

Will You Accept the Call? – May 1, 2016  
By Wayne J. Schneider – Gloria in Excelsis Deo

## Will You Accept the Call? Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

When listing the names of Jesus' twelve disciples, Mathias is usually not at the top of the list. I think partly because we know little about him, only the way he was chosen a disciple. Dr. Luke informs us that following the resurrection, Jesus' disciples got together in Jerusalem grieving the loss of Jesus, waiting for what would happen next. Judas, having committed seppuku, left the sum total of disciples at eleven.

In the Gospel story's timeline, this is 'downtime,' a pause between the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost. While they wait, they ruminate upon how their new beginning will take place. They are jam-packed with hope and holy anticipation. They occupy themselves with worship, prayer, and stories of Jesus. I imagine while remembering they also try to peer into the future struggling to discern God's leading.

Please note the eleven disciples did not use the United Methodist Appointment system to fill Judas' position. They used what is termed a 'call' system and this particular occasion was directed by the Holy Spirit. The disciples designated two candidates, Matthias, and Justus, by prayerful consideration out of the followers of Jesus. They drew lots and chose Matthias.

It is important to note that this call involved Spirit-led direction and community involvement. The Holy Spirit always available within the community of the faithful in this process. Unlike today, there is no campaigning. They are looking for Spiritual gifts rather than volunteers, there is more concern for how this individual with help fulfill God's Will, than how famous or influential they are. This divine call is not an arbitrary choice. The casting of lots was believed to be a distinctive way to know God's will. Matthias was God's choice.

After this, we hear little of Matthias. He, like many of the other disciples, preferred to work for God's kingdom in anonymity, the stage was not for them, Saints Peter, James, and John being the exceptions. Matthias becomes one of the multitudes of faithful servants, counted among the "twelve" he, like you and I, becomes a worker in God's vineyard.

Without knowing the specifics of his story, he is called by God for service in the Kingdom. We are aware that this involves prayer, teaching, and fellowship. Like the other Apostles, he is called to bring healing, to proclaim justice, and to minister to the needs of others in Jesus' name. Service and ministry take place through him, but it is never about him. When our only goal is to lovingly serve in Jesus' Kingdom, it's difficult to have your pride hurt.

What then, about Justus? The one not chosen. He, like Matthias, had been there from the beginning. The only thing we know about him is his name: Joseph called Barsabbas, aka Justus. Although he was not counted as one of the "twelve", he was counted as one of the faithful.

The Book of Acts is filled with outsiders who come in and insiders who go out. In chapter two we discover the Holy Spirit and Pentecost where the people are thrust out speaking languages as a gift from the Spirit. Then Saul, the tormentor of the church is converted into St. Paul, Apostle of the Gospel.

The singer Bono has both personally eased the pain of many sufferers, especially through his orphanage in Ethiopia, and collectively by using his popularity and talent to encourage people and corporations to become involved in serving others. Bono tells the story of his anger at God, and crying out against God in prayer for 'not caring about the children of Africa.' Eventually the answers began to come to him. God seemed to be saying, *"Where do you think the idea for the trips to Africa came from? Get moving! Do Something!"*

At the Ascension, the angelic words “Why do you stand here looking at the sky?” seem to be saying the same thing to us: We often expect God to take action when it is God wanting to work through us.

Consider this: Matthias, Justus, St. Paul and multitudes of women and men whose names we do not know, have heard and answered God's call. When we are tempted to think that we are not recognized or have little to offer, we are encouraged to remember Matthias. Each of us is called by God into Kingdom service. God has chosen you for ministry.

As we open our spiritual eyes, we can see our spiritual gifts and find the courage to use them. And, using these same eyes, we can see the gifts in others. Can you imagine the discussions among the twelve again, asking how God is going to use Matthias and then, how God is going to use the new twelve? God will use Matthias in ways that may never have been considered or even whispered.

The same may be said about each of us. God has plans, ideas, wild, un-thought of experiences for each of us, called by the Holy Spirit for service and ministry, if only we have ears to hear. And we never need worry about ‘how we do that?’ because the Holy Spirit will provide us with whatever we will need.

The family of the faithful is called to prayer and discernment. We are invited to assist each other in finding our Spiritual gifts, and supporting each other in them. God has given our fellowship of believers what it needs for doing ministry here and everywhere. Sometimes God brings outsiders in, like St. Paul. But, most often, God uses you and I and our gifts to go out. And, as with Matthias, we are called, blessed, and guided to invite others to know God, and to become a follower of Jesus. Let it be so for us. Alleluia. Amen.