

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

The Call To A New Vocation

By

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Mark 1 14-20

Jesus comes with authority to announce that the Kingdom of God is being set up. The new dispensation he ushers in causes a change in the administration. The old order is out. The temple and its hierarchy is going to be foreclosed and dismantled. But something far more gigantic is being established. A worldwide enterprise is being set up. This is no little one-nation affair. This enterprise will reach to every corner of the globe and it will require an army of workers.

Let's consider the mission of Christ. You have heard from this pulpit many times that the mission of Christ was to seek and to save the lost. That is a two-part mission. The seeking is one thing and the saving is another. But it is all of Him.

As Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God he said , **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."** Mark 1:15 (NASB)

Christ does not go into any explanation as to how this mission is to be realized in his dying on the cross as the Lamb of God in order to take away the sins of the world. But he does announce the results of that yet-to-occur death at Calvary. The Kingdom of God will be preached and men are called to repent and believe the gospel of salvation.

Let there be no mistake about one thing – this is not an optional thing for men to do. Unless men repent and believe the gospel there is no way for them to be a part of this great Kingdom. The apostle Paul, speaking to the Athenians about their ignorance of the true God, said **in Acts 17:30-31** **"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."**

Christ began immediately to commission workers in His kingdom. He had no sooner announced the kingdom and the terms of entering it than he began choosing men to serve in it.

Some folks have the mistaken notion that the church is having a hard time recruiting people. But when Christ started selecting men to be leaders in this worldwide enterprise he didn't seem to have any trouble. The men he wanted he got. That is because all that the Father gives to him shall come to him (See John 6: 37).

God has never been short of willing workers. He is able to extend a call so imperatively that men do respond. We may have difficulty believing that because we tend to think that the Kingdom of God comes in a poor second in competition with the world. It often seems that the church lacks manpower, that the church can't get the job done that God wants done. But that certainly is not due to any ineffectiveness on the part of God in recruiting workers. It may seem that way because God hasn't seen fit to use the techniques and strategy that the world uses.

Jesus didn't come sweeping men off their feet. Notice how low-key he was in recruiting Simon Peter, Andrew, James and his brother John. Two sets of brothers. And what was his method? Did he preach a great sermon and then close with an urgent appeal to serve the Lord? No, nothing like that; he just quietly calls them to come and follow him.

He calls men to a new life and a new vocation

I want you to notice first of all that Jesus chose men who were already actively engaged in a vocation. Why do you suppose he did that? Here were four men, two sets of brothers, and they were engaged in an occupation. In the very midst of that occupation he calls them. Does that tell us anything?

It is my belief that all men are expected to engage in useful work if they are physically and mentally able to do so. I believe we all have a job to do. That job should be some sort of service that benefits others. It should be honest and honorable work. That would include everything from garbage collecting to banking. There are thousands of ways we can serve God and serve each other. But engaging in illegal activity or activity that contributes to the moral corruption of people would obviously be an improper form of work.

As Jesus sets about choosing men to follow him and serve in the work of the kingdom he purposely chooses men who were gainfully employed in the business of commercial fishing. These men were not fishing for pleasure, although they may well have enjoyed their line of work, but they fished to provide others with food.

Jesus called them in the very midst of their ordinary work of fishing. They were actually doing something. The scripture says that Andrew was casting a net into the lake and James and John were preparing their nets. They were functioning as teams in the business of fishing. They had already displayed a willingness to work together. I believe Jesus deliberately chose them while they were engaged in their tasks to teach us that he approved of their industry. The very fact that they had chosen a vocation for themselves and were busy about it prepared them for the call of Jesus when it came.

We might even question whether the call would have come if they had not been engaged in that which they knew how to do. Had they been idlers, shiftless bums, lazy loafers, men looking for a soft touch and the easy life, Christ would likely have passed them by. How can Christ use men who deplore and avoid work? And it is quite clear that he expected them to keep on working because in the same breath he called them Jesus said to them, **"Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."** ¹⁸**Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.** ¹⁹**Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets.** ²⁰**Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. Mark 1:17-20 (NASB)**

He calls these fishermen from their present vocation to another vocation. There is a relationship between the two vocations. If a man can catch fish he can also catch men. What they don't know about men and about this new type of work Christ promises to teach them. He will make them able to do the work he gives them. The one thing both assignments have in common though is that you have to work. Fishing for fish is work. Fishing for men is work.

Sometimes you see an ad in the newspaper and it will read, *No experience necessary -- will train*. But the necessary ingredient is that a man be willing to work. I've never met a businessman or an employer or a supervisor who wanted an employee who couldn't or wouldn't work.

I'm reminded of the story of the man who said to his doctor; "Give it to me straight, doc. I can take it! Tell me in plain English what's the matter with me?" "Okay, I'll be frank with you. My diagnosis is that you're just plain lazy!" "All right, doc, now please give me a *scientific name* for it so I can go home and tell my wife!"

Or take the story that is told of a student who wrote to Henry Ward Beecher asking the great preacher for an easy berth. To this student Mr. Beecher replied: "Young man, you cannot be an editor; do not try the law; do not think of the ministry; let alone all ships and merchandise; abhor politics; don't practice medicine; be not a farmer, a soldier or a sailor, don't study; don't think. None of these is easy. Oh, my son, you have come into a hard world. I know of only one easy place in it and that is in the grave!"

Lastly, I want you to notice that the call came quite suddenly, In the midst of a busy life Jesus passed by. He called these brothers to the higher life and to a higher vocation when they were probably so busy that they could easily have said, "I'm too busy right now to stop what I am doing and follow Jesus."

I believe the one thing that keeps more people from coming to Jesus than anything else is that they are just too busy to stop what they are doing. They consider making a living, being successful at their vocation, as being far and away the most important thing in life. They are so busy that they don't hear the voice of the Master when he calls to them to lay aside what they are doing and come and follow him.

I also want you to think about the suddenness of Christ's call and the urgency of that call. Jesus did not say to them, "I have a proposition for you that I want you to consider carefully, then I'll be back in a week or a month or a year and get your answer." No, his call was urgent. It was sudden. It was crucial. It demanded an immediate response.

All four of these men gave the same response. The scripture says that straightway, immediately they dropped everything and followed Jesus. They left their nets, their fish, their boats, even left, in the case of James and John, their father and the hired servants in the ship. They just took off after Jesus.

Why do you suppose they did that? We don't know that they had ever seen Jesus before. He was a stranger to them. He just looked at them and spoke to them and that was all it took. I remember a commercial for a new car that said, "Just one look, that's all it took."

There is something so compelling, so attractive, so winsome, so inspiring, so thrilling about the call of God that comes through Jesus that it takes priority over everything. In that look, in that voice from heaven and God there is something so exciting, so adventurous that everything else in this world pales by comparison. To be called to the upward way, to be called to minister the gospel to lost sinners, to hear the call to be a part of the greatest enterprise that has ever been or ever will be, that has to be better than fishing. That has to be better than buying and selling merchandise. That has to be better than farming. That has to be more exciting than all other vocations that end with this life, that merely serve the needs of the physical and material side of life in this world.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye these brothers saw the richness, the glory of this call to follow Christ and become fishers of men. What would have happened if they had not responded? What would an ignoring of Christ's call have said to Christ? What would even a postponement have said to Christ? Can Christ take second place to anything else in life? Can the Creator be compared to anything in this world? **⁷Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,**

"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

⁸ DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, Heb. 3:7-8

God was grieved and swore that those that Moses led out of slavery in Egypt who erred by hardening their hearts. For their stubbornness and unbelief they would not enter into God's rest. The Word says, **Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.** (Heb. 3:7-12).

Rather than that the apostle Paul told the Corinthians, **¹And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— ²for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"— 2 Cor. 6:1-2**

It is not after the storm has arisen, or the telegraph has reported that his ship has struck an iceberg, that the merchant runs to insure his goods. He takes care of the insurance while the sun is shining and the air calm; he makes sure the insurance is in effect before the ship has cleared from the dock, or at all events before the ship has left the river. You should do the same, you living, but dying people! Now is the accepted time, today. God is with us waiting; his terms are still, "Whosoever will." Today you may enter into life; tomorrow the door may be shut. -- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon*, (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, Inc, 1990)

Like Peter, Andrew, James and John we are all called to repent and believe the gospel. Jesus is the embodiment of the gospel. He calls us to serve him in some capacity in his eternal kingdom. Have you answered the call? Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Repent and believe the gospel and know his forgiveness and warm welcome into the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ.

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