits. This, of course, would be bad news but for Scripture’s promise that believers are offered power over such evil spirits. Make no mistake about it. The power of evil is real, but the power of God is greater. The promise of Scripture is,

“… greater is He who is in you than is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

In other words, the God who lives in your heart is greater than the evil that lives in the word, and when God calls you into His service He will make sure you have the necessary power to do whatever it is He is asking you to do.

God gives power right from the beginning to His followers. He does not make them wait, which is good news if you feel you are under attack.

But Jesus’ offer of power doesn’t stop with evil. The Scripture says that Jesus offers His disciples power to heal every disease and every infirmity! Another way to translate this is to say that Jesus gave His disciples the power to
“…cure every kind of disease and sickness.” (Matthew 10:1)

To cure every sickness and disease is not from the hand of man but from the hand of God. But Jesus gives this power to His disciples… the power to heal every kind of sickness and disease. There is really not much to say here other than to affirm what the scriptures say:

“… all things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27)

There are articles everyday in the newspaper of people who are supernaturally healed of their cancer or of their heart disease with no simple explanation. God is afoot all the time, and we are foolish to limit His activity to the thing we can measure.

**Called For A Mission**

As soon as Jesus calls His disciples, He sends them out on a mission. He doesn’t give them much training. He doesn’t teach them how to preach. He doesn’t run them through seminars on leadership principles or on miracle making. He sends them out immediately even though they probably didn’t feel ready to go.

Some people don’t get involved in Christian service because they don’t feel ready. For example, they don’t feel as if they know the Bible well enough for Christian service, but the disciples didn’t know the Bible when Jesus sent them on their mission. Jesus spent His whole life teaching the Scriptures but He didn’t let the ignorance of His followers stop Him from enlisting them in God’s service. Knowing the Scripture is important for Christian service, but you don’t have to be an expert to be effective. Noah’s ark was built by an amateur and the Titanic was built by professionals. Just because you aren’t an expert doesn’t mean you can’t do something great for God. Over the years I’ve found people are less impressed with how much you know, and more impressed with how much you care. You can know the Bible front to back, but if you don’t have a heart for God and for people, then your knowledge of the Bible is a useless thing. Jesus didn’t choose His disciples on the basis of how much Scripture they knew, and neither does He call you for Christian service on the basis of how much Bible you know. God does not want your knowledge; He can give you knowledge. God wants your heart; He cannot make you give Him your heart.

Another reason why some people don’t get involved in Christian service is because they don’t feel as if they have any real experience to rightfully volunteer themselves. But the Bible tells us the disciples didn’t
have any experience when Jesus sent them out. They didn’t know much about religion, they didn’t know anything about preaching, they were confused about who God was, and they knew nothing about healing and miracles when Jesus sent them out. The only real qualification the disciples had for Christian service is that they said “yes” when Jesus called them, and that was the only thing they needed to recommend them. Again, God isn’t concerned whether we feel worthy for His service, He only wants to know if we are willing. When we are willing, God can make our ministry work.

Had Jesus’ disciples submitted resumes to a search committee they would have been rejected. Had they been interviewed by an official Church board they would have been rejected. Had they been asked to audition a test sermon they would have been rejected. These were men with dirt under their finger nails, and sin firmly encrusted in their souls. They were not a very impressive group, which is exactly why Jesus chose them.

Not long ago Phil Jackson won his seventh National Basketball Association World Championship as coach of the Los Angeles Lakers. Jackson had won six world championships with the Chicago Bulls when they had Michael Jordan, and now He wins the championship with the Lakers. Some are saying that Jackson is a great coach. And some are saying that he is one of the greatest. But the fact is that the Bulls had great players when Jackson was their coach, and so do the Lakers. A great coach is not the coach who can take a great team to victory. A great coach is the one who can take a poor team to victory.

When Jesus called his 12 disciples into Christian service He did not call great men. Instead, He called the most ordinary men He could find to form God’s team. Jesus wanted there to be no doubt who it was that was getting the job done. He wanted everyone to see the hand of God in the deeds of His followers.