



SIEBENQUELL

»Simon, Simon . . .« ~ the two-fold call



When do we call someone by name twice? Surely we want him to hear us, because what we have to say is urgent and meaningful, perhaps there is even danger from which we want to protect him. Perhaps there is something admonishing in our voice. The Bible also knows such moments.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus addresses Peter twice before his suffering: »Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back again, strengthen your brothers!« (Lk 22:31-32) Simon Peter responds very quickly by saying that yes, he is ready to go to his death with Jesus, but Jesus clearly says that he will shortly deny him three times.

The twofold mentioning of the name is remarkable, since it occurs only five times in the whole of the Holy Scriptures. And these five narratives open up new worlds and life possibilities for us. Let us look:

- In the 10th chapter of Luke's Gospel, Jesus addresses Martha twice: »Martha, Martha, you have many worries and troubles. But only one thing is necessary.« And Jesus points to Mary and her way of relishing this hour.
 - After the young Samuel was called three times in the night and he always thought it was Eli, the story then goes: »Then the LORD came and stood near, and called as the former times, Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel answered,
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Speak; for thy servant heareth."«(1 Sam 3:10) God then entrusts Samuel with what will happen to the unfaithful house of Eli.

- Moses, well past mid-life and shepherd to his father-in-law, has an extraordinary experience one day. »When the LORD saw that Moses was coming near to look at it, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, saying, Moses, Moses«. (Ex 3:4) Then God commissioned Moses to go to Pharaoh and lead the oppressed people out of Egypt.
- And finally, the first to have this experience of being addressed twice among the people of God is the patriarch Abraham. When he raised the knife to kill his son Isaac, who was already bound, it says: »Then the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, saying, Abraham, Abraham! And he answered, Here am I. And he said, Stretch not forth thine hand against the lad, and do him no harm.« (Gen 22:11-12)

In each of these stories, the situation is existential for the one whom God calls twice, because each time it is about a turning point in life. In a sense, everyone is up against a wall and is not even aware of it. The double call says: Turn around. Change your path. Change your gaze.

Abraham is prevented from killing his son and is thus called upon to urgently change his image of God.

Moses is called out of his life plans in Midian and challenged to face a new, completely different design for his life.

Young Samuel is addressed by God as a prophet for the first time and is thus challenged to recognise and fulfil his own leadership role.

Marta is shaken by Jesus in the self-image of her performance and challenged to rethink this.

And finally, Simon Peter is challenged to review and change his self-assessment.

Each of these calls means a new call to life and thus affects the whole existence of the one being addressed. If we place ourselves in each of these stories and allow ourselves to be challenged, we can hear God's voice in our own lives. His words want to save us, because perhaps our image of God is preventing us from choosing life. Or, my previously well-functioning way of life prevents me from seeing and daring new possibilities. It may be that I always give responsibility and leadership to others »more suitable«, and do not see that I myself can and should grow into this role. How often may it be that I exaggerate my performance so much that I don't even suspect that God looks at me lovingly when I do nothing, when I just am. Finally, my self-image may be unrealistic, I see myself as too small or too big and I have to learn to look at myself honestly through God's eyes.

So God also calls out to us in these five stories, »Rosemarie, Rosemarie, change your . . .!« When I imagine how the biblical stories would have continued without this radical call to change, I sense how necessary they were and are for us today. For they broaden our lives and help us to overcome limitations.

Where are we standing right now as if in front of a wall and hearing this call - twice? When we hear this admonishing urgency, we should realise that life is at stake. »Life and death I set before you, blessing and curse. Choose therefore life, that you may live, you and your descendants.« (Dt 30:19)

Lent, the »Holy Spring«, could - if we face up to these calls - become a life-changing time for us.

Rosemarie Monnerjahn

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