

“Come, Follow Me”

Matthew 4:12-25

When we read John’s Gospel, we learn that Andrew was present when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” And Andrew went with Jesus and listened to His teaching the rest of the day. Andrew then went and told his brother Simon Peter, “We have found the Messiah.”

Therefore, when we hear today in Matthew’s Gospel how Jesus calls Andrew and Peter to be His disciples, this is not the first time that Jesus had contact with these men. Christ calls His disciples some time after His Baptism, when John the Baptist has already been thrown into prison [Mt. 4:12]. Jesus comes to these fishermen, Andrew and Peter, and says, “Come, follow Me.” And at once they left their nets and followed him.

When we read the other Gospels before we read the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew’s account of Christ calling these fishermen to be disciples is easier to understand. When Christ came to Peter, Andrew, James, and John and called them away from their home and the only life they had known, they had already been privileged to hear Jesus’ teaching, had

witnessed the miraculous catch of fish [Lk. 5:1-11], and through His Word and actions had been convinced that He was the Messiah.

Jesus is not like the Pied-Piper of Hamelin who puts unsuspecting people into some mystical trance and draws them away from their homes when He comes calling. But also let us not belittle the call to follow Christ. As we see, it was not so much that Andrew had “found the Messiah,” as he tells his brother Peter in Jn. 1:41. But rather the Messiah had found Peter and Andrew.

Faith in God is an amazing thing. Faith is not a function of our intellect. We are not Christians because we are so much smarter than other people. We are not Christians because we are so much better than other people. We are Christians only by the grace of God. We are Christians only because God has chosen us. He has called you to be His child; He has called you by name. He has chosen to accuse His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ of all of your guilt. We had a marvelous discussion in our Sunday morning Bible class last week over this very topic – the undeserved nature of God’s grace.

When Christ came calling His disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they were most likely fairly successful businessmen in the fishing industry of Galilee. There are clues that they were not poor fishermen who were barely scraping by.

They were businessmen who gave up their entire life’s work because they had heard the Good News of Jesus Christ, and they had been

graciously chosen by God Himself to enter into a different line of work. Not only had they received the call to faith, but they had been called to preach and teach this Good News of Jesus Christ so that others may come to know the Messiah. They were compelled by that call to gladly give up the life they had known for the sake of Christ and His church.

However, a person does not have to quit their job and enter into full-time church work in order to be a good Christian – as if my white robe, pastor’s stole, and chasuble makes me a good Christian. As we established in last week’s Bible class, I, by my own merit, am unworthy to be called a man of God or be the vehicle through which Christ’s words of Absolution or the Words of Institution are spoken. Satan frequently reminds me of my unworthiness. But God is gracious.

I do not deserve the life that I have – none of us do. I certainly do not deserve the life to come. But God chose me and He chose you, and He said, “Come, follow Me.”

You follow Him and are able to serve Christ and His church in many and various ways without leaving your current homes or jobs, but that does not mean that you have not been called to drop everything and follow Him. Christ has said to every one of you, “Come, follow Me,” and like the disciples, you were to drop what you were doing. We do not follow Him because we have been brain-washed like the children of Hamelin when the Pied-Piper came calling. We follow Him because we have been Blood-of-the-Lamb-washed in Baptism. We are to drop our sinful selfishness

and we are to see Christ and the Gospel as the highest priority. Whatever is your highest priority, that your God; that is the God which you follow.

But here is the real world challenge: everything I have said to you I believe whole-heartedly. But when I look at the conversations I have had throughout this week, I confess that, in my casual conversations, I probably spoke more often about the prospect of a victory by the Dallas Cowboys than telling others of Christ's victory. The challenge is to keep reminding yourself of what is truly important and what is truly exciting. We tend to get so caught up in the news of the day, and we get so excited about things that are happening now, we neglect that which is enduring for all eternity.

I will be honest, I am really looking forward to the Cowboys-Packers game. But it is Christ's victory that really matters. Now, I am not suggesting you come to church with face paint and hang John 3:16 banners over the front of the pew. But what we have here is really worth getting excited about. Look at what Isaiah says in our Old Testament reading – when the people who walked in darkness see a great light, they rejoice as with the joy of the harvest – with the joy of those who divided the spoils of war after a victory in battle.

You and I do not deserve to come before the Lord. But Christ has come to you and He says, "Come, follow Me", and with joy and excitement – we drop everything and we follow. Amen.