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A few weeks ago I had an interview with my Bishop. In the course of our conversation, I told him about a time in my life when I was frustrated in not being able to work on a church project for which I was qualified. I had not been selected to a particular committee, and I had to watch while the work floundered and eventually failed. Upon reflection on this experience, I told him about my use of the Covenant Prayer of John Wesley. As I read and re-read the lines of the Prayer, I came to understand that I was to let go and wait upon God. I asked if he knew it. He chuckled and said he had used it in a clergy retreat just days before our meeting. Here is the first part of the prayer:

I am no longer my own, but thine.  
Put me to what thou wilt,  
rank me with whom thou wilt.  
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.  
Let me be employed by thee  
or laid aside for thee,  
exalted for thee  
or brought low by thee.

I wonder what the three colleagues of Barnabas and Saul felt when they were not chosen by the Holy Spirit to go on what we call the First Missionary journey. Five names, five men from all parts of the Mediterranean area. Five different walks of life. Yet, the only two we hear anything more about are Barnabas and Saul.

We know the Gospel spread like wild fire in the Roman empire during the first generation after Jesus' life. If the writing of "Luke" has any validity, the number of people coming to the Way increased day-by-day.

Did the three not chosen have any part of this? I suspect they were faithful and did whatever they needed to assure the growth of the movement. They just didn't get the notoriety, (but they did get mentioned in the New Testament, that's something).

About thirty of us will be graduating from CDSP in just a few days - thirty-seven days - but who's counting. The class completing their first year is involved in finding a Field Ed assignment. Others are trying to line up CPE places or summer jobs. We are all trying to finish the semester with a bang or a whimper, but our anxiety is at its highest.

Those of us planning to graduate or receive our certificate are trying to determine where and how we are to serve once we leave here. We have heard the call from God, and we have answered it. We've spent three years or more in one or more seminaries. Most of us are not sure where we are in the ordination process and that is a constant concern. Most of us are in competition for the perfect job or maybe a job that is a good starting place or one that will help pay off our student loans or just any job. I don't know how many jobs are out there, but I do know that there are about 200 people graduating from Episcopal seminaries this year who wonder if they are going to be part of God's plan: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Will I be 'set apart for the work'? Will you? In Jeffrey Clawson's words at the end of his sermon yesterday, "How and where is God calling each of us to enter the word?"

Suppose that call to enter the word for which we have worked so hard doesn't come for a while? How are we to respond? We have been trained to theologically reflect, so we need to ask the question where is God in this period of waiting, of being "laid aside for thee?"

I have lived long enough to have experienced some amazing turns in my life. I have been frustrated in many ways, but, you know, looking back on those times, I can see the work of the

Holy Spirit in some of the “no’s” as well in some of the “yes’s.” Now I’m not telling you that I have been in direct communication with God and God has told me when to say “yes” and “no.” What I am telling you is that sometimes God works in mysterious ways; God expects me to have faith. In the face of anxiety and fear, this is hard. We question ourselves, we question our call and we question God. But we have to let go and let God.

Now this is a really difficult thing for me. I’m a control freak. For most of my professional life, I managed computer professionals. Much of the time, that’s not too different from herding cats. In order to get things done in the software world, you have to create a good design, divide the effort into manageable pieces and develop accountability, and then you hire square people to fit in the round holes and make sure they meet the deliverables. I am used to having control.

But that’s not necessarily the way the Holy Spirit works. The wind of the spirit blows where it will. If we are in tune with the spirit, we will bend with the wind and sometimes wait for it to blow.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus gives us some direction on this point. Jesus says that if we have heard him, then we have heard God. Our job is to spread the word of God. His message, his word is the light of the world. It is the light that drives out darkness. The message we are to spread is to show people the light and to help them understand that if they believe in the light they will not have to remain in darkness.

Jesus says that he came not to judge the world, but to save it. Jesus’ message was to be a positive one, not a negative one. Jesus came to preach and live a life rooted in God. He was to preach the grace and love of God, to preach eternal life. That is our job too. Our job is to let God

do God's work. Our work is to spread the good news. The good news that God has entered the world, loved it so much that he was willing to die for it, and willing to give us eternal life.

We can do that work whether we get that job or not. Some of us will get that call to begin the journey. Some of us might have to wait a while. But the work of spreading the Gospel can be done anywhere. Our vocation is something more than our work as a deacon or priest or chaplain. Our vocation is to spread the word of God in Christ.

Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen were not set apart for the mission in the Church's story, at that time. Paul and Barnabas got the job. I suspect that Simeon went back to home and began spreading the Gospel in his part of Africa. We know the church became firmly established in North Africa. Maybe Lucius was the one who did that work starting in Cyrene. And Manaen, well, he was an insider in the government of Herod. He was called *syntrophos*, which could mean he was an intimate friend or foster brother of Herod. Maybe he was the center of a Christian cell group in the capital. We know that Christians began popping up in strange places quietly doing their work to spread the word.

Their names are here as testimony that they were called by God to tell the absurd story of the chosen one of God, who presented a God of radical hospitality, who came to spread light in the face of darkness and who offered eternal life to all. Simeon Niger, Lucius and Manaen were not called to that mission trip but to the mission itself. Their names are recorded here as evidence of their participation in delivering the Good News. Will our names be recorded elsewhere for our faithfulness? In another time of religious renewal, in idioms that sound strange to us, a religious musician Mary Kidder penned a camp song in 1876, to convey that sense of belonging to the family of God.

Is my name written there,  
On the page white and fair?

In the book of Thy kingdom,  
Is my name written there?

“Faithful to God’s calling,” would that look good on your resume?