

Study Guide

Monday, January 30 1 Corinthians 1: 1-3

This begins as every good letter should, with the heading, the address and the salutation. Now, it is not like a modern letter where the address is printed at the top and a simple “hello” or “dear” is how it begins. Each part of the elemental requirements for a good letter is a sentence long. We know it is from Paul and his companion Sosthenes, and it is addressed to the church at Corinth and Paul is greeting them with the commonality they have Jesus. These three verses are important because it sets up Paul’s authority (called by God’s will to be an apostle), his expectations (those who have been made holy and called) and his hope and prayer for the church (grace and peace). If you have read this letter before, you know there was division and problems. Paul’s emphasis tends to be on the call of the church to follow Jesus. How do you find yourself “made holy to God” and called to be one of God’s people?

Tuesday, January 31 Matthew 4: 12-16

These verses occur right after Jesus comes out of forty days and nights in the wilderness being tempted. Jesus starts his ministry receiving word that John has been arrested. Jesus goes from Nazareth to Capernaum. Here the scripture notes it is in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali (which is spoken of in the book of Isaiah.) Geography is everything, and by the time of Jesus, the land of Zebulun and Naphtali had not been called by those names in 700 years. Those lands were conquered by the Assyrians. Why would Matthew call the land by those forgotten names? Maybe to remind people that God is faithful in God’s promises and the “people lived in the dark have a seen a great light.” John’s arrest is scary, but does not stop Jesus from continuing his ministry. What places, whose names have been forgotten or rarely used are you called to share the love of God?

Wednesday, February 1 Matthew 4: 17-22

Jesus begins his ministry with the same words that John used, “Repent! Or Change your heart and live! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!” Jesus calls brothers: Peter and Andrew, James and John to become his disciples and they do! There in basically the backwaters of Israel, Jesus comes calling. He calls some fisherman to come and start fishing for people. In the words of the United Methodist Church, they are called to “make disciples...for the transformation of the world.” They leave their nets, their livelihood and follow. What would you, or could you leave behind to follow Jesus? What is keeping you from following?

Thursday, February 2 Matthew 4:23

Jesus is on the move. Preaching, teaching healing and sharing that God’s kingdom, God’s reign is at hand and is present. In one verse Jesus’ ministry is shared and the following verses show how people are hearing and coming and experiencing God’s grace and love in Jesus. The disciples are part of this crowd and they are close to Jesus. Learning, pondering and living out their call as God’s beloved children. They will make mistakes, sometimes they will misunderstand and get it wrong. That does not change their saying yes to Jesus. How are you living out your call as God’s beloved child? How do your words and actions point to God’s kingdom at hand?

Friday, February 3 1 Corinthians 1: 4-9

Paul is praising the church at Corinth for God’s work in them and through them. God’s grace is made real in their words, their actions and their testimony. He notes they are not missing any spiritual gift at all. God is faithful to those who have been called into partnership with Jesus. What powerful words for us to take heart in our lives and spirits. We are also called into partnership with Jesus to transform world. How is God’s grace being made real for you? How is that grace being shared through your life and spirit?