



January 29, 2012

Next Steps

Invited to Serve

[Mark 1.16-20](#) | [Listen to Sermon](#)

Jesus wants me. Jesus wants you. For some reason when I say this the theme song from the children's educational program, *Barney*, comes to mind. Sing it and see if it doesn't fit. Maybe that song comes to mind because I have young kids. That's a possibility. Actually, I think that song comes to mind because of the warm feeling I get, a feeling you can only get from hearing it sung by a purple dinosaur. That warm bubbly feeling is the same feeling I get when I hear it said that Jesus wants me. It sounds almost too good to be true. Jesus actually wants me?!?! No way! That can't be possible. Why would Jesus ever want me? And yet, as I sit and listen to Jesus pass by on the seashore, as I enter the text and meet Jesus there I recognize that Jesus really does want me. He really does want you. He wants all of us and it feels great.

It is wonderful to be wanted, desirable. We feel important. Cherished. Valuable. Oh the wonderful throes of feeling wanted. Honestly, after the warm fuzzies of feeling wanted fade, a more cynical voice remains. It is a voice that whispers that Jesus only wants me for what I can do. He only wants me so I can serve. He only wants me for what I can accomplish, for the benefit I bring him. I am not fully certain of where that voice comes from. In part I think it is the voice of the evil one who loves to speak lies. Yet, I also hear in that voice a cacophony of voices of pastors, pastors who told me Jesus wanted me and used this text to prove their point. When they spoke they always had something for which Jesus wanted me. He wanted me to do something. As I look at the text and others like it, I can't get around that Jesus does have things that he wants me to do. Is this why Jesus wants me? If Jesus only wants me because of what I can do then he really doesn't want me. He just wants to use me. Frankly, I have had more than my fair share of encounters with people who want to use me. Is this why Jesus really wants me?

As I sit with this text and try to live it, try to experience God in and through it I am surprised by the longing I sense in Jesus' voice. It is a longing not for what I can do but for who I am. Jesus wants me. He really wants me. He wants me for who I am. He longs to be with me, for me to be with him. He longs for me to come and follow him, to share my life with him. He is not concerned about what I can or can't do.

In fact, on my own I can do very little. Rather, he promises that if I will simply be with him, he will transform and empower me to do. He will make me what I am not and enable to do what I cannot, to join him in his mission and ministry. As I really listen, I hear that ministry and service is definitely an outcome of this relationship but it is not the crux of the relationship. Jesus doesn't want to use me. He simply wants me. In the deepest part of me, I want him.

A fellow traveler,
Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Sit with God:** Jesus invites us to come to him and be in relationship with him. It is in this relationship with Jesus that we are transformed so that we might join him in his mission and ministry. This month, consider adding a time of silence to your times of family prayer as a way of accepting Jesus' invitation. You might do this at your times of offering thanks for meals. When you pause to pray, begin with a few moments of silence in order to sit with Jesus. You might encourage your family to simply sit for a moment and imagine they are sitting in the presence of Jesus. One way to help younger children with this practice is by adding an extra place-setting for Jesus at the dinner table. After sitting with Jesus for a few moments, proceed with your prayer of thanks. As we sit with Jesus, we learn that it is more important to be with him and offer our lives to him than to rush to him and ask him to be part of our lives. We also open the door for him to speak to us and teach us about the life he offers.

We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .

- **Practice Surrender:** Jesus invites us to come to him so that we might experience a life-changing relationship with him, one that enables and empowers us to join him in his mission and ministry. However, approaching Jesus takes surrender, coming to him for a relationship and life that are on his terms. The reality is that surrender is hard. It doesn't come naturally. We have to train ourselves to surrender to Christ. Often our ability to surrender is rooted in believing that God is trustworthy. This month, consider offering the following prayer to God. "Father, I know that you are good and loving. I surrender to you." Offer this prayer as you rise and as you lie down in the evening. Seek to offer this prayer as you go about your day. You might say it as you move between appointments or tasks throughout the day. You might consider journaling about your experience, the feelings you have as well as how the attitude of your heart changes. At the end of the month review your journal and offer thanks to God for the way he has worked in your life.