

# **JANUARY 8, 2017    BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

## **“CALLED TO SERVE”**

**Pastor Becky Smithey**

**Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17**

Little Johnny and his brother decided to go ice fishing one Sunday after church. Little Johnny started drilling a hole in the ice when a voice from above said, “Young man, there’s no fish down there.” Little Johnny asked his brother, “Who is that?” His little brother said, “I don’t know.”

Little Johnny started drilling again and the voice said again, “For the second time, there’s no fish down there.” Little Johnny asked his brother, “Could that be God?” His little brother replied, “I don’t know.”

Little Johnny started drilling again and the voice said once more, “Young man, for the last time, I’m telling you there’s no fish down there.” Little Johnny looked up and said, “Is that you, God?”

The voice said, “No, I’m the manager and the rink’s closed”

Sound like a story we have heard today? The story of Samuel calls us to have our listening ears on and to be ready—God could even call on us...and will! God may change your plans. God may even call you to go a very different direction in your life.

Our job is to:

1. Listen for God.
2. Answer God.
3. Go and be the Servant he has called you to be in whatever form that may take.

Today we also read about Jesus’ baptism, which was the start of his ministry on earth. Baptism represents the turning away from the old to the new, from our old ways of life to the kingdom of God. It is claiming God’s call on our lives. Claiming that God was present and active in our lives long before we could even say the word, GOD. The baptism of Jesus was a sign to both the people of his day and to us of something extraordinary. That Jesus, in fact, was one with God.

As the baptism occurred, we hear a voice from heaven, *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”* It is the voice of God setting the stage for a life changing ministry to take place. It is the voice of God which confirms for the world who Jesus is, “My beloved Son.” At that moment, a dove came and rested on his shoulder symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was God’s promise that we would not have to go it alone.

Jesus’ baptism shows the glory of God’s plan and how all the details are important to God. Jesus heard the Holy Spirit call him to speak the truth and live with grace. Christ came to identify with sinners and give them his righteousness.

Jesus shows us how far God would go to be a part of our lives so that we can be a part of God's life. When he insisted that John should baptize him, Jesus wanted to melt into the crowd of the marginalized and rejects of society. By being with them, Jesus would raise them up, meet them in their despair, give them hope, be with them in their pain, comfort and cure them, accept them in their shame and bring forgiveness to them. Since Jesus also wants us to have right relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters, he went out and preached, healed and reached out to those who asked for forgiveness, who needed healing and who wanted to hear God's Word.

We as Christians are called to live out our baptism. We can't afford to make ourselves comfortable or do only what will be appreciated or be satisfied with the way things are. We have to struggle with what's right and what's wrong, what's important and what's not important. Baptism changes us. It is a celebration of grace and an enactment of the Word of God. It is claiming God's promise of never leaving us alone. Baptism empowers us, as children of God, to be the hands and feet of Christ.

As I mentioned earlier, Jesus' baptism was the start of his earthly ministry. He had to have a clear sense of God's support and identity before he could begin his mission. Our mission is the same as his mission, and before we can start our mission, we need to have the support and identity that only our faith in Jesus can provide. That identity is as a child of God.

Baptism calls us to service. God had a purpose for Jesus, and he has a purpose for each and every one of us. This purpose is to share the love of God to the world with all God's people. This purpose will be made clear to us at a time and place of God's choosing. We can't change God's timetable. He does things in His own time and in His own way. He gives us a vision. He reveals to us why we do what we do. He gives us a purpose even in the hard places of our lives. He gives us a purpose in whatever stage of life we find ourselves. God has a plan and a purpose for every single one of us. God has a calling for us.

Are we listening? Have we answered? So what's the game plan?

God's call always calls for an action response on our part. There will always be a response.

Doing what God requires is difficult. For some, it means becoming more humble, because they have gotten too proud. For others, it means becoming more forceful, because they are too meek. For others, it means going out and helping the needy. We must also remember that what we think is the right thing to do may not be what God considers to be right. For example, Joseph thought he was doing the right thing when he planned to divorce Mary after she became pregnant, but it wasn't what God wanted.

We must listen for our calling. We must not be afraid if God calls us to do something great. We must not be ashamed of the calling of God on our lives. We must be faithful and prepare ourselves to see the heavens open and hear God's voice saying, *"This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased."*

Remember your baptism, and be thankful. May it propel you into the world to serve in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.