

About 10 years ago I was part of a leadership retreat. There were about 5 of us on the retreat. The retreat was led by a local pastor. Friday evening we gathered together in a meeting room. He spoke briefly for a few minutes we prayed a few prayers together as a group and then he talked about silence. He explained that throughout the weekend we would experience longer and longer periods of silence. That evening we would start with a short period of silence 45 minutes. Have you ever tried to sit quietly and feel like every little shift you make the noise is louder and louder. I remember sitting in that room trying not to move and focusing less on prayer and meditation and more on not making any noise. When the 45 minutes was over the leader looked at me and said so this is your first experience with a silent retreat.

Our Psalmist is waiting in silence. The psalmist says his soul waits in silence for God. For the author silence is an expression of trust in God. God has become his salvation and fortress a mighty rock. The psalmist trusts even with God's silence.

In our Mark passage we see a different image of trust. John has been arrested. Jesus begins traveling and proclaiming the good news of the coming kingdom. Jesus' message is simple God has come near, repent, and believe. John's message was static he remained in one place baptizing in a river. Jesus is on the move the living God is on the move walking by the Sea of Galilee. The living God is now calling for repentance and belief. N.T. Wright described this message of repentance "as turning away from the political agendas that was driving Israel in a ruinous war... and calling Israel back to a loyalty to God. This call to repent is part of the announcement that this is the time for the great moment of freedom of God's rescue."¹ This is not an individualistic call to repentance but a corporate call to repentance to return to God. I think many of us struggle to grasp this concept of corporate responsibility. It is difficult to understand how we are responsible for things we did not directly decide or participate in. As a culture we seem to grasp individual responsibility and miss corporate responsibility.

The #MeToo movement that is reshaping our culture. I like many of you have been brought to tears and felt moments of anger reading stories of how women have been mistreated by men in positions of power. Reading stories written by women in our own pews and glimpsing their pain. Repentance calls us to hold perpetrators responsible but also to ask the question how do we change the direction of a culture that allowed this to happen? How is God calling us all to reshape our culture, our community, and ourselves so that things like this are not allowed to happen.

As a community we need to perpetually ask why is that when we live in the greatest country on the earth that there is so much economic disparity. Why is it that the zip code you are born into has a large affect on educational and health outcomes? Why is that our black and brown brothers and sisters are disproportionately incarcerated at a higher rate? These are not political questions but questions driven by faith. Driven by a faith that chooses to ask why. A faith that longs to call all to repentance and reconnection to God.

As Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee Simon and Andrew are fishing Jesus calls them in a faithful moment of trust they respond by following him. James and

¹ Wright, N.T. The bible for everyone: Mark, pg 9.

John mending nets. Jesus calls to them and they follow. One has to wonder how many generations of James and John sat by the Sea of Galilee mending these nets. One has to wonder how many generations of faithful prayers were met by silence until one day Jesus Called.

Jesus' call is simple: trust and repentance. In 1979 Linda was sitting at home waiting for her husband Tony to get off his shift on the oil rig. She was surprised to hear a knock at the door. She opened the door and no one was there. She stepped outside and looked around she discover a small bundle in the snow. A three-day-old baby was on her porch. Linda immediately wrapped him in a blanket and brought him inside. She found a note, she instantly knew the baby belonged to her drug addicted sister. Tony came home from work, she was scared to tell him. Tony took one look at the helpless baby boy and fell in love with him. Linda and Tony decided they would care for him. They named the infant Gordy. Gordy grew at the age of 5 he had his first seizure. They took him to the hospital, the doctor asked Linda if she had done any drugs while pregnant. Linda told the doctor his story. Gordy left the hospital with a diagnosis of epilepsy and a verdict that his brain would like never develop beyond the capability of a seven-year-old. Through a series of medical bills and misguided decisions, Gordy, Linda and Tony ended up homeless. For three years at times living in shelters, tents and the occasional hotel. They began attending a bible study and eventually through a series of people they met at that study they were able to move into a new home, a used trailer. Linda, Tony, and Gordy were overwhelmed by the generosity of the community they found. The first morning in that trailer. Gordy bounced into Tony and Linda's bed yelling Mom, Dad get up we got to check out or they're going to throw us out! It took Gordy two months to fully grasp that he had a home.²

This moment of restoration for Gordy, Tony, and Linda did not happen because of some super saints but because of faithful work of women and men who heard Jesus' call. Jesus' simple call to trust, repent, and follow.

² Graham, Alan. Welcome Home, pg 85-95.