

- > Great day... Pastor Gary here... We are so glad that you have joined us for another message segment, brought to you from the **Discovery Crossroads Ministry**; “Where Dead-ends, Become Alive Again”.

- > So, we are here in Anchorage Alaska, watching the Spring give way to the Summer. The snow is melting, and the rivers are running wild. One thing is apparent now, life is returning to the once frozen tundra. The purple lupin are popping up everywhere. Fields are set aglow with various wildflowers, that bathe the countryside in dazzling contrasts of purple, yellow, red & white. The woods are alive with animals coming out of their winter slumber. New offspring, getting their first chance at life in the wilds of Alaska. Soon, the rivers in and throughout Alaska, will be teeming with salmon, making their way to their spawning grounds. Following them, will be a host of: bears, eagles & fishermen, all eager to make a meal out of the salmon. The salmon are the prize of the season; sought after by many!

- But, *What of the salmon? What's their story?* Just a few quickie facts:

- a) Salmon return to the place where they were born, to spawn and die. They make their way hundreds of miles away from the open ocean, to complete this mighty feat!
- b) Out of a salmon's 4,000 eggs, that are delivered to the sandy patches of the upper rivers – only 4 fish make it back downstream to the open ocean, to live for many years, before returning again to spawn upstream. *Pretty low odds, huh?*

--- With the depth of the salmon's journey; you might now know why this message is called: "**River Trip**".

> Certainly the salmon's life-journey, begins in the high places (*interior*) of the upper rivers in Alaska. It fights with everything it has, to survive the trip downstream to the open ocean. And amazing as that journey is, the greater challenge comes later in life – when the salmon is required to swim upstream again (*against the current*), to mate & die!

-- We may understand all the foes that the fish will have to battle, to complete it's final-mission. But there is a greater issue with the salmon's journey, that happens *before* it strikes out on its mission – that of: "**leaving the open-ocean, to go upstream**". **So**, just imagine yourself as a happy-go-lucky salmon swimming in the open-ocean, and suddenly you get

this deep down **inkling** (*desire*) leave and go swim in waters that are shallower than you are; exposing yourself to the many bears, eagles & fishermen along the way. Does this sound like something that you would do, if you were that salmon? I mean, Who does that? I am trying to get you “the felling” of this momentous occasion... You are swimming along with 20 of your best salmon-buddies, and suddenly you get this strange **urge** to go upstream, mate & die! If you had your choice, you would go? No, you would choose to stay in the open-ocean, and live! You would, because you are a human being with “**free-will**” choice! But the salmon does not have “free-will”, and so it follows **The Voice** (**calling**) that it receives from it’s ultimate Master & Creator (**God**).

--- Have you noticed that I have used some key words today?

Words like: “**inkling**”, “**desire**”, “**urge**”, “**calling**” & “**free-will**”. These words make up the basis of what I am after today!

> **So**, What am I after today? I am after the “**Calling**”

(“**Summons**”), that WE get at some point in our lives! For, it is not just the salmon that get a calling, it is us too!

-- God “**calls us, and gives us a Deep-longing**” (*Desire*), to take a “**River-trip**” (*Road Trip*) towards Him. He “**whispers into our soul**”, calling us by name. **Isaiah 43:1-3a**, “**this**

is what the Lord says - he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" NIV

> **3 things to know**, in this passage:

1) "**Summoned you**"... The word "**Summoned**" in **verse 1** means: "**Invites**", "**Orders**", "**Sends for**". **Ok**, If you get a "**summons**" from the Lord of Life, your Creator (*I mean, **He sends for you***) - **Don't you think that you should go?** He is God; you are not! Yes, we have "free-will", and can choose NOT to go - **but should we?**

- A "**summons**" is a pretty big deal. **Who of us gets a "summons" to jury duty, and just doesn't go?** That's a pretty good way of getting a one-way ticket to prison!

....When I think of God's "**loving-summons**"; I think about the words we spoke of either – God's: "**inkling**", "**desire**", "**urge**" & "**calling**", that He sends Deep within the recesses of our hearts. Make it out to be: a "**Deep-longing**" – a

“**Supernatural-Longing**” for Him. **Look**, the “**Cambridge Dictionary**” says of “**Supernatural**”, that it is: “*something that is caused by Forces, that cannot be explained by science*”. You better believe it! **Dictionary.com** says: “*Relating to what is beyond natural; unexplainable by natural law or phenomena*”; “*of, or pertaining to, characteristics attributed to God or a deity*”. Again, You better believe it! I absolutely believe that **God** has the **Power** (**Force**), to cause these **Inklings** (**Longings**) in us!

- Soon enough, many salmon will get God’s “**Supernatural-Longing**” placed upon their being, and they WILL OBEY His Voice (*His Calling*). **How do we know that this WILL happen?** Because the bears, and the eagles, and the fishermen, will prove it so! It happens year after year; all at the same time of the year – a Perfect cycle!

-- And here’s the deal folks... In the same manner, there WILL come a time (*a sweet time*), when God will Call us to Him too!

- The Bible says (**Romans 5:6**), that, “*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came **at the right time** and died for us sinners.*” NLT

1) In the greater context, Jesus Christ came 2,000 + years ago, when humanity struggled greatly, and He died on the cross, to forgive our every sin, and make us right

with God (*at Peace with God*). This, Jesus has already done for us!

2) But on a personal context, I believe that this passage means that: right when WE are/were absolutely helpless, is when God Called to us, and made Himself known to us. He placed a "**Calling**" (*Summons*) on our heart, to **turn to Him** for Eternal salvation – a salvation that will stand the test of time!

* I believe that God Calls us, at least twice in our lifetime: **1)** to receive His Salvation, and **2)** to Call us Home, when our life on earth is over – hence Psalm 23, verses 1 & 4, "*The Lord is my Shepherd; **I have all that I need***"... "*Even when I walk through the darkest valley; I will not be afraid, **for you are close beside me!***" *Need I say more?*

Ok, Point #2:

2) "by name"... Isn't it better when someone calls you by name, instead of "**Hey You**"? God Calls us "**by name**". We are not a number to Him. We are not some stranger to God - He has known us all of our lives. The Bible says (Psalm 139:15-16), "***15 You watched me** as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. **16 You saw me before I was born.** Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out*

before a single day had passed." NLT

- There is not a more personal means of being in a relationship with someone, than being on a "**first name basis**". I want you to grab the depth of what I am saying... God, The Creator of all that is, KNOWS "**YOU**" by name. ***Let that sink in.....*** If you are honest with yourself, that reality is freaky! God, the Infinite, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Majestic, Alpha & Omega, the Beginning & the End, literally KNOWS "**YOU**" by name. And not just by name, He KNOWS "YOU" to the ultimate-degree... every hair on your head... the sound of your voice... your weaknesses... your strengths... your secrets... the thoughts of your mind... the motives of your heart... what makes you sad... what gives you joy... etc.
- And yet, by your same name, He gently calls "YOU" to enjoy a **One-on-one relationship** with Him. He draws near to you daily, in the hopes that "*you will fall in love with Him; as deeply as He loves you!*" We are the "**Apple of His Eye**"; the very center of His Gaze. He Loves us equally, impartially, and with a Love that never fails. When God Calls our name (*unto our heart*), we find complete: Joy, Fulfillment, Peace, and so much more. He loves us so much, that He carved our name into His Hand. He loves us so much, that He gave His One & Only Son to die of the Cross of Calvary for us! Never

let the thought come to your mind, that our Great God does not KNOW "YOU" – He knows "YOU", better than you know yourself.

And, Point #3:

3) "**you are mine**"... Do you know the significance of those words? Seriously, you & I "**belong to God**" - "*For we have purchased by the Blood of The Lamb, Jesus Christ; we are NOT our own.*" So, on one hand, people might struggle with this, because they don't want anyone to own them. But, on another hand, **Who wouldn't want to have the most Powerful, Incredible, Unshakable, Unbeaten, Father, Friend, & Bodyguard in all the universe, by your side?** I mean, the Bible tells us (Romans 8:31), "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" **God is** our: Rock... our Shield... our Fortress... our Refuge... our Daddy... our Big Brother... our Strength... our Savior... our King... No one dare mess with one of God's Children, or they will pay the penalty - ask the Pharoah, and all those who tried to hurt God's people. Frankly, I can't think of a better place that I'd rather be, then: in the Hand of God – wrapped up tight inside His barrier of protection – with my name written on His Mind, Heart & Hand.

> So listen, When God says that He "**summons us**" ("*invites us*"; *even "sends for us"*) - May it be that: He lays a Deep-longing

& Desire upon our heart, to know & love Him, more than we ever have, or thought that we could! May He give you a **Longing** (*a thirst*) for Him, that can only be satisfied by Him! Just as the scriptures says, *"As the deer pants for water, so my soul longs for You God"* *If you do not have the Longing, ask Him for it and it will be yours!* And realize, that when God gives us a longing for Him, that He too can & will satisfy it! To satisfy your thirst for Him, is the most fulfilling thing that can ever happen to you!

-- *"If you got the call today, to leave the world behind and follow Jesus"; would you? Would your "free-will" tell God, "No, I am not coming; I am not yours" – or would your "free-will" tell Him, "Yes Lord of all Life; I am totally Yours"?*

-- *"If you hear His Voice Calling to you today (or any day) – Don't harden your heart towards Him" – Don't refuse to obey His Call. As the salmon rests securely in the Deep parts of the river; Likewise, may you & I rest securely in the Deep aspects of God's Inner-Most Being & Love. "Deep calls to deep" right now - so, Will you go Deep with God?*

Discovery Questions:

- 1)** Do you believe that you have had an “innate” (*present from birth*) desire to do or be something, or to go someplace, that may not have made any sense to you at the time?
- 2)** Is life sometimes like the fast-running stream, whisking you away to parts unknown? Do you fear that the fast pace may make you miss your turn-off (*or calling in life*)?
- 3)** Do you believe that maybe you have had a calling (*a Supernatural-nudge*) from God in your innermost being? Can you explain that nudging, or share the experience with others?
- 4)** As Romans 5:6 suggests; Have you ever been utterly helpless, in need of God, and called out to Him? If so, explain how that calling helped you to recognize His Voice.
- 5)** Do you feel like you are a stranger to God, like He doesn't know you exist, much less knows your name? Explain the feeling.
- 6)** Does it freak you out a bit knowing that God knows more about you than yourself?
- 7)** Is there anything burning on your heart today, that you long for? Could that burning be God's Voice unto your spirit?

8) “Deep calls to deep”; what does that mean to you?

9) Seriously, with your God-given “free-will” choice, do you think that you would leave the streams of this life, and follow Jesus to parts unknown?