

# All Creation Flourishes Together

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This week, I watched an amazing movie that I highly recommend. It was recommended to me by Jan and Mercury. It's called *Pride*, which is perfect for this weekend. Right now, Jan and Mercury are getting ready to March in the Seattle Pride Parade with a whole giant contingent of other ELCA Lutherans from the Northwest Synod of Washington, which is super exciting.

This movie is based on a true story in the summer of 1984 in Great Britain, and it's about an unlikely partnership. At a Pride Parade in 1984, Mark, a gay man, tells his friends he's realized something: the police aren't raiding them as often and the tabloids aren't writing many nasty articles about them. People are leaving them alone, and he realized it's not because people are becoming more tolerant. It's because a large number of miners have started striking in other parts of the country, and the police and the politicians and the tabloids are going after them.

Instead of basking in the respite from harassment, Mark decides that they should start collecting money to send to the striking miners in a show of solidarity. An action that goes beyond *the enemy of my enemy is my friend* to something more like *we know what it's like to be the underdog, and our compassion extends to action*.

They start a group called Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) to raise funds for the strikers and, at first, the challenge of getting other people in their community to support the miners

is almost as hard as finding miners who will take money from them. The two groups have never gotten along, but they persist and find a village who wants to be in relationship with them. And as the members of LGSM drive up to Wales to give money and other donations, the two different groups learn more about each other and how their struggles are not so different.

The various members of LGSM are willing to join the cause—to sacrifice time, money, and energy—because they can see how it is making a difference, and along the way, they are part of something much bigger than themselves. It's joyful. I won't give the ending away because I think you really should watch it, but I will say, in the end they find that solidarity is not one-sided.

This movie was funny and heart-wrenching and beautiful, and I've been thinking about it a lot this week in conversation with our two biblical texts this morning. There are lots of calls stories here, inviting people into a life of sacrifice for the benefit of others. And yet, for the ones who accept the invitation, they find that what they have gained is worth so much more than what they have given up.

In our first reading we hear about Elijah. He has just returned from the desert after fleeing for his life from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. We remember the story: how God speaks to him—not in the whirlwind or the thunder—but in that still small voice. And though Elijah is very discouraged, he hears that he is not alone anymore because God is sending him to anoint Elisha as his successor.

He arrives to Elisha's home and finds some plowing. The fact that his family has so many oxen means that they are fabulously wealthy. We don't know much about Elisha, but we can assume that if he had said *no* to this opportunity, he still probably would have done very well for himself.

But he doesn't turn down this opportunity. Instead, he takes a moment to decisively separate his old life from his new life, as he ends his time as an oxen driver and begins his time as one who will lead the people.

On the surface, it does not make sense. Why would he leave his privileged life to first serve and later become a prophet? One who is constantly in danger and on the run, to proclaim to a stubborn people a message that they do not want to hear? And yet he does it with almost no hesitation.

Perhaps Elisha has compassion on the other Israelites who need someone to speak truth to power.

Perhaps he knows Elijah's reputation and hopes to do similarly great things.

Perhaps he wants to be something greater than himself.

Whatever his reasoning, he sees his chance and he takes it.

In our gospel message today, we have two similar call stories, a similarly daunting invitation, but Jesus adds an extra element: **urgency**. It says he has set his face to Jerusalem. He has started

his journey to the cross to fulfill what the scriptures had said. He's got an appointment with Pilate, and he cannot wait.

The man wants to bury his father—which is good and reasonable—but not today. Today, Jesus is on the move.

The man who wants to say goodbye to his family? Not today. Today, Jesus is going and says, *Get on board*.

They're not like Elisha, taking a second to separate their old ways from their new ways. They are still looking to the past and Jesus is letting them know: *I'm on the way to the future. I don't have time to wait. The kingdom of heaven is showing up there ahead of us.*

It has showed up before in the lives and relationships of these people, but if they keep looking back, they're going to miss what Jesus is doing now:

Proclaiming good news to the poor.

Letting the oppressed go free.

Working for justice for all creation.

God's will is being done on earth as it is in heaven **now**.

So now we come to the final call story, which has not been written down because it's our call story. I know that life can feel scary and exhausting—especially for teachers and students

who've just gotten out of school—but Jesus is calling you **today** to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

To make sacrifices on behalf of other people.

To join in the joyful and amazing work of the kingdom of heaven.

And Jesus wants you to know that it is **urgent**. There is a need in our community and in our world.

When I was teaching AOB, I did not realize that there are other youth from other traditions that are being trained to tell their peers that if they don't believe a certain way, that they are going to go to hell. That's how they are taught to evangelize.

There are people in our community that are living in despair.

There are people who need a better story than what consumerism tells them.

There are people who are yearning for a deeper connection than what we can get on social media.

There are people who desperately need the good news that we've got.

Our faith that tells us that God loves us, that we are called into a good world, and that God cherishes us.

Our faith that tells us to be part of the ways the kingdom of heaven is breaking into this world.

Our faith is something precious. It is vital, and it is life giving. It is a gift we are called to give our community, as we share God's love in word and in deed.

I don't know how each of you—specifically—are called to do that. I wish I could just look at you and be like, *This is what you're supposed to do!* But individually and collectively, we are called to discern what God is inviting us to, what God is calling us to.

I know that you all have gifts. I know that everyone has a call, and I know that God is constantly inviting us to join in the work that God is doing. I also know that sometimes we say *no*.

I can remember so many times where I was like *later*, times where I have had my hand on the plow. And then, not only have I looked back, but I have just walked away.

And what does Jesus say about that? Jesus offers no condemnation. His disciples say, *This village says no. They don't want to join. Should we burn it to the ground?*

And Jesus no condemnation. Jesus knows that sometimes it is hard to join in. It is hard to sacrifice. It is hard to walk away from what we've known.

Jesus says, *I'll ask again, later. I'll come back. The urgency won't go away and neither will I.*

Jesus continues to show up again and again—and invites us over and over—until the entire world is joined up in God's single-minded purpose that all creation would flourish together.

Thanks be to God.