

“Leaving Your Nets”

Matthew 4:12-23

27 January 2008

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
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Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Prayer.

What level of commitment

Does Christ place upon our lives?

Is there a limitation of time?

No.

Is there a cap on money?

No.

Are there equal expectations among disciples?

Nope.

Can we make arrangements to place the family first?

Not really.

Can it be postponed until a later date?

Possibly; but that is gambling with time,

which is,

Placing trust in statistical outcomes,

Not placing your trust in God.

From the Bible we know that makes God cranky.

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For those of us who are retentive
planners,
Over-involved organizers,
Or like-to-be in charge
and in-control,
type A leaders,
This comes as bad news.
Time management? out the window.
Budgetary constraints? forget about
them.
Equal distribution of responsibilities?
don't even ask.
Making it home for dinner? Maybe ...
not tonight.
Thus, it is
with a Spirit filled
Disciple of Jesus.

Sign me up, baby!
And make it a lifetime commitment!

Jesus had retreated to Galilee,
Capernaum, to be exact.
He had done so,
We are told,
With one eye on prophecy
And the other on destiny.
He drew from his deep Jewish roots
To touch the electrified third rail
Of prophetic energy:
Isaiah had foretold,
That light would dawn
And chase away the darkness.
Light would be revealed
To people who sat in the shadows.
Light would rise in the land
Of Zebulun and Naphtali,
On the road by the sea,
Across the Jordan,
Where the people of Capernaum
Made their homes.

With this prophetic posture
Jesus picked up where John the
Baptist
Had left off,
Like a modern day plagiarist,
Using John's identical words,
"Repent," Jesus proclaimed,
"for the kingdom of heaven
has come near."

The other eye was focused
On the road that led to Jerusalem.
That road took him through
Three years of choosing disciples,
Preparing disciples,
Teaching disciples
All that would be necessary
To keep the light alive
After his body would be replaced
By his Spirit
At his ascension
on the day of Pentecost.

This job of disciple making
... disciple growing ...
... Leadership development ...
is one fraught with danger.
Bring on board the wrong person
At the wrong time
And everything could be lost
In the blink of an eye,
I know,
Because I've seen it happen.
It makes one wonder
Why greater care
Wasn't made in the selection of his
disciples?
Why not three interviews,
references, and a background check?
But with the confidence of an all-
knowing God
Jesus cuts to the quick:

"Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

"Follow me" is the invitation.
"I will make you fish for people" is the promise.
On this day,
and in that place
The fishing must have been mighty lousy,
Because the prospect of following Jesus
And fishing for people
Was a whale of a lot better
than bad fishing or
staying home and mending nets with dad.
Up they jumped!
"Immediately," it says,
as if to give the impression
of complete and total conversion.
"Immediately they left the boat and their father,
and followed him."

Those of you who have raised,
Or are raising teenagers,
You know that it doesn't take long
For "immediately" to turn into
"when I get around to it,"
and "when I get around to it,"
to change once again into
never getting the job done.
"I forgot about it!
Don't blame me!"

The immediacy of Christian discipleship
Is not something that can be
Bargained or negotiated,
Whined about,
Justified,
Or forgotten.

Jesus immediately began his ministry
Teaching, proclaiming, and curing
every disease
Throughout Galilee.
Thank goodness
Simon Peter didn't respond,
"Count me in,
just give me a chance to sell these fish,
put my boat up for sale,
and to close up shop with my accountant."

I recall the amazement I felt
As a twenty-something seminary student
When second career students
Would report how they had walked
away from big salaries,
Sold their home,
Packed their bags,
And moved their family into seminary housing.
"You've got to be nuts"
I remember thinking to myself.
No, they were not nuts,
I now recognize
with reflection
And maturity.
They were simply acting with the immediacy
of Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

There is probably
a certain level of discouragement in
the crowd.
There usually is
When faced with the conditions of discipleship.
"I can't do that."
"I couldn't do that to my family,"
we think dismissively.

But, I'm here to tell you,
"Yes! You can!"

Each of us can "Come."
It is all about embarking on a journey
With Jesus;
Being mindful that we are traveling
together.
When we come when we are called,
We demonstrate faith sufficient for the
journey.
We demonstrate a desire for there to
be
Something more to this world than
Simply living and dying a purpose-
empty life.
We demonstrate a deeply felt longing
To connect our lives completely
With Christ
In every facet of our existence:
At work, at home, at church, at school,
And every place in-between
When we respond to the invitation,
"Come."

Faith sufficient
Is an important point that should be
made.
It may not be knowing with certainty
The next step God may be leading.
But it is knowing with confidence
That God will always act
In our best interest.
God probably isn't going to destroy our
family,
Put us into bankruptcy,
Or have us lose our jobs.
Faith sufficient
Is as much about trusting in God
As it is responding to His call.
God will abide.
God will take care.

God will see us through.

Leave those old nets behind.
Join me in fishing for people.
It is a whole lot better than what
we've been doing.
And the promise
Is so much more Divine.
Amen.