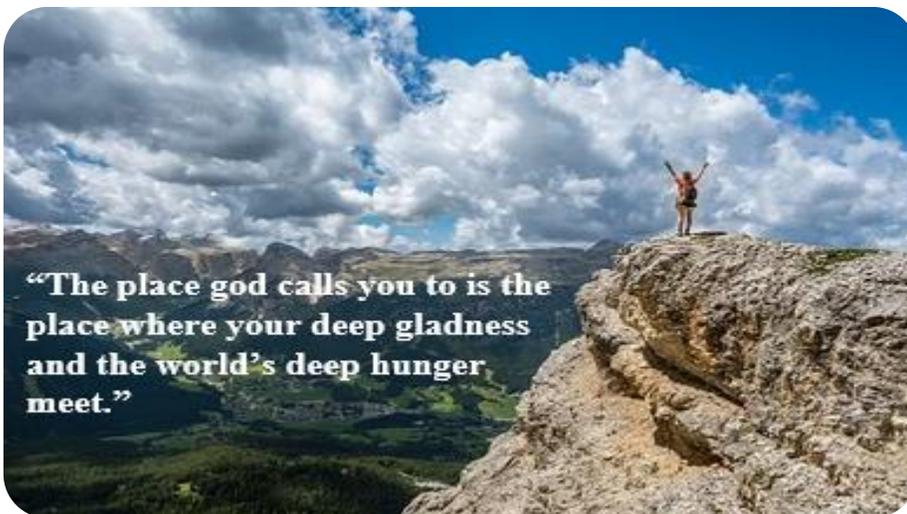


Faithnews

From Your Pastor



“God’s grace is irresistible.”



“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

<https://www.inspiringquotes.us/author/6313-frederick-buechner> These words were penned by American theologian Frederick Buechner.

I can’t help but think that John the Baptist felt this way when he began his ministry of baptism and repentance. He left the world as he knew it, entered the wilderness for a period of time, returning to the world a transformed man. He dressed differently and ate weird food. He literally lived off the land.

His ministry had a clear message. “Something new is coming. Get ready for it! Cleanse your hearts, turn from whatever is wrong in your life.” As a symbol of

Disturbing Grace

Mark 1:14-20

1/24/2021

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said

to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

entry into that new life, he offered baptism.

His message became popular. He drew people from all walks of life. Eventually, it cost him his life because he pushed back on the power and the authorities of his day.

During John's ministry, Jesus entered the baptismal waters with us. It wasn't that he had anything to confess. He chose to be there with us sinners.

It wasn't until after John was executed by Herod that Jesus formed his ministry. His message was also clear. "The alternative government of God has drawn near. Turn away from the things that aren't life giving. Believe this wonderful, good news."

In other words, repent. What does that mean?

Repent is when we admit that we're doing something we shouldn't be doing, or we've left undone that which we should be doing. Our act of repentance means that we turn away from the sin

and turn to God to help us make it right.

Repent is when we see something in our lives that no longer feels right. It's not necessarily bad, it just doesn't fit anymore. For example, someone leaves the corner office and the high-paying job to enter ministry.

Repentance can also mean acknowledging the interruption created by Jesus' call on your life.

Simon and Andrew and James and John all had jobs when Jesus called them. They were fishermen. In fact, they were working when he stepped into their lives with his invitation. Did they, too, feel that deep sense of gladness that Buechner describes? Did they feel called to that place where they could meet the world's great hunger? I think they did.

They dropped everything and followed Jesus.

Whatever form of repentance we feel, it demands of us an acknowledgment of a deep need to reorient our

lives. Transformation occurs and we turn our attention to God's kingdom, God's alternative form of living and being.

W. E. B. DuBois was an African American political science professor at Atlanta University from the late 1800's into the 20th century. His early work was an effort to educate all people on the history and harm of racism in the American South. On a Sunday afternoon in 1899 a particularly cruel lynching took place in DuBois' city of Atlanta.

The next day he passed a butcher shop with evidence in the window of the previous day's lynching. He said later that this scene "pulled him off his feet." He realized in that moment that he couldn't be a "calm, cool and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved."¹

That day DuBois was transformed into an activist. His writings reflect the horror of the cruelty toward the black community while pointing to the kingdom that God is enacting.

Our call to turn around and face towards God's kingdom arrives in a variety of ways.

Often, we don't realize it until later and we resonate with DuBois' description of being pulled off our feet. That moment when we realize that the Holy Spirit was present and touching us.

If you have a hymnbook close by, I encourage you to leaf through it. Find those old hymns that speak about coming to God just as you are or about taking up the cross and following Jesus. Read the poetry and allow it to resonate with you. Consider times when you changed direction because Jesus touched your heart and mind.

God's grace is irresistible. It disturbs. Ultimately, we find great comfort in it because that Holy Spirit is ever present with you.

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

DuBois found it as he walked down a street in Atlanta. We find it more often than we

realize in our actions or lack of action. And when we do, we turn around and walk toward our Lord, always waiting for us to respond to the call.

All glory and honor be to God. **Amen.**

Let us Pray:

Holy One, as you are well pleased with Christ, help us to accept that you are well pleased with us. As you call us to listen to Christ, help us to always heed his word and seek his will.

Gracious One, help us to hear your Son's call to us. Give us courage to turn away from what is no longer life giving for us and toward you and transformed life.

As our nation transitions to new leadership, we pray for your peace filled presence in the halls of government. While we struggle with issues of racism, we pray for a renewed Spirit of inclusiveness. While the pandemic rages, we pray for your healing and wholeness.

Be with those who are sick, worn out, dying, grieving.

Let them feel your presence and your healing power. Be present with our medical community, exhausted and demoralized. Be present with those who stock our shelves, deliver our goods, and keep the supply chain moving.

We pray these and all things through the One who taught us to prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

Charge & Benediction

The Lord bless and keep you in your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, The fellowship of the Holy Spirit find a place in your heart. Alleluia! Amen!