

A Sermon By
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Corona United Methodist Church
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But God in His Grace Called Me Pt 2
Psalm 42

Two weeks ago I preached on Paul's account of his call and said that there are at least two calls for each of us:

A call to come and follow Jesus
A call to service/to what we do.

I said the key line of the scripture reading that morning was Galatians 1:15:

But when God...called me by his grace...

That is a key line for me because it describes my experience of the call to come and know Him/to come and follow.

I am a sixth grade Sunday School drop-out. My family moved when I was in sixth grade and with the move I declared I didn't want to go to Sunday School anymore.

A year or so later, when I was in seventh grade, my second cousin invited me to MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship). I went and I was captivated by what I found there:

I enjoyed the group—the friends I made there.

I enjoyed the fun we had.

I enjoyed being included in the leadership of the group.

But I particularly enjoyed learning about religion.

One thing I remember clearly is the images of Hinduism from the old Time/Life films on "The Great Religions of the World." The bright golden images--the things I was learning at church: it all said "There was Something here" and It appealed to me.

Psalm 42 begins by declaring,

As a doe longs for running water
So longs my soul for you my God.

My soul thirst for God, the God of life...

(Psalm 42:1-2a *The New Jerusalem Bible*)

That is an apt description of how I felt. There was Something there, inviting. In many ways I would use the image of a moth drawn to a light bulb. Others might turn to St Augustine's description of this "being drawn" in his *Confessions*:

The thought of [God] stirs [the human being] so deeply that the person can not be content unless he or she praises You, because You [O God] made us for Yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You. (*Confessions* I.1)

No matter what the metaphor, the important thing here was my fascination. I kept coming back for more:

Tell me the stories about Jesus.

Teach me about the prophets.

Tell me about God

Tell me—I want to know all about this stuff.

I want to know about...

Not quite right—I wanted to know all this stuff BUT what I really wanted to know was the One it was all about.

Psalm 42 refers to

Deep is calling to deep (Psalm 42:7a)

Scholars think this is some sort of poetic reference to how overwhelmed the Psalm writer feels by being isolated from God in his illness. Probably . But I think it is a repeat of the idea in verses 1 & 2: Something calls from deep within some of us; Something reaching out to us/Something we reach out to. The first step is knowing about It. But what you really want is to know is It..

Is my language too vague/too abstract for you? I want you to get inside the experience I am describing and if you do that you'll understand that at first you don't know who or what is calling you. You think it may be God. You don't know. But you will. You will.

Sometime early in my High School years our youth group attended an evangelical meeting at another church. The preacher said something like,

Do you want to know Jesus? Do you want to know God?

Then close your eyes, bow your head and raise your hand.

I closed my eyes, bowed by head and raised my hand.

And I have known God ever since.

That is my call story. That is the story of when and where and how I became a Christian.

As you think about what I am saying this morning, I want you to notice several things:

First, my story is a story of God's grace. Grace is God's love—a love that we can't do anything to earn. God just loves us.

And in His grace he call us/in His grace He called me.

There is nothing we can do to earn the love or the invitation to know, love or serve God. God begins it—God reaches out to us first.

Second, I know God. I don't just know about God. If this were a class, some of you might want to respond to what I am saying by asking, "What is God like?" That isn't the issue for me. I know all kinds of things about God. I know next to nothing about God. But I do know God. And for me, that is all that is important.

I think it is significant that the writer of Psalm 42 says the cynics taunted him: "Where is your God?" (vs.: 3 & 9). He says it twice. I've known that question from college on,

I've scanned the sky and I don't see any God.

How could God have allowed that to happen?

Where is this god of yours?

I don't want to sound overly confident about this, but I can no more deny the existence of God than I can deny the existence of anyone in this room. You know, in some ways I think faith has a self fulfilling quality to it:

Believe there is no god and you will find only emptiness.

Believe there might just be Something beyond you and me in this room and you will find the signs of that Something moving in your life. The difference is what you believe.

Third, there is no dramatic conversion in my story. I was not a rebellious teenager or a cheat in my business, I wasn't a down and out person; there is no moment of realizing my sin and confession and finding forgiveness. No, there was just a progression/an

invitation to “Come and walk with Me/get to know Me.” I know many Christians become Christian through a dramatic conversion. There is nothing wrong with that. But some of us just come into the faith slowly, steadily. I was at a meeting recently where a person said she had been born into the Methodist Church, been in Sunday School as a child and youth; and had always just been a part of the faith and the Church. She said “You hear people talk about ‘a second birth.’ I just had one birth and it was into a living faith.” I suspect a number of you could make a similar statement.

Saying “yes” to God--Where does all this lead? Psalm 42 verse 8 gives us an answer to that:

By day the LORD commands his love to come;
And at night God’s song is with me...

You know God. You know his love and song and his direction. This last week I was not sure what to do about a certain situations. I talked with God about it and God said “wait, trust in Me, trust in the process—just wait.” I did and it began unraveling the way it should.

That is my story. Do you want to know God? Learn something about him first. Then
Close your eyes
Bow your head
And say, “I want to know You...”
You will. O yes you will.

Let us take a few moments to reflect on what we’ve heard and seen this morning.
Amen.