

*Kingdom Calling -  
Disciples*

Matthew 4:18-25

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Would you do it?

Leave a lucrative business venture in order to follow some poor thirty-year old traveling around Ontario on the motivational speaker circuit?

At first glance that seems to be what the disciples had done.

Two sets of brothers – Simon and Andrew; James and John.

Both families are in the fishing trade – which was by no means a poor way to earn a living.

You wouldn't get rich as a fisher. But you DID live along a busy trade corridor. And there were enough urban centres around. So there was always a market for your product.

So you could count on making enough for a decent living.

They owned their own boats.

And Mark's gospel tells us that Zebedee had hired men working alongside the boys.

Small business operators – that's what they were.

Simon and Andrew are hard at work – casting a net into the sea.

Jesus calls.

And they **immediately** leave their nets and followed him.

James and John were mending their nets – a task generally done after the fishing is over.

Jesus calls.

And they **immediately** leave the boat and their father, and followed him.

They leave behind their trade, their possessions, and their family.

All to follow Jesus.

So.... what **WAS** it about the young, 30 year old Jesus that so attracted them?

I was 35 years old when I got hired on here at Calvin Church.

And one of the things I heard upon arriving was people saying, "*He's too young. What can he bring us?*"

My age got in the way.

Jesus was five years younger than that.

Thirty years old.

Just old enough, according to the scholars, to be able to "handle" reading and studying the Song of Solomon – the great piece of erotic Biblical love literature.

Why would someone give up their family business to chase around behind him?

We're not told.

All we're told is that Jesus spoke to them.

And they responded.

But wait – perhaps that's exactly it.

Jesus called to them.

There was something in the voice, something in his presence, that drew them in.

They met Jesus. They heard what he had to say. And they responded.

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

Two things in this call I'd like you to notice.

*"Follow me"* - that call from Jesus is a call to be disciples, to be apprentices to him as the Teacher.

First, in that culture, it was normal for students to find a rabbi, and to request permission to follow that person; to become apprentices with that teacher.

They would go everywhere with the teacher – listening to the teaching, and then practicing that teaching so that they could pass it along to others.

Whatever the Teacher said, they learned.

However the Teacher instructed, they acted.

They would find a rabbi whose message was attractive to them.  
And they'd approach the rabbi, asking/begging to be allowed to come on as a disciple of him.  
*Rabbi, may I follow you?*  
Hoping, sometimes beyond hope, that the Rabbi would say "yes" and allow them into his cohort.

What happens here in Matthew 4?  
**He** called **THEM**.  
The **rabbi** calls the **students**.  
The **master** calls the **apprentices**.  
Totally backwards!

Virtually every religion presents us with a god whom people have to seek.  
Certain terms and conditions are laid out, and people have to work – often very hard and at great cost – to try and get that god's attention.  
They act, they pay, they pray, they pilgrimage.... and **hope** that the deity will notice and perhaps even respond.

Matthew presents us with the Son of God active – coming, seeking, calling.  
He calling **US**, rather than we calling **HIM**.

Can you believe that this still is the case?  
That Jesus is more interested in finding YOU, than YOU ever could be about finding HIM?  
It is the Son behaving JUST like the Father.  
Jesus, just like the Heavenly Father, who said through the prophet Jeremiah:  
*You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart -Jer 29:13.*

Why are we assured that we will find Him?  
Because he is searching first for us.  
He is calling you, ever before you think about calling him.  
He is the God of divine initiative. Nothing passive about him. Desiring to have you follow him.

The question is really not, "Is God calling me?"  
The question is, "Am I paying attention, and ready to respond?"

And I believe this – that IF you pay attention, really take the time to look at and pay attention to the person and the message of Jesus, you'll find him utterly attractive.  
You'll find a magnetic person that is very hard to resist.

If you only pay attention to the institution that has grown up over the centuries, or some of the religious in's and out's that have developed over time;  
or if you get all bent out of shape about the personality quirks of some of the other people that have signed on to be apprentices for Jesus,  
if you do that, I suspect you could easily get tripped up.

Some of you here this morning may be in precisely that position.  
All you see in the Church are hypocrites.  
All you can notice is rules and regulations in the religious side of Christianity.  
They give you questions. Or make you doubt.

Fair enough.  
I suspect that some of the questions and hesitations you have are right on the money.  
But I'm going to ask you not to be fixated on those things.  
Because it's not where the Bible is at, and it is not where our real, vibrant, eternal spiritual future is at.  
Not at all.  
It's with the person of Jesus.

Whatever your career is – whatever your position in life,

as he comes wandering in, listen to him.

How does he wander in?

When you, wherever you are in life, take the time to settle back and read the account of Jesus' life. Notice what he says. Where he goes. Who he hangs around with.

Just – be careful.

You might find yourself drawn right in to him – like these four were ;-)

And, for those of you that are already followers of his -

and that are trying to win your children, or your co-worker for Christ

remember this -

that, ultimately, your job in witnessing is NOT about how big and shiny your smile can be, or how well rehearsed your lines are.

But simply sharing with them the words and the person of Jesus.

That's the most powerful tool of all.

It is, ultimately, the ONLY thing that will penetrate hearts.

Tell them about how Jesus is important in your life.

How he is your friend.

Invite them to read the story of Jesus, as it is found here in the Gospel.

To meet Jesus themselves.

Follow.... **ME**....

Not a set of religious principles.

Not a bunch of rituals and practices.

But follow a person – Jesus.

If you're here today and questioning, check him out.

If you've got relatives that are unsure, give them a copy of story of Jesus' life.

There is no more powerful witnessing tool. Ever.

Notice also

that this Jesus comes into the lives of very ordinary people.

Small businessmen, in a rural region of Israel.

Jesus isn't looking only for the brilliant scholar, or the well-connected politician, or the bankrolled executive.

They can come, too. But, really, there aren't too many of them.

Most of all Jesus is looking for the average, ordinary sort of person.

Like all of you.

And he comes into your life -

- where you work and play and sleep -

and says, "Follow me – come and be my apprentices."

There is room in the community of Jesus for **ALL** sorts of people.

To come just as you are.

Jesus doesn't tell these fishermen, "Follow me and I will make you healers of people."

[Bruner, *Matthew*]

That's medical talk. That's what he's say if he were talking to doctors.

These are fishers, who understand the language of the sea.

"I'll make you fishers of people."

You don't have to pretend to be someone else when it comes to Jesus.

He'll take you as you are,

and then make you

over time

into the person he is calling you to be.

Just..... **follow**.....

Don't just read the account of Jesus' life like you might read some novel at the beach this summer. You know: Enjoy the read, put it down, and walk away.

Instead – **Follow**.

The word for that, by the way, is one that means “*Keep on following*.”

Keep on paying attention to what he says.

Keep on practicing to do what he calls his apprentices to do.

Keep on doing that.

**Follow**....

.....**me**.....

And so, new disciples in tow, Jesus begins his work.

He teaches.

He proclaims

He heals.

**Teaches** is a word that describes instruction in God's will for peoples lives

- what we would call ethics. [Bruner *Matthew*]

- how we should respond to God.

**Proclaims** is a word that typically focuses on **God's** activity.

- it announces what he is doing.

We saw both a couple of weeks ago, actually, back in verse 17:

**Repent**.... that's the teaching part

“turn your lives around”

**For the kingdom of heaven has come near**.... that's the proclaim part

“God is at work”

It's the big picture, broad vision stuff.

And the very personal, how-do-you-behave-today stuff.

And....

third thing

Jesus heals.

ALL sorts of diseases and infirmities.

Matthew presents a list of ailments that afflict the

body,

mind and

soul.

And Jesus has power over **all** of them.

The Kingdom of Heaven that he is ushering in has power over them **all**.

And he preaches, teaches and heals **ALL** over the place.

In Galilee,

In the area north of Galilee,

In the heathen area to the east of the Jordon River.

Hey, people even come to hear him even from the smug religious centre of Jerusalem and Judea.

Jesus:

speaks to **all** of life

has power over **all** that damages life

brings the kingdom to **all** places in life.

“There is nothing beyond the reach of Jesus' Lordship;  
He is Lord of all...

...There is nothing within the human experience that Jesus is unable to touch and wholesomely to affect, whether it is death at the outer limit of human life, or the will in the innermost sanctuary of human life, or the body with its cells wrapping the will...

Jesus is not only the Saviour of the international macrocosm – as the Light of the Nations – he is also the Saviour of the human microcosm down to the most minute cells; He is the life of the Body.”

[Bruner, *Mathew*, p. 130]

Calling all sorts of people.  
Calling in all sorts of places.  
Healing all sorts of diseases.

Jesus is Lord of **ALL**.

And as Lord of **ALL** he calls to us today, too.  
And - like the disciples, it is not a call that is open to negotiation.  
When he calls us to follow, he is demanding everything.

I have to admit that sometimes I get very, very worried about the Church in North America.  
We have become so spiritually whimpy.  
Getting into the heresy of treating Christ like the manager of some local Loblaws.  
And we come with our little shopping list of what we want for this or that.  
Take what we like.  
A bit here and a bit there.  
And leave the rest.

Come to worship when I want.  
If I have the time.  
Volunteer a little.  
As long as it doesn't demand too much.  
Follow the morality that I read about in Scripture  
When I happen to agree with it.  
Give some money to Kingdom causes.  
If there's a bit left over after vacation.  
Take some time for the person struggling at work  
No, wait.... not that.

You get the idea.

Then we begin to follow Jesus like the crowds.  
Trailing from a distance.  
Watching.  
Waiting for the moment we can step forward for our little handout.  
And then dip back into the anonymity of the group.

Coming along behind Jesus because of what we can **get**.  
Because of what he can **fix**.

When Jesus called the fishers to follow him, he didn't lay out the long term plan for them.  
He didn't give them some sort of CAA triptik.  
Never does. That's not how the Kingdom of God works.

It works with the Manna principle.  
Manna - the food that God gave to the people of Israel during their desert pilgrimage.

Each day enough for that day.  
And just for that day.

And the cloud that guided the nation.  
It took them forward for that day.  
And tomorrow it would move to the spot for tomorrow.  
Not for a month from now.

Each day enough for the day.

The Manna Principle.

That's how the Kingdom works.

So, these disciples didn't know that within a few years James would be dead – seen as a threat by King Herod and killed.

Or that eventually eleven of Jesus' twelve disciples would die as martyrs.

All they knew was that they had to follow.  
Surrendering their property, their businesses, their time.  
Their family lives were never the same again.

From an immediate cost/benefit analysis, it doesn't seem to make sense.  
But long term – the Kingdom spread around the globe.  
And from an eternal perspective – priceless!

Friends, we live in a culture of the immediate.  
A culture that measures by rates of return **today**  
of what I'll get back **right now**.

Can we, in the middle of that, still hear the voice of Jesus?  
And, if we do,  
will we listen?