

Warnervale Regional Uniting Church / Weekly Devotion / Easter Sunday 2022

Acts 9:1–6 (7–20)

Easter is a season of joy! The core belief of the Christian faith is believing in Easter, which is founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Today, we are also on the back of Paul. Through the book of Acts, we meet the great apostle, Paul. The story of Saul's conversion on the Damascus Road (VSS, 1-9) is often reached alone to revive the notion of conversion. Whereas, if the whole story is preached, we can see that conversion is a call to life in a Christian community.

We can see many callings in the Bible: Jer, 1:4-10 (the call of Jeremiah), I Sam. 3 (the call of Samuel), as well as allusions to Isa. 52:5-6; 59, and particularly the apocalyptic vision reported in Dan. 10. Here in Luke, the call of Saul is the story for faith and for the upbuilding of the church.

Can you tell your calling story throughout your life? Did you experience the clear calling from God? How did you first hear the call of God in your life? Do you remember how you felt when you realized that it was God? Each of us is called to God. If you read the story of redemption Saul of Tarsus, we find so much hope and encouragement. Before, Saul was a man who was dedicated to destroying those who followed Jesus. Now he is called to God and he is a great apostle. What great change is that? If such change can be made, why not us? We can return to the streets to reclaim both the helpless, hopeless, and homeless. We cannot afford to stop until everyone on the face of the earth recognizes just how loving and powerful God is!

We could understand only post-Damascus Paul as the true Paul, but in fact, even before he met Jesus in Damascus, he was Paul. By and large, we think his meeting Jesus at Damascus made the turning point to follow Jesus. I believe, however, there was an earlier time when he has been shaken. It was when Stephen was martyred. (Acts 7) He was indeed shocked by the scene where Stephen was stoned and died, full of the Holy Spirit, looking up to heaven and seeing the glory of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:54-60). If previously there was no such experience for Paul, how could he discern and accept the voice of Jesus? At that time, Paul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5-6)

Through the story of Paul, the greatest apostle, who was the founder of the church, we remember Jesus's "new commandment. Jesus commands us to make the new community, the community of love, care, and healing. Throughout the season of Easter, let us move forward step by step recovering our mission, as the Church, breaking the bread, and sharing the cup of joy. And we remember that we have received the Holy Spirit. Let us recall that we are the people of the great commandment who love God with our whole being and our brothers and sisters, our neighbors as ourselves; and at the same time, let us give thanks we are also the great commission people, who carry the good news to the end of the world: the good news that the God's reign is at hands. Amen.

Reflection

Was your conversion dramatic, like Paul's, or more gradual? What choices did you face? (Stephen D. Jones)

Prayer

God of second chances, thank you for turning me around and changing my life. I choose you again today. Amen. (Stephen D. Jones)