## 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

 **10** I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. **11** My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. **12** What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”

 **13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. **16** (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) **17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

 **18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

## Matthew 4:12-23 (New International Version, ©2010)

 **12** When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. **13** Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— **14** to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

 **15** “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
   the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
   Galilee of the Gentiles—
**16** the people living in darkness
   have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
   a light has dawned.”[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4:12-23#fen-NIV-23226a)]

 **17** From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

 **18** As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **19** “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” **20** At once they left their nets and followed him.

 **21** Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, **22** and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

 **23** Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

 “A Week of Christian Unity”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Some of you may know the song, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back; no turning back.” I have wondered what it would be like to sing this here together. We’re not all from the same denominational background, and I thought initially that it was “so Baptist.” What does that mean, so Baptist? So, I wondered what might it mean to each of us, individually, when we consider how we face each day and how we plan for tomorrow. What does it mean to say that we have decided to follow Jesus with no turning back? As we read and think about the first disciples leaving in the middle of their activities, “immediately,” and following Jesus, I hope we can know that their being fisherman is certainly very important, particularly as we have borrowed imagery from fishing for our faith, ever since. Yet, Jesus calls all kinds, doesn’t he? Anna Carter Florence is often one of the featured preachers at the Festival of Homiletics, which I attended this year in Denver, and I often read her reflections in my preparation for Sunday. Carter Florence plays around with some of the other calls Jesus might have made back then, and I’d like to share them with you to oil the wheels of your imaginative discipleship:

*“Follow me, you miners, and I will make you mine for people!*

*Follow me, you farmers, and I will make you farm for people!*

*Follow me, you bankers and tellers, and I will make you bank human life!*

*Follow me, you builders, and I will make you builders of God’s house!*

*Follow me, you shopkeepers, and I will make you keepers of God’s shop!*

*Follow me, you clowns and fools, and I will make you fools for God!*

*Follow me, you landscape workers, and I will make you landscapers of life!*

*Follow me, you seamstresses and tailors, and I will make you sew our lives as well as our garments!*

*Follow me, you cooks and chefs and butchers and bakers, and I will make you season and leaven and serve and preserve more than food!*

*Follow me, you insurance agents, and I will make you insure God’s agency!*

*Follow me, you instrumentalists, and I will make you instrumental to others!*

*Follow me, you friends, you parents, you children, you siblings, you neighbors, you strangers, you hosts and guests, and I will make you all these things—to every other human being!*”

I recommend you check out Anna Carter Florence! I also invite you to play with your own vocational calling, and see how God might be calling you to view your job differently, through the lens of discipleship. And if you are through with your life’s work, how might you view your retirement through the lens of discipleship?

*Everyone* who chooses to follow Jesus’ model is his disciple. Some, I am sure, God knows are better than others at following Jesus’ example well. On any given day, I am just as sure that *we* know we are doing a better job than on another day of our own walks of faith and discipleship. On these days more than others, maybe we are grateful for a forgiving, gracious God. Salvation, God’s saving grace after all, is God’s job, and through Christ. It is not ours.

Sometimes, though, we may forget this when we get stuck doing our best at the rest of our lives’ work. We may think that perfecting our daily work is more important than perfecting our walk of faith, our walk modeling after Christ. Even more than that, sometimes we may forget that it is God’s job, and through Christ, that others be saved. Maybe we think that by looking closely at someone else’s life, even judging them in their walk of faith and discipleship, we can somehow bring them closer to being saved. Why else, as disciples of Christ, would we be judging another? What glorious purpose is served in finding fault with another person’s path of discipleship?

I want us to think about this question, because this is the Week of Christian Unity, with today being known as “Ecumenical Sunday,” when we make a conscious decision to look beyond the differences among people of faith, and instead look at our similarities. At worship at Parker Ridge on Thursday afternoon, it struck me that we come from a lot of different faith backgrounds. So, just for fun, let’s see how many different denominations are represented among us. Any Lutherans? Baptists? Roman Catholic? The small denomination of which I was a member? The Reformed Church in America? Methodists? Cradle Congregationalists? The United Church of Christ, which began 65 years ago, was created so that we might follow as Jesus prayed, “that they may all be one.” That is my prayer regularly.

Maybe, in number, we can find fewer similarities than differences among us when we think about our faith background. It seems true worldwide in every measure. Yet, these similarities in our faith are the bedrock of lives of faith, wouldn’t you agree? We believe that we are all children of God. We believe that the creator who made us loves us and that we are called, therefore, to love God and one another. If there were one simple creed, maybe that’s it; Jesus summarized the law that way, but the creeds, my goodness, they were created around tables full of white men determined what was the essence of our faith. I’d like for us to think about how it is that we let Jesus be Lord, the one who leads us; to let God be the judge and let us be fisher people, servants for God, so that maybe we could find our way to greater peace.

One ancient creed, wrongly attributed to a fourth century theologian, Athanasius, ends with the words, “This is the true Christian Faith. Whoever does not faithfully and firmly believe this cannot be saved.” Do any of you wonder, as I do, whether these are God’s words, or a human’s words? What does God seek from us, a verbal profession of faith, or lives lived in loving service to others? Don’t get me wrong: I stand by the words of our ancient creeds regarding God’s actions on our behalf, and about Jesus’ divinity, and am thankful that people sorted through biblical text to know something about God and to clarify it “on paper.” I am someone who learns through the written word, for sure. Yet, so much has been said and done that is hurtful of others, not only critical with words, but violent in action because of our differences – of opinion. Because isn’t anything that we humans can know just that? Differences of opinion. God alone is our judge. Thank God. For the rest of us, we do the best we can, and we are called to love.

Around this congregation, we have a lot of different origin points and we have landed in a lot of different places, as well. I say that I am grateful for the creeds in their descriptions of Jesus’ divinity, and I know that there are folks here that understand Jesus’ modeling differently. But who are we to split hairs? What is it that we are doing?

Paul, hearing about the differences of opinion among members of the early church wrote, as we heard read earlier today, “**13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. **16** (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) **17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

Hmm . . . Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. So what is the “good news,” the “gospel”? So, all of our squabbling regarding how and when baptism is to happen is less important than our keeping Christ as Lord and seeking to follow him as best we can. What then about Communion? That is one of the chief differences among denominations. How many of you have read Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*? Regarding the differences of opinion around its significance, the satirist Jonathan Swift said that arguing over whether God is truly present in the sacrament, with the wine mysteriously have become blood, or whether the cup is symbolic of God’s presence was like arguing over which side of an egg to crack first, the little end or the big end. Whole wars were fought over which end of the egg to crack, said Swift. Our human desire to celebrate our differences, and even to fight about them is not what God had in mind when Jesus called us from the comfortable places of our lives to follow him. I am sure that over supper, the Tax Collector Matthew did not find fault with the fisherman Peter, holding up his place and position as higher than his. We are one in the Spirit. We are one in the Lord.

There are so many ways in which I am grateful to live here in Blue Hill. I have heard it described as a bubble, and yet we know that there is plenty of strife and challenge here, as anywhere. When I think of the different houses of worship in our town and around the peninsula, though, I wonder to what we are called—together. I will be making an earnest effort in the weeks ahead to see how much more we can be united in our efforts to ease the difficulties here and elsewhere—together. I hope we will join *together* in a vigil for an end to gun violence in our nation; I hope we may worship again together when we celebrate our most holy holidays; I hope we may together meet the greatest needs in our towns, of hunger, of a crisis of housing, of the need for warmth.

From what place of comfort and assurance does Christ call you? Casting wide Christ’s net, happy to discover in it people of all backgrounds, of all ethnicities and abilities, Jesus wants us simply to follow him; to believe He is our Lord, the one who guides us, and to give Him the glory when our lives are full and rich. Imagine what the world would look like if we *celebrated* our similarities, and even celebrated our differences, united in action, nonetheless, under one God, who loves each of us so much. May it be so for us, as we humbly seek to follow Christ. Amen.