

2 Peter 1: 1-11

Mark 2:13-17

What does the word 'CALL' mean?

We most commonly use it these days in relation with one of these devices – a telephone. A call is what happens when one person enters the code number to connect to another person's phone, and it makes a noise to alert you to this, and if you choose to pick up your phone or push the right buttons, or slide the little circle towards the little green circle without getting too confused ... then the magic happens and two people can hear each other's voices in real time across any distance on planet earth.

Telephones were already invented well before any of us in this room were born, so I assume that phone calls have been a part of your life. Did anyone ever work in a telephone switchboard? I'm old enough to remember the old rural party line, in Ruatoria in the 1970s, where each house had a distinctive ring and if you were curious about other people's business you could easily listen in.

I wonder if you can recall a particularly memorable phone call in your life. I remember some very emotional phone calls from my flat in Wellington to a flat in Christchurch, talking to a most interesting young man called Chris Purdie, and arranging to meet up with him when he came home to Wellington for Christmas.

I remember talking to my father, when he lived in Shropshire, England, after he had a stroke, before he died, and how difficult and distressing it was to try to understand him as his voice was badly affected ... and how terribly expensive it was!

A phone call, then, is a communication between two people over a distance. You can also call out to someone over a short distance. I remember the time we were on holiday in Sydney with 3 small boys, walking around outside the Opera House, and Aaron, aged 2, suddenly disappeared. So Chris held the other two and I ran around like a mad woman calling out Aaron! until he heard me through the crowd and I saw him and grabbed him before he could take off again!

But beyond these two obvious meanings, 'Call' has many other depths of meaning.

You make a call, meaning you make a decision

You receive a call, meaning you are given an appointment

You hear a call, a spiritual sense of life purpose

Call is an important word in the Bible. It is in both of our readings today. When Jesus is criticized for hanging out with all the wrong people he replies "I did not come to call the righteous people, but sinners"

And Peter writes "*God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of the one who called us to share in his own glory and goodness.*"

There's quite a lot going on in that sentence. It has two verbs in it, two actions of God: first, Given us. God has given us. second Called us. God has called us. Two actions of God. And Peter is making some big claims about who God is and what God is like: the nature and character of God

God's power, divinity, essential God-ness, into which Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is fused into the divine power, is also described as glory and goodness and 'righteousness' Our reading today describes a dynamic process of God including us in the very nature and being of God ... not because of anything we've done or earned, but simply because God wants to.

God gives himself to us

God calls us to himself

God enables us to experience in our everyday lives 'god-li-ness', God-like-ness and God enables us to know him, and it is the knowing God that opens up more of God in our everyday lives.

That's the first part of our reading, all God's initiative, promise, gift and action. The second part is about our response: "do your best" writes Paul. "make every effort" in another translation, or in our pew Bibles "try even harder"

¹⁰ So then, my friends, try even harder to make God's call and his choice of you a permanent experience; if you do so, you will never abandon your faith.^[b] ¹¹ In this way you will be given the full right to enter the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God calls us and we respond

God chooses us but it's up to us whether or not we choose God in return

God gives us great and precious promises, and we may enter into them or leave them unopened.

Jesus called Levi the tax collector, and Levi responded. Our gospels are full of stories of people who said yes to the call of Jesus. And we also hear of some people who said no, who reacted to Jesus with defensiveness, even anger, self-righteousness 'I'm all right Jack'.

This Lent we are inviting you to respond to God's call on your life, on your heart. Next week we will be giving you a Lenten study called the 'Invitations of Lent', written by the very wonderful Barbara Sampson. You'll get to meet her next week, as she will be preaching. Our theme for Lent is spiritual practices, disciples, ways in which we can "do our best" to know God more.

There are some study booklets available today if you want to get in ahead of time, or if you can think of someone else you'd like to give one to. It's not a solid Bible study, it's a mix of poetry, questions to ponder slowly on. It's not a test, it's just personal.

Lent is an excellent time to slow up a bit, make a bit more space for God, to deepen in faith.

As Peter puts it:

"For this very reason do your best to add goodness to your faith; to your goodness add knowledge; ⁶ to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add endurance; to your endurance add godliness; ⁷ to your godliness add Christian affection; and to your Christian affection add love. ⁸ These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance, they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

For myself, I find it so important to remember, when I'm feeling inadequate or frustrated or bored or tired, when I start to doubt that I'm much use to God just now, it is important to remember that I am called and I am chosen and I am given by God what I need for this moment, this week, this year.

This is the beginning of all faith and the foundation for all spiritual disciplines, not that we can somehow by working hard enough get through to God, but that we can get out of the way and let God get through to us.

You are invited to say to the person next to you:

**...(name) ..., you are called by God's glory and goodness into God's great promises.
God has given you everything you need.**