



REFLECTIONS

October 20, 2019

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Mark 1:17-18

Willingness

A 13-year old newly discovered singing sensation once stood before a capacity crowd at an NBA championship game. Even at that tender age the strength and quality of her voice earned the invitation to sing the *Star-Spangled Banner* to open the nationally televised event. The audience sat mesmerized by the beauty and clarity of her voice as she belted out the first few lines. Then terror crossed the 13-year old's face when she fumbled the words. Panicked to recapture the lyrics, her voice trembled for several beats until she found the home team's coach alongside singing with her.

Coach Maurice Cheeks knew the words by heart. He sang them at every game. But unlike the young aspiring singer, he couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. Yet there he stood singing his heart out to encourage a frightened girl while she struggled to regain her composure. And he stayed with her to the anthem's end.

Be Prepared, the Boy Scouts motto reads. Yet, hard as we try, we seldom feel prepared. Only maybe we *are* but hold ourselves back in fear we are not. Besides, did Jesus call the prepared? Preparation was not a qualification for his call. Willingness was!

"Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men," Jesus called to Peter and Andrew. They left their nets and followed him. Then Jesus called James and John, and they followed him too. When Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth, he didn't check for preparedness before asking him to, "*Follow me.*" They all answered Jesus' call but not because they felt prepared. They answered the call because they were *willing*.

The unexpected strikes us all from time to time. There is no preparation for it. The disciples had not expected anyone to call them from their jobs. As a teenager, Natalie Gilbert had not expected the words of the *Star-Spangled Banner* to escape her memory. And Maurice Cheeks never dreamed he would answer a call to help a terrified teen sing the national anthem before a nationwide audience. None were prepared for what happened. Still, they answered the call—and not because they were prepared.

Because they were willing.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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