

I finally got around to watching the movie FROZEN recently when it was appropriately too cold and snowy to go outside. I liked it but then most everybody has a soft spot in their hearts for fairy tales. There is just something about a fairy tale's reversal of expectations that intrigues us. There is something delicious about finding out that the frog is really a handsome prince, that the ugly duckling is the one that grows into the most resplendent of all swans. **Frozen** is delightful because it reverses so many things: the main characters are female, the prince Charming-like character turns out to be the villain, the boyfriend who rushed to save his beloved with a kiss – doesn't make it, and in the end it's an act of selfless love by a family member that saves the day.

Fairy tales are always stories of transformation, and that's what happened to these simple people we call the disciples. If you took the disciples and brought them all together into one room, you would never in your wildest imagination guess by looking at them that this weak-looking pack of ordinary folks could change the world. But they did. That's probably why Jesus called them in the first place. If you're going to save the world, you've got to start somewhere. And if in the end you're going to save the world through humility, gentleness, compassion, and sacrifice, it makes sense to begin with a bunch of fellows who couldn't get much more humble if they tried! The messengers fit the message. The disciples needed to be common, ordinary, and above all humble if they were going to do Jesus any good and so change the world. But as it turned out, each one of them was the frog who was really a prince!

Sometimes ministers and teachers like to do some romantic editorial work on the nature of Christian calling. We like to tell stories about moments of theatrical intensity:

the disaster survived, the sermon that changed our view of the world, the person who lifted us up from a low point. There is a tendency to want a sort of fairytale quality. But in real life most people come to faith in ways that are far more gritty and down-to-earth. They were forced into Sunday school by their parents, or the youth group turned out to be a reliable way to make friends, or they married someone who was a church goer. Being called is rarely a one-time thing or a moment of high drama. What does it take to make up a "call" for you? That's an intriguing question, and one which lies at the heart of today's readings.

In the story of Samuel he lives in temple, he works for the high priest, and yet even though God calls to him over and over, he remains clueless. The priest, Eli, is old and blind and so he calls Samuel all the time for assistance. So Samuel is stuck in a rut; he doesn't notice the difference between Eli's voice and God's. He needs Eli to shake him out that routine and tell him to really pay attention next time.

What about us? We come to church, we hear the readings, the sermon, the announcements about parish activities and then we go back home to our routine. We aren't likely to get that great dramatic moment that forces us to reevaluate everything, but maybe there is someone who will tell us to really pay attention for a change. Maybe **you** are supposed to be Eli to a friend or family member.

One day St. Francis of Assisi, invited a young monk to join him on a trip into town to preach. The young monk was so honored to get such an invitation from St. Francis that he quickly accepted. All day long he and St. Francis walked through the streets and byways, alleys and suburbs, and they rubbed shoulders with hundreds of people.

At the end of the day, the two headed back home, however, not even once had St. Francis addressed a crowd, nor had he talked to anyone about the gospel. The young monk was greatly disappointed, and he said to St. Francis, "I thought we were going into town to preach?" St. Francis responded, "My son, we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many and our behavior was closely watched. It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!"

St Francis was right; mostly we repeat God's call by the example of the life we live, but sometimes I think we do need to say something. There were two men who had been business partners for over twenty years. They met one Sunday morning as they were leaving a restaurant. One of them asked, "Where are you going this morning?" "I'm going to play golf. What about you?" The first man responded rather apologetically, "I'm going to church." The other man said, "Why don't you give up that church stuff?" The man asked, "What do you mean?" "Well, we have been partners for twenty years. We have worked together, attended board meetings together, and had lunch together, and all of these twenty years you have never asked me about going to church. You have never invited me to go with you. Obviously, it doesn't mean that much to you." We don't need to harass people on street corners but sometimes we do need to be brave enough to speak to a friend.

It was once said that "A pile of rocks ceases to be a pile of rocks when someone has a cathedral in mind." When Jesus first laid eyes on his would-be disciples he didn't see a pile of rocks, he saw the beginnings of a cathedral, a church. Jesus looked at the likes of Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathaniel and saw great potential, great God-given potential.

He didn't see rocks, he saw diamonds in the rough. Jesus didn't see a bunch of uneducated, salty, low-income fishermen, he didn't focus on the "what appeared to be," he saw the "what could be."

What do you see when you look around at the people in this church, or the people you work with or live with? Do you see a world filled with piles and piles of rocks or do you see cathedrals? God doesn't ever call us to just do the best with what we have accomplished so far in life; he does call us to become the person that he sees in us.

I have hunch that most of us buy into the American myth of the rugged individual and we have felt pretty good about letting people find their own way to God. You hear it said in families. **We don't want to impose our religion upon our children**, these parents say, **we want them to find their own way.** What a tragic mistake. There is only one conclusion to this path, heartache and sorrow for the missed opportunities. Jesus didn't call his disciple to sit back and see what happens; he called them to go out and influence people, change hearts and minds and lives.

Two robins were sitting in a tree. "I'm really hungry," said the first one. "Me too," said the second one. "Let's fly down and find some lunch."

They flew to the ground and found a nice plot of plowed ground full of worms. They ate and ate and ate and ate 'til they could eat no more.

"I'm so full I don't think I can fly back up to the tree," said the one. "Me either." said the second. "Let's just lay here and bask in the warm sun." "O.K.," said the first robin. They plopped down, basking in the sun.

No sooner had they fallen asleep than a big fat cat snuck up and gobbled them up. As he sat washing his face after his meal, he thought, "I love baskin' robins."

Will we be people who soak up a little church each week and then just sit and bask? Or, will we invite others. Will we go out of our way to say to people, "Come and see?" Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if each one person here, at least once a month, invited another human being to "Come and See? What would this congregation look like if "Come and See" became a natural part of our life and relationships?

So I guess the point of today's sermon is simple... don't be baskin' robins.