

February 8, 2022

**Jesus calls his first disciples (Matthew 4:18-22)**

 “As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

**Bishop William Gordon**

I want to take this reading from Matthew’s Gospel to a different level. You are not just listening to a familiar story about Jesus, 2,000 years ago, calling four men to follow him. This is at bottom a story about the possibility of each one of us being summoned. Here is a story about that.

Years ago, the Episcopal Bishop of Alaska was a man named William Gordon. He was more than a man; he was a rugged individualist and larger than life. He was Bishop in the challenging environment of Alaska from 1948-1974: twenty-six years. He was actually elected Bishop when he was just twenty-nine years old and had to wait six months until he turned thirty to be consecrated. During his tenure as Bishop, he flew his own plane as he made his visitations. There are stories of him making several forced landings, one on an ice floe. The guy was indestructible!

In the mid-1970’s, shortly after my return to the Diocese of North Dakota, we brought Bill Gordon (then retired)) to the diocesan convention as our featured speaker. He spoke at the banquet on Saturday evening. He had what one would call “a weathered appearance.” He looked as if he had spent his whole life outside (in the winter).

I remember his talking that evening about this same subject, i.e. Jesus calling disciples. Bishop Gordon made the point that Peter and Andrew and John and James were certainly very ordinary as recruits. After he had said that, Bill Gordon paused and looked slowly around the room at all the people there at the banquet, and finally said, “why I bet I could grab four or six and even a dozen individuals out of this group who are much more talented than those first followers of Jesus, and we could go out and change the world.“

The people sitting there were startled and taken back by the possible truth of that statement; they were momentarily seized by the possibility in it. Here was a guy talking to us abut calling people to new life who really meant it. Bill Gordon had touched our “restless hearts.”

*You have created us for yourself and restless is our heart*

*until it comes to rest in you.*

Augustine’s Confessions [1.1.1]

Richard B. Tudor