



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Second Sunday after Pentecost, June 14, 2020

Called Out

by Garland F. Pierce

Genesis 18:12-15, 21:1

18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"

18:13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'

18:14 Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son."

18:15 But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

21:1 The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised.

Matthew 9:37-38, 10:1, 10:7

9:37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

9:38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10:1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

10:7 As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

Liturgically, the Easter Season has passed, and Pentecost Sunday has come and gone, we are in the season that many refer to as *Ordinary Time*. On this Second Sunday after Pentecost, during this *Ordinary Time*, the lectionary pairs the Genesis account of Abraham and Sarah extending hospitality to strangers with Matthew's account of Jesus calling the twelve disciples. I

must confess I did not readily see a thematic connection. In the Genesis account, the strangers come and Abraham rushes to be a kind and generous host. During the course of this visit, a prophecy and promise is made; Abraham and Sarah, this old and childless couple, will have a son that same time next year. Surely the promise of a much-desired offspring has outlived its likelihood, so in response to what must be an impossibility, Sarah laughs. And God calls Sarah out. God asks Abraham why she laughed; but, Sarah denies that she did. God asks, “Is there anything too wonderful for the Lord?” Against all the conventional wisdom and perhaps even the laws of nature, in their old age, Abraham and Sarah have a son, Isaac, one year later. Right now, what seems impossible for you? Careful, lest you laugh too quickly or too loudly and get called out. God has a good track record of making the impossible possible. God makes the seemingly “too wonderful” real.

Maybe for some the connection is a stretch; but, it seems worth a little time of reflection and prayer. Here it is. God can call us out and often does when we are quick to dismiss the possibility of the impossible when the impossible rests squarely in God’s hands. In Matthew’s account, Jesus calls out disciples however not because they laugh. Jesus calls out disciples to follow him and to spread the good news of salvation and liberation. This calling out is both burden and privilege. This calling out is urgent and critical. Jesus declares that the harvest is plentiful; there is work to do. There are fields to cover, crops to gather, people to feed. This calling is almost one of those cases of “too wonderful.” Why the disciples? Why us? The savior wants us to follow, to help, to preach, to heal, to set free. This calling out offers reward as well as danger. When he called out the disciples, Jesus did not sugar coat it. He warned of rejection and persecution; but, the Master promised that his calling out comes with the assurance of authority, power, and the presence of God.

There is work to do—there are too many people who do not believe. They don’t believe that the value of black life is equal to the value of white life. They do not believe in a God who loves and calls out ALL to come and live as family. They do not see the suffering of many for the sake of comfort and abundance for the few. There is work to do—too many languish in poverty and too many are victims of violence. Too many say by their words and actions, “There is no God!” Sometimes, to look at the work yet to be done and then consider being called out by Christ to respond, the first response just might be to laugh at the impossibility of it all—if not laugh, then maybe cry. But we remember and take courage, knowing, the one who calls, equips. The one who calls, accompanies. The one who calls, empowers. So, in the urgency of now, “answer quickly when He calleth, ‘Here am I; send me! Send me!’”

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share/write down— Right now, what seems impossible for you? What is Jesus calling you to do?

PRAY: Calling God, you hear us when we laugh at what seems impossible. You hear us when we cry at all the pain. Your son, our savior, calls us to follow and work to usher in his reign. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers few. There is indeed so much work to do. Because you call us, “yes” is our answer. In faith, we trust and follow you. In Jesus’ name, we pray and promise, AMEN

ACT:

1. Exercise the authority given to you as a disciple and a citizen and take some action of advocacy for justice and peace. (e.g. Write a letter to a public official regarding racialized

policing and brutality or environmental racism or unequal access to quality healthcare or education, support a peaceful demonstration for justice and peace, make a donation to an organization working for justice, etc.)

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

Hark! The Voice of Jesus Calling AMEC Hymnal, #562

1. Hark! The voice of Je-sus call-ing, "Who will go and work to-day?
Fields are white and har-vests wait-ing, Who will bear the sheaves a-way?"
Loud and strong the Mas-ter call-eth, Rich re-wards He of-fers thee;
Who will an-swer, glad-ly say-ing, "Here am I; send me! Send me"?"
2. If you can-not cross the o-cean, And the hea-then lands ex-plore,
You can find the hea-then near-er, You can help them at your door.
If you can-not give your thou-sands, You can give the wid-ow's mite;
And the least you do for Je-sus Will be pre-cious in His sight.
3. If you can-not be a watch-man Stand-ing high on Zi-on's wall,
Point-ing out the path to heav-en, Of-fering life and peace to all,
With your prayers and with your boun-ties You can do what heaven de-mands;
You can be like faith-ful Aa-ron, Hold-ing up the proph-et's hands.
4. Let none hear you i-dly say-ing, "There is noth-ing I can do,"
While the souls of men are dy-ing, And the Mas-ter calls for you.
Take the task He gives you glad-ly; Let His work your plea-sure be;
An-swer quick-ly when He call-eth, "Here am I; send me! Send me."

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



Photo Credit: Tanya Martineau

The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.