

There once was a girl who knew exactly what she wanted to do when she grew up. She thought about it, made plans. She could see her life coming together – giving of herself—giving to God—being creative. She was happy.

When she got ready to go away to school to start on this journey, suddenly her friends, advisors and even her parents told her it would be a mistake to follow her vision, her path. They came up with 107 different ways it wouldn't work.

They were well-meaning—her friends and family. They tried to be logical as they cautioned her.

It wouldn't work because it wasn't the right time. What if she wasn't successful, then where would she be? She should back off a bit, pursue it later, when she was secure.

So, she didn't follow her spirit. Her direction.

But her life changed forever when she closed that door.

Thank God Jesus didn't make the same choice.

Peter and the disciples were not happy with Jesus' disturbing vision of religious intrigue, betrayal and death. Suddenly the disciples could see that things were about to get very real.

Jesus had taught them everything he could about the way of love, justice, and the very real kingdom of God they were building—but now---now was the time to put their beliefs to the test.

Throw their the irons in the fire.

Fish, or cut bait.

Peter – undoubtedly the spokesperson for all the disciples—tried to “reason” with Jesus.

Maybe they should back off, because it wasn't the right time. What if he wasn't successful, then where would they all be? He should back off a bit, pursue it later, when their situation was more secure.

And Jesus doesn't candy coat his answer.

"Stop trying deter me, tempt me from the vision of the kingdom we are pursuing.

We need continue to speak out for the poor, heal the sick, and love everyone—even the people men of faith and power tell us are outcasts! This isn't something that we put on hold until people can wrap their heads around it!

The kingdom of God isn't something that can wait until everyone gets on board.

Caring for the least and the lost is what it takes to follow me. If you don't believe in the message of love enough to stand up to power and prejudice—go home, Peter.

But----if you're looking for love that moves mountains and justice that builds bridges—then shoulder that cross of courage and follow me."

That was the vision of Jesus. It's still the vision of Jesus. It's sometimes not a popular vision even now. Naysayers are all around. Peter was just the first.

Naysayers say:

- Love is for sissies.
- Love is too weak to overcome the hatred in the world.
- Love isn't the only message. There are rules.

But Jesus' vision is about justice, healing, hope, and love.

When we say it is not—we deny Christ.

If we are only interested in our own viewpoints, our own good, if we speak out to limit God's love-- we will lose our own life.

But if we are interested in justice for everyone, God's generous love, and a kingdom that embraces every soul—we will find a life that is rich in all that money can't buy.

Because the truth is:

- Loving everyone is dangerous—even now. Because love tears down walls.
- Love makes everyone equal in the eyes of Jesus and his followers.
- Love will never stop, and love will always win.

So – if we're with Jesus—if we believe in his vision-- let's pick up our cross of love that bears the entire world – and follow him.

Amen.