

You know, things have a way of coming back and haunting you, if you're not careful. I can't remember who I was talking to, last Sunday but I was saying how happy I was that I got to talk about John's account of the calling of disciples, rather than the one from Mark we discussed a couple of weeks ago in the Wednesday Night Bible study. And I think my comment had to do with the fact that Mark generally doesn't add a lot of detail, leaving it to us to work all that stuff out.

Of course I hadn't looked ahead so I didn't know I'd be preaching on that, today. Oh well...

*After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God and saying, "The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel."*

He had heard the news that John the Baptist had been executed. John had finally enraged the ruling family with his denunciations of the immorality of their lives, and the injustice of their kingdom, and they had responded, predictably, by killing him. John paved the way for Jesus, and now that John's ministry had ended, Jesus knew it was time for his to begin, time to gather his disciples.

So Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Good news of God. His message was simple: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." "The kingdom of heaven has drawn near to you; in fact, it is standing before you in the flesh! Change your ways, change your priorities, your hearts, your minds, your lives -- enter today, into God's new reign."

*As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea-- for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.*

Notice that in calling these two disciples, Jesus linked his call to their occupation, to the experiences and skills they already had. Peter and Andrew weren't asked to throw away their nets, abandon everything they had learned over the years; instead, Jesus wanted them to exchange their old nets for new ones and use their skills and instincts as fishermen in new and more meaningful ways...

And that's the way it is with us, also. We all have a calling and a vocation in the world -- we each have certain skills and things we do well. We have gifts and talents which we are using right now. When we become Disciples of Christ, when we offer ourselves to him in his service in the church and in the world, Jesus invites us to use the gifts and the talents we already possess. Use those gifts and talents, but now direct them in service to the liberating power of God's kingdom, rather than the vanities of the kingdoms of this world.

**God's will is done on earth by disciples whose commitments to the future are married to the skills and the talents they have developed in the past. "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people, he said."**

And what would that sound like now?

- Perhaps to a truck driver charged with hauling loads up and down I-5, Jesus might have said, "Follow me, and I will show you a new road, a highway to everlasting life..."
- Perhaps to the homemaker whose responsibility includes the raising of three children, he might say, "Follow me, and I will make you raise children of God for the rewards of eternity..."
- Perhaps to the manager in charge of an organization or the entrepreneur, Jesus might have said, "Follow me, and I will have you manage the new enterprise of God, making the whole work as one for the good of each part..."
- Perhaps to the real estate broker, whose job it is to put people and housing together,

Jesus might have said, "Follow me and I will show you a heavenly home..."

As many have noted before, Jesus didn't assemble a blue ribbon commission here or a panel of experts like we do. Jesus was doing something important -- fixing the world's ills with divine salvation, so he recruited ordinary people off the street, some fishermen, a tax collector, a friend of a friend, and someone's brother. People like you and me.

Besides sharing our ordinariness, these people shared something else as well. They were restless and looking for something deeper and greater in life. I think they had the sense within them that there is more to life than making a living and I think they wanted to find a greater and grander purpose in life which only the spirit of God can reveal. I think Jesus touched the person they wanted to be, when he said, "Follow me."

The word disciple means student, learner, and apprentice. Disciples are people who seek to learn and grow in the way and the life of their teacher. And the truth is, we are all disciples in one way or another.

Consciously or unconsciously, we all choose teachers -- in life -- from our families, from the TV, from sports heroes, work, culture, -- whatever -- and we emulate those heroes in ways that we sometimes don't recognize or understand.

So we face life's greatest decision. We all choose, sometimes deliberately and sometimes without awareness, to be like Christ or be like somebody else. Surely if we must all make such a choice in life, we should be deliberate about it, and choose to be like Christ as God gives us the grace to try.

Are you restless? Are you looking for some deeper purpose in life and some greater sense of mission and calling? Are you seeking some larger meaning for your life? What could be more important than to accept Christ's call to discipleship, using the skills and talents, and gifts He's already given you to carry on his work in the world? Join your skills to his purposes and he will tell you what to do.

Come you accountants and bookkeepers, and I will make you balance the economy of heaven. Come you lawyers, and agents, and advertisers, and you will represent a new creation...

Jesus came into Galilee preaching about the Good news of God, and he picked out some ordinary people who were restless, and he changed their lives with three simple words: "Come follow me."

Amen.