

Ordinary 22A - 2020

It Is Not I

It is said that St. Augustine was accosted one day on the street by a former mistress some time after he had become a Christian. When he saw her he turned and walked the other way. Surprised, the woman called out, "Augustine, it is I". Augustine as he kept going the other way, answered her, "Yes, but it is not I." It is an amusing story - one that comes close to making the same point the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer made when he wrote "When Christ calls a man to follow him, he calls him to die." (by Richard J. Fairchild from *In the Way or on the Way*)

Your Place is Behind Jesus

One of the early church fathers, a man named Origen, suggested that when Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan," what he actually meant was, "Peter, your place is behind me, not in front of me. It's your job to follow me in the way I choose, not to try to lead me in the way YOU would like me to go."

Certainly what Jesus said immediately after his rebuke of Peter would support that interpretation. He told all of his disciples, including Peter, that not only did HE have a task that was set before him by God, but that THEY also had work to do. "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me," Jesus said. "Get on this new thrill ride with me. There will be many dangerous twists and turns in the tracks, but I promise you it will never be dull. It will mean putting someone other than yourself first, being concerned not so much with what YOU want, but what God wants for you. It won't be easy and sometimes it won't be much fun, but it will never be boring." (by Johnny Dean from *Life on the Roller Coaster*)

Our Logo

Marketing experts are always quick to tell start-up businesses how important it is to develop a corporate logo. "Brand identity" they call it, pointing out that symbols serve to generate not only product familiarity but also identification with the overall philosophy of an organization. As the authors of one book on logo design state, "The success of any business or organization lies in its ability to persuade its audience to do what it wants. The ultimate goal of any designer when creating a logo is, of course, to

develop a rhetorical and informative mark - one that not only identifies the company and its business, but also helps persuade viewers to respond in a specified manner." For Christians and other religious groups we might agree that the same holds true. The old adage, "a picture's worth a thousand words" reminds us that even around the spiritual dimensions of our lives we can be consistently and powerfully moved by a single sign or symbol.

For the Jewish people it is often the Star of David, for Buddhists, the figure of their enlightened teacher, and for us as Christians the central "logo" of our life together is the cross, that sacred sign of God's sacrifice offered through Christ. Through this marking we're continually reminded of God's undying love for the world and of our call to love and serve one another throughout the course of our earthly existence. (by Lael P. Murphy from *Come Survey the Wondrous Cross as a Symbol of Our History*)

He's Going to Make It Hard on You

Bob Hodges, a Presbyterian minister in Rogersville, Tennessee, tells about duck hunting with a friend of his on Cherokee Lake in East Tennessee. His friend, Riley, who had just recently given his life to Christ, began to ask some serious questions about his Christian pilgrimage. Riley's old friends were making it very difficult for him to remain consistent in his obedience and commitment to Christ. They seemed to delight in trying to get him to fall back into the old patterns of life. They ridiculed him for spending so much time with "the preacher."

Riley asked, "Why is it that I'm having more trouble since I became a Christian than I ever did when I was lost? Everything seems to go wrong. I'm having such a struggle!" Bob Hodges spoke up, "I'll tell you why, Riley. A couple of ducks fly over and you shoot. You kill one and injure the other. They both fall into the lake. What do you do? You have to get out of the boat and go pick up the ducks, but which one do you go after first?" "Well," Riley drawled, "that's easy. I go after the injured one first. The dead one ain't goin' nowhere!" Hodges said, "And that's the way it is with the devil. He goes after injured Christians. He's not going to bother with the man dead in his sin. But the minute you give your life to Christ, you'd better get ready; the devil is going to come after you. He is going to chase you; he's going to make it hard on you." (by King Duncan, www.Sermons.com, adapted from Don Emmitte)