

## **THE CALLING OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES.**

### **THEME:**

All people have been called to follow Jesus: and for the kingdom of God to further grow, they all should become fishers of men.

**Grace, peace, and mercy, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Jesus opens the gospel lesson today with the words, 'The time has come' and I find these words to be very touching indeed. These words are sobering, like water being flicked, sprinkled on the face. In fact, these words are compelling me to dig deep into my inner spiritual being. They are making me aware of what I have achieved in my life, and of what I missed out on, also of what I have regretted and the mistakes that I have made along the way. These words are bringing me to this very point in time of my existence upon this earth.

And, in a funny sort of way, now that I think of it: the past doesn't seem to matter at all, and maybe it didn't and doesn't, so why should I bring up memories if there's nothing I can do about them and it makes me rueful. For what is important is now time, how I exist for now, and for what I can do for the Lord right now in the best way I can.

Sadly enough, an aunty of mine passed away during the week [unexpectedly], and I've been thinking and reminiscing about her life, her children who are my cousins, the many nieces and nephews, all the while my mind drawing me to Ecclesiastes chapter 3. Verse one begins; There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: 2. a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot.....so forth.

All that deep thinking brought me back to where I am in my life and how I lived that existence. In the first instance of my recalling my life, I guess it was the bad memories, the regrets that surfaced first, the things I couldn't change. And if you truly think about it, they are there as permanent reminders that they belong to us. And try as we may to forget them, they still surface in our lives when some kind of incident or tragedy triggers off something from your own past and life.

The good things I didn't focus on before soon start coming back to mind that I start to refocus my thinking. Somehow and for some strange reason, all the bad things seem to surface first, and when they run their race and shoo out of the mind, then its time to focus on the good things.

And for me, the major achievement of them all: is that I made a decision to follow Jesus and he provided for where I am in my life today. I was born a Lutheran, but

to follow him in the ministry was a huge step of faith. Let me assure you that in doing so, it has had its challenges. Like everything else in all our lives, we have our peaks and valleys, the good times and the bad times, in the end they even themselves out: neither times lasts longer than the other.

Yes, it's not all wine and roses, and there are plenty of dangers in the ministry; but it's very rewarding and fulfilling, so that the ministry is not all gloom and doom; and I do have a role to play that Jesus has given me to do. And the role I have taken is done with all seriousness, because when people's lives are involved with whom I have to deal with, then, I go into every situation prepared as best I can. I always try to be open, attentive and flexible, which I have to do, otherwise I wouldn't be able to survive.

But my journey to get where I am took a fair bit of preparation, time and planning to get here [i.e. fie years

at the Seminary - ALC]. The bottom line is that I have been sent by God to go out to his people.

In our gospel reading today, when Jesus called the disciples, their decision to follow him was instant, for when Jesus called these people to be his disciples; they left all and followed immediately.

When I look at the way they acted, I had to ask the question? What made the disciples consider as part of their lives, which was of no significance to them, to just follow the Lord Jesus at his command of; “Follow me and I’ll make you fishers of men?”

In asking that question of myself personally, in essence I had to rely on God totally to get me through to where I am today as I just reflected and conveyed to you. Many pastors and clerics would have had to ask themselves the same question; and many have gone ahead and followed after the way of the Lord.

Just for a second I want to get personal with you [indulge me]; I just want to ask you: ‘what prompted you to continually follow the Lord so obediently over many, many years?’

If we look around us, we’d find that there are not many of us gathered here as we would like. Sure some of our members are away on holidays, and many faithful followers have passed away and have gone home to be with the Lord. So what happened to their children and grandchildren?

Where are those baptised believers who have let their faith lapse for now, for whatever reason? And I say lapse for now, because my earnest plea is that their staying away from church is provisional and that they all come back into God’s loving environment and kingdom before they die in their sins.

In our gospel lesson today, the four fishermen, Simon and Andrew; James and John Zebedee [their father was even in the boat when they heard Jesus call and they left], left their family businesses to follow Jesus, without delay. I believe that this sort of action would take an enormous amount of courage to do so.

Big question, did these men understand what they were being called to do? Yes, we do hear in our modern day and age of people, even pastors, who have been called to a deeper challenging role in their lives, to leave what is comfortable to start all over again in the Lord's work!

What would you do or say, if God challenged you right now to do something for him? I guess that if God challenged us to do something outside of our comfort zone for him, I'm sure we'd all arise to the occasion because of our faith, hope and trust that we have in him!

So what about the disciples? What words did they hear from Jesus that clicked in their brain immediately? What did they see in the man himself, up close and personal? What in Jesus' prompting or message, did these men leave all to follow him? Let me ask you what keeps you coming back to church; week in, week out, year in year out, to hear the Word of God being preached to you; that keeps you coming back? What is keeping your attention for so long a time?

When I think about the above questions I just asked, I think of words like believe, trust and hope, and a true way and reason to live. They give us all the reasons in the world to immediately follow after him in an instance, without any questions asked of us.

Jesus went fishing for men and he was the master fisherman in this area. He caught four without delay whom became his disciples. From this beginning they grew into a larger core group of twelve disciples who

grew further out to seventy including women who became prominent in the Lord's work when they travelled around with him.

They soon spread the Lord's kingdom out to the Gentiles through the Diaspora [dispersion] who were accepted in God's kingdom.

Just as the Bible states, many are called but few are chosen; the harvest is ripe but the labourers are few: but to those who are called, hear and obey what the Master is saying to them, the kingdom of God is theirs forever.

Just in conclusion, whether the full impact of Jesus' command to 'follow' is immediate or belated, hearing and obeying is the important thing. Remember, God is faithful to us in all he says and does for us, its all in the Bible: so why shouldn't we repay that faithfulness back to him.

God created us for a relationship with him. God loves each and every one of us so much that he sent Jesus down to us. Not only did Jesus seek us out and call us by name, but he gave his life as a living sacrifice so that we don't have to die for our own sins. We now have access to heaven, and because we heard his voice calling out to us, let us continue to live in what Jesus has done for us so that we can be his forever. Amen.

**The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**