

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, 2nd Sunday after Epiphany, January 18, 2015

Just Do It!

Dr. Kenneth Humphreys
January 18, 2015

1 Samuel 3:1-20 John 1:43-51

When I first read today's two scripture passages about God's call to various people, my mind for some reason went to Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy singing "Indian Love Call" in the 1936 movie "Rose Marie". Some of you may remember that song which begins, "When I'm calling you-oo-oo-oo oo-oo-oo. Will you answer too-oo-oo-oo oo-oo-oo?"

We live in a world of instant communication --- cell phones, smart phones, text messaging, email, Facebook, Google Plus and on and on. Someone is always calling you-oo-oo-oo. And you probably do answer too-oo-oo-oo. People carry their electronics with them everywhere and seem to be oblivious to anything else.

Walk down the street or through an airport and you are very likely to be bumped by someone who is paying more attention to their smart phone or to texting than where they are going. Auto accident rates are skyrocketing because drivers talk and text all of the time and are distracted from the task at hand which is driving, not communicating with people who are not in the car with them. Doing this while driving has been proven to be more dangerous than being drunk.

Teenagers carry their phones everywhere and on average send more than 50 text messages a day, often to someone who is just across the room. It is an epidemic of needless communication. People just can't wait to answer a call or to respond to a text message. The phone rings or vibrates and it is immediately answered. But do people answer God's call as quickly? Do they answer it at all? Sadly many people don't.

Last October we recognized three Boy Scouts with the God and Life Award, the highest honor that the church can present to a young adult. Remember the posters that the Scouts made that we placed in the social hall? Their theme was that God calls many people, but he doesn't do it with a smart phone or an email. He certainly doesn't do it with a junk mail permit to everyone in town. He does it one-on-one, often quietly and subtly, so much so that we often don't realize when God is calling, at least not

immediately.

God calls all of us in one way or another, but do we recognize it when he calls? Have you recognized it when he has called you or do you even realize that he has called?

Our Old Testament lesson from 1 Samuel is a story about a call from God that was unmistakable --- one which could not be ignored. God was calling out to Samuel. He heard the call loud and clear. At first he didn't understand that it was God calling him. He thought it was Eli calling but Eli knew that it was God. He told Samuel to listen again for the call, which he did, becoming one of God's great prophets.

Does answering God's call lead to you doing God's work, perhaps even becoming a prophet or an apostle as was the case with Jesus' call to Philip and Nathanael as described in our lesson from John 1.

Yes it does --- but not necessarily in as obvious a way as it did with Samuel, Philip or Nathanael. In this congregation I look out and see folks who have answered God's call in a great many ways, often repeatedly.

Several of you are, or were, teachers. You dedicated much of your life to educating our children to become better citizens who in turn would answer God's call in many additional ways.

Clara, Martha, John and Mo --- all of you answered that call. Mo works with very young children, particularly Hunter, but also with the children she teaches daily.

Clara answered the call to serve as treasurer of this church, something that she has faithfully done for a great many years.

Martha devotes an incredible amount of time to community affairs and to the DAR.

John and Bonnie showed their response to God's call in bringing Vanna into their home as a daughter who they are in the process of adopting.

Each of us has answered God's call in our choice of profession and in the many community service activities which we individually and as a church support.

Pat's organizational skills and dedication in getting the yard sale organized each year are simply phenomenal.

I could go on and on and cite examples for everyone in this congregation but I don't need to. Look around the sanctuary. Look at others in this room. You know what

they have done. Each of them has answered God's call in many ways.

Jesus found Philip and said just two words to him, "Follow me." Philip told Nathanael that he had found the one whom Moses had written about and said, "Come and see." Two words constituted the call to Philip and he responded. In Nathanael's case, it was just three words.

God calls to us, quite often, with no more than two or three words but we have to listen.

I believe that God called me to be here to serve as your pastor. I knew about the Presbytery's educational program for lay leaders, thought about participating, and said, "I don't have the time for that." But I kept hearing two words, "Do it!" I finally caved in thinking that it might be interesting and, after all, it would be good Bible study. Then we got to preaching classes and I had to write a bunch of sermons. That wasn't hard for me because I had been an educator, a publisher and magazine editor, and I often did public speaking. After that I thought briefly about becoming a pastor but I shrugged it off saying, "I don't have time for that." Again I kept hearing those two words, "Do it!"

So I finally caved in and after graduation did guest preaching at various churches. That wasn't hard for me. I was used to talking to groups and, after all, it was only an hour on Sundays when I would be in church anyhow.

But then the thought came about of seeking to be commissioned as a regular pastor in a church. That takes a lot more effort and again I said, "I don't have time for that." But the two words, "Do it!" kept working into my brain. God was telling me what he wanted me to do so I talked to the Rev. James Adyette, the moderator of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina at that time. He in turn contacted Bobbi White, the Executive Presbyter and not long after that I was called as co-pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Bessemer City. That wasn't all that much more effort I thought than my supply preaching. I would only preach once or twice a month and the senior pastor would do most of the work. Wrong! I preached occasionally but I was doing all of the pastoral care and taking charge of building maintenance and upkeep, and much more. But I found that I loved doing it.

After that service and then serving an interim pastorate at Oakwood Presbyterian Church in Lenoir, the church that called Philip Adams as their pastor, I was asked to fill in at a church I had never heard of, Conley Memorial Presbyterian, for one month. I said

OK, it's quite a distance from my home, but a month is not all that long so I came here. That month now has extended to more than three years and I hope that the good Lord keeps telling me to "Do it!" It is wonderful when you can respond to that call joyfully.

Listen to God's call to you. He has called each of you in the past and you have responded. He will call you again and again in the future. When he does, follow the recommendation of Nike shoes, "**Just do it!**" I know that you will.

Alleluia! Amen.