

Journey With Jesus

Pastor Matthew Ude

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Jesus Calls Us to Listen

Isaiah 43:1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine."

How do you describe 30 kids running around the gym, dancing, singing, acting out bible stories? Some might use adjectives like exuberant, joyful, or fun. Others might say noisy, or chaotic. Some adjectives that you would probably never use are quiet, silent or peaceful.

It's good that our kids are excited. It's good that they are having fun. It's good that they are talking and making new friends, but it does make it a challenge at times to get them to listen when they need to. They are mostly pretty good, but sometimes you have to call them by name to get them to stop talking and listen.

Our lives are likewise full of noise. There are so many things that want our attention. There are so many devices and ads and marketing strategy that are specifically aimed at grabbing our attention., work and friends and family etc. God calls us by name so that we will shut off the noise and listen.

God doesn't shut over the noise. He quietly calls us by name.

Someone once told me how they heard a pastor booming from the pulpit. They said that is what they always thought God would sound like. But God doesn't shout at us. He doesn't boom from heaven. In 1 Kings 19 he spoke to Elijah in "a still small voice." It is a voice that is heard to hear amongst all the noises of our modern world.

God calls us by name. He calls us to listen to the only voice that really matters. He calls us to shut off the unending noise of this life and hear the words of life, at least occasionally.

God used a burning bush which burned but did not burn up to get Moses attention. When Moses drew near he called him by name and told him to take off his shoes. This was in essence a call for Moses to be silent and listen.

What has God done to do get your attention? God doesn't speak to us through a burning bush, but he has attempted to get our attention. The son of God died on the cross, he rose again and ascended into heaven. All of these are wonders greater than a burning bush through which God calls us to silence and to listen. He calls you quietly by name to be his child, to shut off at least briefly on Sunday morning the noises of the world, so that in silent contemplation we may hear his word.

No one can say that one form of worship is the right way. The apostle Paul tells us that we are free to worship in whatever way works best for us. But one of the advantages of traditional liturgy is the setting aside of the noises that surround our lives so that we may in quiet contemplation consider and hear the voice of the Lord.

Christ has called us by name. He has called us to follow him. Set aside the noises of this world and listen to the still quiet voice of Jesus.

Jesus Calls Us to Follow

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

On day three of our VBS the children's unforgettable journey with Jesus took them from Jerusalem to Jericho. Along that road they saw a man lying beaten and robbed by the side of the road. While the priest and the Levite walked by pretending not to see, the Samaritan stopped to help. Two walked by, one stopped to help. In reality many walk by, few stop.

We live in a world that does not know what it means to love. Our world has confused love with lust and sex. It has taken something that should be selfless and made it the most selfish thing. All that we know in this world is sin and pain.

In this world we learn to hurt others. When others make fun of us, when we are neglected, beaten or ridiculed, when no one seems to care about us and we feel all alone, we are often tempted to lash out at others. We treat them as we ourselves have been treated. Hurt people hurt people.

From Jesus we learn something different. From Jesus we learn not how to hurt other but how to love. Most people walk by because that is what was done to them, but we see Jesus. We see the Samaritan who is Jesus. He does not walk by but stops to help us in our need. As we journey with Jesus, we learn what it means to love one another.

That still quiet voice of Jesus calls us to follow his example. He calls us to be "in the world but not of the world."

We journey with him and we see what love is. We learn to love from him who loved us.

Jesus Calls Us to Run

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

I've seen some pretty amazing sites in my life. The grand canyon, the crown jewels in the tower of London, the Taj Mahal, mount Everest, snorkeling in the Andaman Islands, but no site has been as marvelous and wonderful as what Peter and John saw as they stooped to look into the tomb on that first Easter morning.

On day four the VBS kids ran with Peter and John, literally they were running across the gym as they reenacted the story. More importantly they ran with Peter and John to see the empty tomb. We also run with Peter and John run towards the empty tomb.

We can't go back in time and see the stone rolled away and the angels but one day we will. Because Jesus' tomb was empty, we will one day see Jesus and we will see our graves empty.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us:

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

And of course the prophet Habakkuk:

Habakkuk 2:2 Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it

The whole world is running in the wrong direction. They run away from death. We run towards it because we know that the grave is empty and that Jesus lives. We know that because Jesus lives we will see the most incredible thing on the day of our death. We will see Jesus.

On day five Jesus ascended into heaven completing his journey. His journey was not easy, nor will ours be if we follow him, but he will be with us always. He has forgiven all our sins. He will bring us with him to heaven. The VBS kids spent a week on an unforgettable journey with Jesus. Let us spend our whole lives on that journey. Listen, follow and run with Jesus to the life that he has waiting for you.