

Midweek Lent 5 2017

Do you think about yourself as a leader or a follower?
Last week I filled out a recommendation for a student's internship placement and it asked me several questions about her leadership potential.

I fill out a lot of recommendations, for our youth and young adults and the evaluation forms always include questions about leadership.

I can't think of a time when I have been asked about the candidate's followership potential.

It always makes me think of Garrison Koeller's quote:
Welcome to Lake Wobegon, where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.

What happens when everyone is a leader and no one is follower?

Here are a few excerpts from a Wall Street Journal article entitled **The Joy of Following**. (By Sue Shellenbarger Wall Street Journal on-line, Sept. 29, 2015, retrieved April 4, 2017)

“Many offices are finding they have plenty of leaders but not enough followers. And it isn't easy to follow well

We hear a lot about promoting leadership in the workplace. But few people aspire to be followers.”

Most offices are populated with too many leaders and too few followers. So now, some companies are training their employees in “followership.”Article goes on to say that

generally employees don't like the “f” word and ask if it can be called something else. Maybe “leadership support.” “Researchers say that the “follower” role is hard for people to embrace.

Leaders are seen as the heroes of the American Workplace.”

Today's Lenten theme is “Following in the Dark” not “Leading in the Dark.”

I wonder if it was easier in Jesus' day to agree to be a follower? I doubt it. People are people after all!

When I think of following, I think of the calling of the first disciples.

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

In Jesus' time, a small, flourishing fishing industry developed around the Sea of Galilee and was important to the Galilean economy.

Being a fisherman in Jesus' day was difficult.

They worked all year-round in the heat of summer and the cold of winter. They would fish sometimes during the day and others at night. It was extremely hard work. They would cast large nets out over the water. The nets were weighted

with pellets of lead or stone and then they sank into the sea and surrounded the fish. Then they scoop up the fish and then haul the whole, heavy load up and into the boat. These fishermen worked in small family businesses. They were responsible for their success or failure. They decided when to go out, what to catch, where to fish, when to repair the nets, when to care for the boat and then how to sell their fish in the market.

Fishermen were very self-reliant and independent and yet, it was to 4 fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James and John, that Jesus said, *follow-me*... And they did.

Disciples are followers of Jesus and these 4 fishermen became the first disciples.

As Christians, we too are called to follow Jesus, to orient our whole lives in the direction of God's will. We listen, learn, pray and do what we believe Christ would have us do. But following is no easy task, even when we know who to follow.

Years ago, when Bill and I were moving to Colorado, It was a two-day trip. Bill led the way in the U-haul and I followed in our car. The second morning we left our motel in Omaha, and as we were getting on the interstate system, there was a series of exits and entrances, one after another. Unfortunately Bill took the entrance and I took the exit. I could see him heading off in the opposite direction. I doubled back but so did he, so we were again going in opposite directions. At one point I saw him going south on the overpass, while I went west on the underpass.

This is all before cell phones or walkie-talkies and we didn't have a CB.

Somehow we both had the idea of getting back on Interstate 90 heading west and waiting at the next wayside.

It worked. What a re-union!

Following Jesus is not easy. We get into trouble when we begin to assert our own will, when we go our own way. This year's Lenten/Easter theme has been **Stumbling in the Dark—Dancing in the Light**. For the last 5 weeks we have explored the many ways we get distracted or lost in our journey with Christ: fleeing, turning away, searching in all of the wrong places, wandering aimlessly, stumbling over roadblocks but finally turning, or returning to Christ.

Lent is a time to re-orient ourselves toward God, to get back in line and follow Jesus

Lent is a journey through the darkness.

However with Christ as our leader, we are journeying toward the light of the resurrection.

We are not there yet. There is more darkness to come but we can see the light and it draws us forward.

With our hearts and minds fixed on the Easter promises, we follow with renewed energy and hope, trusting that at journey's end we will be dancing in the light of Christ!

This is the good news of following Christ.

This is the good news of the Gospel.

