

The Calling

Matthew 4: 18 – 22NLT

"¹⁸ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him. ²¹ A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²² They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind."

Selecting people for ministry is the task of the Savior. Yet, there are many who serve Him right where they live each and every day. Our calling is to do as the disciples did thousands of years ago, **"follow Him."** Why do you think Jesus selected these twelve men to be His followers?

Were they the most highly qualified men He could find? Did they all have the best of academic, social and spiritual reputations? Were they the best friends of someone on the inside track? **If not, then, Why were these twelve men called to follow Jesus? And, What does this have to say to you and me?**

"The Twelve, a group chosen by Jesus to accompany him and share his ministry (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:13-16; cf. John 6:70; Acts 1:13). From what I have read, that number apparently refers to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28) and symbolizes the restoration of Israel. As witnesses to his ministry and resurrection, these Twelve authenticate the church's post-resurrection proclamation of the traditions brought about by Jesus (cf. the selection of Matthias to replace Judas, Acts 1:15-26)."

Let's look at a few of these men in particular today.

There was Simon Peter, Cephas:

- From Bethsaida in Galilee, fisherman, follower of John the Baptist.
- One of the twelve disciples. He was married (Mat 8:14)
- Continued to be married once he became a follower (1Co 9:5).
- One of the three primary leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9).
- Traveled to Antioch, where he spent time with Paul. Ended up in Rome.
- Martyrdom by crucifixion (upside-down) in Rome

There was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter

- From Bethsaida in Galilee, fisherman, follower of John the Baptist
- One of the twelve disciples
- Continued his ministry in Scythia (*Sci -thia*) (southern Russia), Asia Minor, Thrace, Greece, and Achaia.
- Martyrdom in Patras (in Achaia)

There was James, son of Zebedee, one of the "Sons of Thunder."

- Fisherman from Galilee
- One of the twelve disciples
- James was brought to trial by a man who was so moved by James' testimony, that his accuser became a Christian, and was later beheaded with James.
- Martyrdom by decapitation at the command of Herod Agrippa I (the grandson of Herod the Great) in 44 A.D. James was the first of the twelve to be martyred.

There was John, the brother of James, one of the "Sons of Thunder"

- Fisherman from Galilee
- One of the twelve disciples, commonly believed to have been "***the beloved disciple.***"
- One of the three primary leaders of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:9). Cared for Jesus' mother Mary. Exiled to the Isle of Patmos. In his later years he reportedly returned to Ephesus to win back a congregant who had left the faith.
- No record of martyrdom or death. He was believed to have been around as late as 100 A.D.

It was the calling of these four men that this passage speaks of..

As Jesus began preaching, there were a number of people who followed Jesus in this country. Many were called, but there were twelve who were called out from among the followers to be His chosen. For some particular reason, Christ was intimately manifested unto them, unlike the rest of those hearing and watching.

So, let's look at the questions I posed in the beginning.

First - Why were these men called out of all the rest to stand with Him?

Jesus went about gathering people who would later be known as "***disciples.***" The first "***hearers***" of the Word, and later those who would become "***preachers***" of God's Word. The Lord wanted people who would be witnesses of His miracles, and participants in the miracle of reaching and changing lives. Those who had personally seen and knew of His power, and were called to tell others of what they had heard and seen.

These four men left their fishing nets at the Sea of Galilee and became Disciples. Galilee was considered a remote part of the world to most. It's inhabitants, were less cultured, and thus, less influenced by the refined things the world had to offer. The people of this area were not as polished, as the Galileans were known to be.

The Word says, "For He chooses the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise." It was thought that these four had had some prior acquaintance with Jesus. But it wasn't until some time later that they were called to a close and continuous relationship with Jesus. It's much like having been sent to Sunday School, as a child, to learn about Jesus, but not necessarily making a commitment to serve Christ until sometime later.

As we look at these four men, we notice several things in common.

1) They were brothers.

The fact that all of them were kinsmen of some sort, related to each other, became a factor in their following Jesus. Families in our world today, for many, do not have as strong a bond as they did back then. As brothers they stood together.

2) They were all fishermen.

Consequently, that meant they were most likely poor. Many people back then, if you didn't have any property of value or investments, then most likely you would have been fishermen. A very common fact in those days.

3) They were all businessmen, who had been brought up to labor.

Hard work would have been the norm. A strong work ethic. At that time in life, it was a needed factor, especially in that vocation. It was also important for someone who was called to follow and serve God.

4) Fishing and mending their nets, was a daily routine. Which speaks of their ability to use that which they had to the fullest.

They worked hard and maintained what they had. They knew the values of what they had. They used everything they had wisely, as they would as they followed the Lord.

So, it was entirely possible that these men were called out of the crowd because of these facts... Among other things.

Just as many people today are called for many of the same reasons.

Think about it -

•**They were related to each other**, thus, there was already a bonding between them. As children of God, there is supposed to be a brother and sisterly bond between each of us. We are related by the blood of Christ.

•**We are a poor people**. In our world today, some of us may have means, but in our spiritual need, we are all poor. We serve the Lord because we need Him, and desire His mercy and grace. We need His guidance, encouragement and love every day.

•**Many have been found to have diligence**. In order to obtain the blessing of Christ, we work, work and then work harder, to accomplish the many tasks of life and of ministry. Hard work is a common part of life.

•**We are often put in places where we must and should help others, by using that which we have for a longer time than normal**. Maintaining, utilizing and handling correctly, that which God gives to us.

Like these men called years ago, we are called to follow Jesus. We dare not allow this ministry, His ministry, to fail for lack of effort. There are people ***waiting to hear, waiting to see, waiting to discover*** the miracle of Christ. They need witnesses to step up, to maintain and to proclaim Jesus as Lord. ***We are those witnesses. We are modern day disciples.***

Who or what are modern day disciples?

They are men and women who are willing, because of an unusual manifestation of Christ within them, feeling compelled, to speak out. Compelled to serve. Compelled to seek for ways to help people find Jesus Christ as Lord. There is a strong desire within our heart and we have to discover how to fulfill that desire in Christ.

Second - What does this have to say to you and me?

I have a strong belief that God is, or has, selected many of us to come out of the crowd and stand with Him today. ***It is not by accident. Rather by His design.*** He is calling people who are often too timid to stand up and out. People who are living common, everyday lives, perhaps fishermen, so to speak. Some with ***material resources***, and many others ***with barely enough to get by day by day***. I believe that the time has come for men and women to say to the Lord, ***"Here am I, send me!"***

How did Andrew, Peter, James and John respond to the call of Christ?

"At once they left their nets and followed Him." "Immediately, they left the boat and their father, and followed Him." Their response was immediate and complete. Without hesitation, and with full willingness no matter the cost. The author even says, they left their father - representing their family, to serve Him. That could be a tough call for some.

Some of us seated here today, are being called to come and stand with Jesus. There is no doubt of that in my mind and heart. The question is, ***"Do we answer that call, or not?"*** He realizes that answering this call is more difficult for some because of people, things, money, wants, and a host of other distractions this world places in our way.

Let me ask you this,

"If there was nothing holding us back, no job responsibilities that would conflict, no money demands that required our time and talents, no family to hold us back, would we truly follow Him right now? Would we "come just as we are?" As the song says, that many of us here today have sung over and over?"

Jesus said,

LUK 9:23 ***Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*** If we are following Christ, we must deny ourselves - put away, remove our wants and wishes, take up His cross daily, ***(doing what needs to be done, physically and publicly)*** to follow Him. Whatever that may require. ***Doing what He desires of us!***

Jesus also reminds us,

JOH 12:46 ***"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*** (Do we hear what he is saying?) We dare not stay where we were once we accept His grace.

It is His desire, that we all walk in the light of His love. Just as He depended upon the disciples of old, He is depending us, you and me, to help bring this powerful message of hope to the lost. We are Christ's legs, arms, hands and feet. Thus, ***just as those first four disciples were called, so are we.***

May I pose a few questions:

Who have we made an effort to reach out to in the past week, month or year?

How many people have come to know Jesus as Lord, because of our lives?

How willing are we to truly follow the Lord, when life becomes difficult or hard?

We all know that life is full of ups and downs, and that at times we will be faced with situations we would rather not have in our lives. It is during these times that our true character is demonstrated. We may not be one of the original twelve, but we are one of His children today.

Illustration:

"One night, an American president was awakened by George Washington's ghost in the White House. The president saw him and asked, "George, what is the best thing I can do to help the country?" "Set an honest and honorable example, just as I did," advised George.

The next night, the ghost of Thomas Jefferson moved through the dark bedroom. "Tom, what is the best thing I could do to help the country?" the president asked. "Cut taxes and reduce the size of government," advised Tom.

*The president didn't sleep well the next night and saw another figure moving in the shadows. It was Abraham Lincoln's ghost. He asked the ghost, "Abe, what is the best thing I could do to help the country?" Abe answered, "**Go to the theater.**"*

Either we need to do something to help our Savior, as we step up and help carry His cross, or get out of His way, allowing Him to do what He needs to get done. The first choice is what I believe He desires of us.

- Why were these men called out from all of those standing there? They were workers and diligent servants.

- What does this have to do with you and me? Many of us sitting here today, are being called just like these disciples, to serve and follow Him wherever He leads us. The real question is, ***are we willing to respond as they did?*** Lord, help us, to have ear that hear and a heart that responds.

Closing Prayer: