

1.24.21 Ep3 Called, No Need to Register

- It all started when my old iPhone's battery wouldn't hold a charge through the whole day, so I found a great deal on replacing it with a new phone that cost only a little more than replacing the battery on my old one
 - So of course, I opted for the new iPhone
 - But then, even after they transferred all the apps and files from my old phone to my new phone, I spent a lot of time the next few days resetting my preferences to make both the telephone's screen and the apps behave like I wanted them to
 - Now that was several months ago, but this week I opened a program that I had not yet opened since transferring the files to a new phone – I opened a navigation app
 - And this traffic app on the new phone drove me crazy
 - I just wanted to get from point A to point B
 - But it wanted me to set preferences
 - And it wanted me to set up a personal profile
 - Now I couldn't remember setting up a profile with this app on the old phone, but a started to do it on the new one, and it tried to take me right down a rabbit hole
 - Did I want other drivers to see a symbol of me on their maps while they were driving? Or did I want to be invisible to others?
 - And did I want to select a mood, to tell other drivers what mood I was in?
 - Did I want to earn points for I don't know what, for the time that I was using the driving app?
 - And I just stopped. I just wanted to get from one place to another, quickly and safely, while avoiding roadwork, accidents and delays!
- But that's the way it is with so many things are these days... they are needlessly complicated
 - I don't need a navigation app to tell other drivers what my mood is
 - I don't need a bathroom scale that sends my daily weight to my smartphone to make a cute graph to congratulate or scold me

- I don't need a refrigerator that keeps track of the food that we about to run out off, and then which reminds us what we need to buy
- So much of our stuff expects us to register and to set up profiles, that we have to get programs just to remember and manage all the passwords and usernames and profiles for all the apps and hardware that require them
- It's a lot of work... it's a lot to do
- And I think this is how many people feel about discipleship
 - For many folks, discipleship seems like a lot of work
 - For so many people that I've talked to through the years, they feel like the Christian faith is something that they have to register for, fill out a form, check off some boxes, and build a profile in order to be a follower of Jesus
 - But here's the thing...
 - This understanding of Christian faith and discipleship puts all the emphasis on what WE do, and very little emphasis on what GOD does
- However our gospel lesson for today stresses not what WE do, not how WE sign-up and register and tell God our preferences and profiles, but rather our scripture lesson lifts up what GOD does to call us and make us disciples
- *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news. [Mark 1:15]"*
 - The time that is fulfilled, is not our time, but GOD's time. We cannot check our watch or our cellphone for this time – it's the time when God is good and ready
 - And the Kingdom of God? It's God's kingdom, not ours. We do not put things into order to bring the arrival of the kingdom of God, instead the arrival of God's kingdom begins to bring God's order to the chaos of the world, and God's rule begins to break its way into our lives, and the lives of other people who hear it
 - And contrary to the popular idea that repentance is something that we first must do in order to prepare for God's arrival in faith creating ways in our lives – instead God creates a desire for repentance within us
 - And it turns out in scripture that repentance is much more, and something much deeper than being sorry for our sins, and instead, repentance means *a*

whole new direction for lives – a new direction that only God can give

- Finally the kingdom, the new creation of God, creates belief in hearts and minds and lives of listeners
- And that is the message, the Good News of Jesus Christ – that the life-changing and faith-creating kingdom has arrived in God's time, and we do not work for it – instead the kingdom works its way into our hearts and minds and lives
- Then Jesus went on and called people, he called lowly fishermen, he called men and women who would sometimes deny him – and one-time even betray him, and finally just about all of them would abandon him at the cross
 - Apparently, Jesus had not checked the profiles of his disciples very carefully, and they certainly at times did not work very hard at being disciples
 - And this is even more good news for us, because Jesus does not check our profiles or our lives or our works before calling us either
 - Instead, disciples are called, you and I—we have been called, not on the basis of our registration or our profiles, but instead, we have been called because it has been God's good time and good grace, to announce and share the kingdom of God with us, and not only now, but through all time, that kingdom will shape and redirect our lives into forgiveness and life... and in the meantime, only by the grace and kingdom of God, we will dare to proclaim the good news of God revealed in Jesus Christ crucified and raised in words and actions, so that others may hear Christ's Good News for them too.