

Jesus' call of the disciples and their commission (today's Text) is not a call to political power or leadership, or positions of authority, but to the servant ministry and mission of love, justice, mercy and peace, to do what Jesus had taught them.

"The Word of God (whether that be the Word as in Jesus, (John 1 the word became flesh and dwelt among us) or the Word that we associate with the Bible – in this is the Word of God)) calls us to respond and follow. How you hear that call, or word, determines how you follow.

Jesus didn't call the talented, the religious, not even those endowed with great faith and character, but the ordinary, the everyday person, fishermen, tradies, shonky characters and people whose background we do not even know about.

In response to a need of mission and service, Jesus gives them authority and instruction to engage in ministry, to go out to where the people are, to heal, forgive, restore and proclaim the gospel in both word and action.

Doing what Jesus does is a pretty high risk - to speak and act like Jesus. It's a call to a higher righteousness (Matthew 6:33 But strive first for the kin-dom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (NRSV)

Here is our hope, as contemporary disciples, the church, the body of Christ. By the grace of God, Jesus chooses ordinary people to do the extra - ordinary things.

God calls the unlikely - not the presidents or princes, not the elite or powerful but God lifts up the lowly as Margaret Cargill says, *lifting up means not making them like the elite but making the kingdom different from that designed by the elite that excludes and oppresses the lowly.*

Those who take up the call/Word/Bible (**hold up a bible**) are aware (or should be) of their actions, for there is always a response required, and that response is how you will live by that call/action.

Steve Taylor Principal of Knox University Dunedin NZ....writes in response to The President of the United States who stood in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, holding a Bible aloft.



During consecutive nights of protesting and rioting, in response to the death of George Floyd, Trump threatened military action. Then, once the police cleared the streets before him with tear gas and rubber bullets, Trump walked some 100 metres from the White House to the "Church of the Presidents." As he held the Bible aloft, black cover stark against the white-walled church, the



reporter asked the question, "Is that your Bible?"

Taylor writes, When asked of an individual, a private reader is assumed. "Your Bible" is personally owned, read at your leisure in the comfort of your own home. A set of reading practices result.

The book is underlined. An entire industry results, with Bibles for stages of life and rites of passage. What is central is the individual, reading through experience, seeking a "word for the day."



The President's answer was. "It is a Bible,"

In the change of words — from possessive pronoun ("your"), to indefinite article ("a") — there is a kind of depersonalisation that takes place. Suddenly, the Bible lacks a human companion. If not "your" Bible, then whose?

After the event, it emerged that this particular black Bible was carried across to St. John's Church in Ivanka Trump's handbag.

Back at the White House, did this Bible return to a human companion — whether Ivanka, Donald or a staffer? Once returned, is it read? Or does "a" Bible exist simply to appear as needed? **BLANK**

In the void, "a" Bible risks becoming a prop, a symbol for "law and order," a kind of modern-day "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

The lectionary readings for that day (when Trump held the bible aloft) included the Magnificat in Luke 1:39-56, which ends with

Mary's dream of a saving God who acts to humble the powerful and lift up the lowly.

Taylor goes on to say: The reading of the Magnificat opens up another community of Bible readers. "Is that Mary's Bible?" becomes the question around which notions of law and order begin to form. This community of readers begins with all those who, like Mary, are conscious of their "humble state" (1:48).

These are not empty dreams or words, for Mary's child (Jesus) lives to declare **the poor as blessed** and the **merciful as pure**. The beatitudes of Matthew 5 become, for Jesus, words to die by, in order that Mary's song of saving mercy might be extended to every generation — the right to breathe, and the right to grieve and the right of freedom from oppression.

Trump's photo-op with a Bible requires the examination of all our reading practices. Whether individually or communally, do we read against the powerful, or with the poor?

Taylor concludes: "Is that Mary's Bible?" is the question that destabilises every Bible reading practice. Whether you kneel beside your sofa, speak from a podium or preach from a pulpit, is your power **destabilised by mercy**, your **privilege by humility**? Such is the power of Mary's song for all those who have ears.

Is Jesus calling the church to be powerful, rich and dominant and swing the arm of might? I don't think so - Zechariah 4:6

"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

Jesus would say Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." And the Prophet Micha says, this is what the Lord requires, to **do** justice, **love** mercy and **walk humbly with** your God

The clear call of this week, then, is for us to be a people who respond to God's choosing by partnering with God in sharing the values, priorities, and purposes of God's Reign with our world.

But, if we accept God's invitation, God's choosing of us, we have to know that this will mean that we have to endure suffering and persecution. This is inevitable because following Jesus way means being out of step with the society around us. But, it also means that whenever we find ourselves being misunderstood or questioned or challenged we have an opportunity to share the message of Jesus and to demonstrate God's love and grace through our actions and our words.

Therein lies a question – how do we read the Bible or hear the call of Jesus? From a position of power and might where extremism justifies violence and terrorism against those who look, think, believe, and act differently from their beliefs.

or from the siding with the poor and marginalized , recognizing that those of us to whom much has been given have a great responsibility to share what we have with those who have less.

Is Matthew, in exhibiting this list of ordinary people, showing the character of those chosen? or showing the character and nature of Jesus in choosing these people?

Perhaps God sees in us, more potential than we do? Perhaps God sees the world needing somebody just like you, with all your worldly wisdom and sneaky tactics. Maybe God needs someone like you at work or at school or at home, at the child care center, down the street, on the netball court. In the village social room

Jesus promises that he will give us what we need to be faithful to him and his mission. And he sends us out into the world, promising that we shall be part of his mission of proclaiming a word of salvation, reconciliation, love, grace and hope to a sick and often violent world and bringing healing to a hurting people.