

## Mark 1:14-20

### Epiphany 3; January 21 & 22, 2018

People had been going out into the desert to listen to this new preacher named John the Baptist. One of the men who had begun to follow John the Baptist was a man named Andrew. You might remember him from last week's Gospel Lesson. Andrew was there when John stood up and pointed at Jesus and said: **"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** Andrew went and found his brother, Simon Peter, and told him: **"We have found the Messiah (that is, the Christ)."** The next day, Jesus finds Philip. Philip finds Nathaniel. To the whole bunch, Jesus says **"Follow me!"**

They followed. They knew who Jesus was. They listened and believed Jesus. Sometimes, they would walk with Jesus, sometimes not. When they weren't, they would go about the family business again and go fishing. They would go back to their job of casting and mending. Day after day it was the wind, the water, the fish, the sore muscles and tired bodies. Cast the net out, pull it in. Cast it out, and pull it in. If you weren't casting, you would sit in the boat mending the torn nets. Perhaps, they began to get the sense that there was more to life than casting and mending.

Do you ever feel like that? Oh, we may not go about casting and mending nets. Days became the same, don't they? Life is routine. Nothing changes. We don't expect much to happen. This is our life. We cast the nets, we catch the fish, we pay the bills and we go along on our merry way in life. But Jesus has a way of showing up in the ordinary places of life and interrupting the daily routines of life. That's what he had done for these fisherman in our text.

Perhaps, Jesus wanted these men to see that life is more than just the gathering of things. There is more to life than just catching fish. What happens with all those piles of fish, with all those piles of stuff? It doesn't last, does it? Does it make us happy? Sure, for a while. Then we need more to make us happy. Is there anything wrong with getting all that stuff. No. But sometimes, we run around in circles in life looking for the next thing. We just don't seem to quite find what we are looking for. Perhaps, that's what Jesus wanted these men to see.

Some time has passed. John the Baptist is no longer in the desert preaching. Mark tells us that John the Baptist now finds himself in prison. Things were about to change for these men in our text. Jesus comes up to them and says: *Let's go men. I've got something better for you.* **"Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people."** Jesus was about to transform their lives. Now they were going to follow Jesus full-time. He had an invitation for them. I have a job for you that is not temporary. I have work for you that you can take with you. I have something more than something that is here today and gone tomorrow. All that stuff that we have, it stays here when we are gone. But when we fish for people, they don't. They go with us to heaven.

Their response to that invitation? They drop everything and follow Jesus. These men did not fully know where they were going as they followed Jesus. Jesus didn't give them a playbook. He didn't mark it out on a map. They followed. They didn't know that they were going to follow Jesus to a cross and a tomb. They didn't fully grasp that he would arise from the grave on Easter morning. But they knew that there was something different about this Jesus. He spoke words of power. He spoke words of compassion. He healed the sick. They saw things that they had never seen before. He spoke words of life. So, what do they do? They just followed.

That same invitation is there for you and me. We know Jesus. We know what he has done. We know that we have life with him. And so, we follow. Why? Because Jesus gives us a promise. **"Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people."** He wants to give us the chance to fish for people. Jesus says that he wants to use you so that you can bring more people to Jesus.

I always find it fascinating to see who Jesus calls to do this task. Look at the first people he calls to follow him. These were just ordinary men. They were fishermen. Look at all the people that God would use to **fish for people**. Jacob was a liar. Abraham was old. Timothy was young. Jonah ran from God and got swallowed up by a fish. David was an adulterer and murderer. Paul persecuted people before he went fishing for people. The list could go on and on. Jesus wants to use all of us to be **fish for people**.

What do you use to fish for people? The Gospel. Jesus says in our text: **“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”** Following Jesus means repenting of all the things in your life that keeps you out of heaven; and believing the good news that Jesus that wants you in heaven because he died for your sins. There is only one person that can deliver us from this world. That one person is Jesus.

God wants to give you a chance to be part of this work of fishing for people. He will give you opportunities to be fishers for people. That can come in many different ways. You may not be able to stand up here in this pulpit and preach. But when someone walks through those doors in back that you don't know, you go and welcome them. Maybe God is going to give you opportunity to serve his people in many different ways. Maybe God is giving you an opportunity to give generous offerings in ways that you can never imagine. I'm convinced, because I have seen it in my life, you cannot out give God. Maybe God will use you in ways that I can't even imagine.

Christian friends. Believers in Jesus. Today, Jesus lays out before you an invitation: **“Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.”** Let's see where he leads. Amen.