

After the Sermon Hymn: *Stepping down to the congregation:*

John 1: 43-51

“Called and Recalled”

(01/15/2012)

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God’s peace with you!

Let us read together the sermon text for this week. You find the text in the New Testament Section on page 92. It is John, chapter 1. Let us read the verses 43-51 (**Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael**)

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’ ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, ‘Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!’ ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, ‘Where did you come to know me?’ Jesus answered, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.’ ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ ⁵⁰Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.’ ⁵¹And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven

opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Like always: Let us first discuss among ourselves, what this text could mean for us in 2012. It is somehow pretty obvious that the theme is "to follow". But to where? It might be no contingency [kontinuschenci] that this "Follow me!" falls together with the Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Day. So why don't have we short conversation what it means for you personally, to follow Jesus.

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I would like to show you now a 3 min videoclip, which I downloaded from youtube. I apologize that you will see the writing "iSkysoft" fading up in the top left, but this was the price for converting the clip with a free internet software.

Youtube Videoclip "The Selma Story" [3:25 min]

“The prayers are said and the marchers go back to Selma. This Alabama town will go down in the history books as a turning point in the civil rights drive. From the halls of congress to the smallest cross roads people understand the plea, that no American can have freedom and justice, unless there is freedom and justice for all. In Selma, there is lesson to be learned.” ... So far the text of the video.

But what is "freedom and justice" in detail? Everybody USES these two words and everybody MEANS with them something totally

different. Both words are in first place only place holders; some think freedom and justice is, when everybody can do whatever he or she wants. Other ones are convinced that freedom and justice are relational words, who find their filling by looking at everybody's individual abilities and needs – and to God. As Christians we go with this second way. And today's text helps us to understand why.

And there is another parallelism between the video clip and our text: The place of action in both cases is the street. In the video we see and hear: They kneel and pray in the streets. In our text we read and understand: Where ever we are, we can and are called to meet and follow Jesus.

It is no contingency that the “Follow me!” follows immediately the Baptism. Baptism is the rebirth in faith and puts us into the right perspective and relationship: to God!

Actually there are two calling stories. The one we just read together, and the other one in the eight verses before starting with verse 35. Both belong to each other. It even seems that the second answers the first.

In the first calling story John the Baptist stands there with two of his disciples. Watching Jesus, who walks by, John declares: “Look, here is the lamb of God!” And the two disciples, who were with him, follow Jesus. Jesus turns around to them and asks: “What are you looking for?” They say to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher),

'where are you staying?' ³⁹He says to them, "Come and see." And both come and see where he is staying, and they remain with him that day. It is about four o'clock in the afternoon. ... One of the two disciples is Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He finds his brother Simon, tells him that they found the Messiah and brings him to Jesus. Jesus looks at him and says: "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas', Peter." So far the first calling story.

Job and calling are unfortunately often for many people not the same. A job is with what we earn the money for our living. A calling is what we are called to be and to do. Religion is called to help us to get reborn in the most intimate space, which we call love – so that we can follow our calling.

The first calling happens in the circle around John, the Baptist and therewith in a group of people, who had turned their back to the official religion of the Sadducees and Pharisees. John the Baptist was the first one, who broke with the cult at the Temple in Jerusalem and the legal interpretation of the torah. John meant the person, because he felt meant by God himself. He felt called and creates out of his calling his job: To bring God through his "I", his tongue and person into life.

Here we are again back to the picture of our Baptism. Nobody can find Jesus without leaving the official, without reaching out to this frontier town at the Jordan at the edge of the desert. Whoever holds on to the tradition as the truth can't find Jesus, cannot get the

answers Jesus is able to give, when we reach out.

When John calls Jesus “Lamb of God” he describes him as a servant of God. The problem with this picture is that it doesn’t work for us psychologically: Wherever we humans need to sacrifice God to achieve reconciliation, we live in fear. But in fear we never can live whole. We always will rebel against it. It is therefore extremely important to hear especially from the prophet Isaiah that God is by nature a forgiving God. It is Isaiah, who wants to call Israel back into this trust, which can overcome each break. So John was right to describe Jesus as this lamb: Even Jesus probably didn’t want to become a lamb, which got sacrificed; but at least he didn’t avoid the consequences of his acting. This has the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in common with Jesus.

But how do we follow now Jesus? How do we find him? Especially at a day like this, where we remember MLK?

It is critical that the faith in Jesus leads into a change of everything we have learned so far ideologically. We literally need to follow what we believe in. This is often a long process, interspersed with doubts and times of despair; how do I know that I am right?

Again Soeren Kierkegaard, the Danish religion philosopher of the 19th century: He meant that 2,000 years of Christianity wouldn’t proof anything. When we just march with a big crowd, only because we grew up in it or joined once – what has this to do with us a person?? It is the religious temptation to make us feel safe when we remain in

history and tradition – instead of living our own lives here and now. The own existence is critical! Religion has nothing to do with saying creeds or following a special order of service as it has been done forever; Religion is the call to become yourself.

The gospel of John tells the stories of people, who experience odd things by following seeking what they heard about Jesus. In the first calling scene it is Jesus, who turns around to the two disciples who follow him. Jesus asks them: ‘What are you looking for?’ He could have also asked “What are you longing for?” Or: “What is it in yourself, you want to start living?” And accordingly is their counter question: “Rabbi, where are you staying?” They don’t ask for a specific geographical location like a house or street. Their question is staggering. They ask for the place, where identity can happen, where rest and peace can happen. They ask Jesus, if he is the one, who can help them to find the way to this peace.

And indeed: This will go on through the whole John-gospel: Jesus will approach the world always as if he would come from another reality. It is evangelism of its best. Jesus doesn’t bother even to talk about himself. He only asks to come with him and to see in person. It is religion of its best: Jesus doesn’t request the repetition of a doctrine, doesn’t request another person as role model, but leads to own discernment and experience. This is important to hear on this MLK-Sunday: Not everybody of you is born to be revolutionary like him – even some of you might.

Interesting by the way is also that this first calling scene mentions 4 pm. Again a real time is not meant here. It is rather our life clock: There is an inner maturity, which we only reach in the second half of our life – let us say at 4pm. All power belongs not to the one, who can move thousands of people around or billions of dollars. All power belongs to the one, who can calm down the human heart; it is Jesus, who invites us to stay, to rest, to become calmly who we are.

And a last remark to this first calling story: We know that Peter will betray Jesus in all his fear and that the rooster will cry three times. He is also the one trying to hold Jesus back from going to Jerusalem, giving himself into the hands of the Sadducees and Pharisees. By naming Simon “Peter” Jesus cannot refer to Peter’s character. But critical is that Peter trusted Jesus and was willing to learn what humanity would mean for him and the world.

Let us have finally a brief look at our sermon text, before we then end with MLK.

In our second calling story not the disciples reach out to Jesus. Now it is Jesus, who reaches out. It is his first time. And he will do it in future many times more. Jesus simply says to Philip: “Follow me!” But with his command Jesus obviously expresses, what the other one already expects and hopes for. The same happens to Nathanael, who embodies, what his name means: “God has given”. Nathanael is filled with prejudices: Like so many others he cannot imagine that something could come from outside Jerusalem, the Temple, the

official religion, the tradition. Each single word is valuable, when Jesus says to Nathanael: "I saw you under the fig tree." The fig tree is in the ancient world the picture for death, whose fruits are tempting sweet like life itself, but whose sweetness becomes bitter - indicating that each living being remains in the midst of life-enjoyment forfeited to death. How can we live with this friction? It is incredibly important to keep our eyes and hearts focused to the wide and to see into the eyes, who look at us since the beginning of time gracious unto us, never judging, never censoring, but only loving, embracing and meaning our real being.

When we are able to keep this way focused on our individual being, our own becoming we "**will see**" – as Jesus said- "**the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending**". It is the same picture, which we know already from Jacobs dream in Bethel, while fleeing from his brother Esau; Jacob dreamed a ladder to the heavens, and the angels of god were ascending and descending. The differences between heavens and earth are here completely abolished. Here the locking bolt between God and man is totally overcome.

It is this peaceful picture of the angels and the territory of peace they create, which brings us now a last time back to MLK and the play Mountaintop, (from which we saw already a scene during our young peoples' message). The scene you will see now is taken from the last pages of the play. MLK knows meanwhile that Camae is an angel. He has forced her to call God and had himself a phone conversation with

God. But she hung up. Martin Luther King has gone so far through all the stages we all go, when we face loss and death: Fighting, refusal, depression, anger. His fighting, his ‘I am still needed”, his “my mission is not done yet” has started to give way to acceptance and “let it happen”. It is the maybe densest scene in the whole play. If you have the chance to see the play, you should do it by all means, but you would need to hurry up as it is only on until next week Sunday.

Please see Amanda Pietrera again in the role of Camae and this time myself in the role of MLK. What we can not bring on stage with our technical possibilities in the moment here in church is, how both watch in the end a video time lapse, which leads them and us as audience through the 44 years since his assassination on April 4th, 1968 until our days: Memphis burning, DC burning, Vietnam burning, Bob Marley, Jesse for president, AIDS, Reagan, Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton, no peace in the Middle East, Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, The Cosby Show, Saddam Hussein, George W. Bush, the towers sigh, Iraq, the first Afro-American president ... it is now our call to carry the baton – in freedom, with joy and with passion!

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AMEN!