

When I read this proclamation from Christ himself I am struck by the sense of urgency in his words. Jesus does not call us to repent and believe tomorrow, a month from now, or whenever we feel ready; "This is the time," he tells us. For me, following Christ's call has often felt so daunting that I have found myself pushing it off for later. Because "belief in the gospel" is no small undertaking. It does not merely encompass accepting Christ's teachings, but rather following his example of radical love and self-sacrifice – even following him into the desert.

The beautiful part of this, which I often forget, is that repenting and following Christ's example of love and selflessness is a perpetual journey. When I followed Christ's call away from my loved ones and my comfortable life to live and work on the margins in Ecuador with Rostro de Cristo, I realized that my initial "yes" was only the beginning of becoming more open to God's presence and plan for me in each day. After coming out of "the desert," and returning home from this intense experience of service, I have not always retained this mindfulness. Sometimes I have fallen into the trap of believing that I can't love and serve as deeply as I did there. This thinking prevents me from being alive to God's call in the here and now. The truth is that we are called away from sin and towards love in big and small ways every day. Whether that call is to follow him into the desert or share a smile with a stranger, today is always the right time to listen closely and to say "yes."

Focus on: *Simplicity*

When I think about simplifying my life, the first thing that usually comes to mind is stuff - cutting out superfluous material things from my life, curtailing spending on things I don't need, using less resources such as water, electricity, etc. All of this is essential to simplicity, but we can also eliminate waste in another area: our time. Challenge yourself this Lent to simplify your schedule and cut out activities that prevent you from practicing mindfulness, staying in the moment, and taking quiet time for prayer. We don't necessarily have to abandon society for the desert in order to find peace and quiet, but in order to hear God, we should cut out some of the noise in our lives. Consider reducing time spent mindlessly using technology (scrolling through social media or watching TV), turning off the radio, and trying to really leave your work at work in order to spend more time being fully present to God and to those around us.

Service Suggestion

Where have you been feeling God's call to service recently? Perhaps you've wanted to start volunteering with a certain nonprofit or you've been meaning to visit someone that could use support right now. Don't put it off any longer. This week, find a way to simplify your schedule, listen to Christ, and make time to follow that call.

About the Author: Amy Krach, Rostro de Cristo alum

Amy Krach has a heart for service which led her to spend a year volunteering in Ecuador with Rostro de Cristo after graduating from Indiana University. She now spends her days working for a faith-based health organization in her hometown in Indiana, hanging out with moms (including her own) and dogs, and applying to grad school. She loves meeting new people, traveling, being outdoors, and sharing her faith through service.



Mark 1:12-15

"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

~ prayer ~

Loving Creator,

In this noisy world, help me to quiet my heart

To better listen to your call to repentance, faith, and love

In every moment.

Although I do not know where your call will lead,

Give me the courage to perpetually trust and to follow,

Even when I may lose my way

Knowing that in self-gift, service, and sacrifice

Your infinite love awaits me.

Amen.