

This morning a classic three-point sermon for you and this introduction.

I was struck by the choice I had for what we call this Sunday. The church loves its liturgical routines and if we follow one strand then we are still in the season of Epiphany through to next week. If we take a different tack then we are in ordinary time.

All this might be of very low interest to you, but I was struck by the idea of ordinary time and the words of the collect prayer...

Almighty God, by whose grace alone we are accepted and called to your service: strengthen us by your Holy Spirit and make us worthy of our calling.

Being called to follow and serve is at the heart of our reading and it struck me that this comes in ordinary time. I think that's worth reflecting on.

We've had Advent - looking forward to Christmas. Purple!
We celebrated Christmas. White and Gold!
Then follows Epiphany, we stick with White and Gold.

But before we start the next seasons – of Lent and Easter we are in ordinary time, in fact most of our worshipping year is ordinary time. Nothing special going on, not preparing for something or celebrating something.

Just being.
And worshipping.
And following.
In our everyday ordinary lives.

In the ordinariness of every day Jesus says, follow me. In the ordinary things you are doing, he says, follow me.

And this introduction now means that point two of the sermon will be shorter – so that's welcome.

Point one. Ordinary life was going on but Jesus was watching and waiting for a moment. He was preparing for it and expecting it but he didn't begin his ministry until the sign came.

The sign was John being handed over to the authorities.

John's ministry (as we heard last week) was to prepare the way for Jesus. He revealed to his own disciples that Jesus was the Lamb of God.

John is handed to the Authorities and Jesus recognises that his time has come and his public ministry is to begin. In biblical theology this is known as Kairos – **a definitive point in time for a specific action. A moment God has ordained.**

We know what it's like trying to recognise the right time for big decisions.

When should we down-size and move?
When should we look to move to a bigger place (and how will we afford it?) Should I be looking to move jobs? Can my Mum still live with my sister or does she need a higher level of care?

How do we know when is the right time to make big decisions?

We might create some signs and say IF – IF I get promoted and a salary increase maybe we can move. IF Mum cannot do these basic things then we'll know. IF the right property comes up in the area we want to move to – then we'll go for it.

It's not easy. We might simply ignore it and do nothing.

Jesus was preparing himself. First His baptism. Then, being tested in the desert. He had meetings with potential disciples. But he wasn't up and running just yet. He waited for that Kairos moment. And the sign was John's arrest.

Whether it's a personal decision or a corporate decision like Transforming Trinity – we are not left to create our own timeline. When we walk in step with Jesus and are open to the prompting of his Spirit, we shall know and recognise the right time just as Jesus did.

Point two (remember this is shorter now because of the introduction.

Simon Peter, Andrew and James and John were in ordinary time doing ordinary things. For them the call to follow would totally change their lives leaving their homes and families and businesses.

Preachers love to make a big deal about how they simply downed tools and followed. But when we consult the other gospels', we realise there had been meetings and conversation before today's calling. I think the disciples had been preparing to leave everything and go, they too were waiting.

To put it colloquially, I think Jesus recognising the Kairos moment said to Simon and Andrew, James and John's "It's time – let's go. Follow me".

The call to follow comes to us in the ordinariness of everyday life.

I think there is a rhythm to following Jesus. What we are experiencing now and the story of our past is preparing us for what is coming next. Jesus has a way of moving things along and repeats his call to follow into what is new.

The call to follow isn't a vague sort of general direction of sort of being part of the faith, but a specific and repeated call to each of us to follow into what God is already doing and what God wants for you.

It might be time to stop doing one thing, in order to do another. It might be time to put the lessons learned to good use. There may be new avenues of faith to explore.

For example the annual meeting is coming. There will be vacancies on PCC. I wonder who Jesus will say "follow me" to, and it will be into a role on PCC.

Or those stepping down, I wonder what will be new for them?

Point three (nearly done).

If we recognise and seize the moment, and we hear the daily call to follow in the ordinariness of our lives, either to keep following or embrace new things, then we find we are part of God's mission.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

It can be easier to talk about the kingdom of heaven than the first bit. The love of God, the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ, the fellowship and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have wonderful things to share.

We may find we get hands on with the caring aspect of ministry, giving lifts, serving others, being on PCC, all the 'stuff' that makes up the life of the church living out the call of the kingdom.

But don't be afraid of the "repent" bit. Think of it not so much as a way of pointing out rather obvious sinful behaviour, but an invitation to turn away from destructive things to walk a better way.

Not only that but to turn away from the solitary pursuit of all the things we think might satisfy us, to walk in the company of others in Christ's footsteps.

Above all, and to repeat Fleur's call to us last week, the mission of the kingdom of heaven is to pray and to love one another.

Whatever new thing we might be moving towards we embed into our ordinary everyday lives prayer and loving one another.

In conclusion (which is a surprise because you were only expecting an introduction and three points) God isn't trying to make our walk with him like a scavenger hunt, trying to find clues. We open ourselves and our questions about timing to him, so that we act and move in harmony with his will. We lay our lives down before him.

All that we have experienced is preparing us for what comes next and when Jesus prompts us, like the first disciples we want the courage to say yes. To let go, to lay down or to take up.

In the ordinariness of our lives we can live out the call of the kingdom and display the love of God. When we allow our lives to be the canvas that displays the love of God, it makes the kingdom message make a great deal more sense.

Let's pray

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