

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany
January 25, 2015
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Mark 1:14-20

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Come, follow me! What would it take to get you to follow me? I would probably have to start by earning your trust especially if you were going to completely follow me wherever I wanted to take you. Perhaps for you to come and follow me you would need to hear promises of what I could do for you. Will you be prosperous if you follow me? Will it make your life easier? How will you benefit by following me? And what does it mean to follow me? What kind of dedication and commitment will it take? What are you going to have to do and where are you going to have to go if you follow me? Of course, I am not asking you today to follow me. But Jesus is! Jesus is calling disciples saying: "***Come, follow me.***" Jesus is still calling disciples even here to: "***Come, follow me.***" I pray we continue to follow Him. I pray we are ready to go wherever Jesus leads us. I pray we are eager to do anything Jesus asks of us. I pray we understand what it means for us to answer the Savior's gracious call so that all our life we: "***Come, follow Jesus!***"

As you read the Gospels sometimes it appears that things happen so quickly including the calling of Jesus' disciples. You could almost get the impression that Jesus is meeting these men for the first time. That is certainly not the case. Jesus was not some stranger approaching these men to come and follow Him. Andrew and Simon (Peter) were disciples of John the Baptist. When Andrew heard what John the Baptist said about Jesus being the Lamb of God he went right away to find his brother Peter. Filled with excitement Andrew told him: "***We have found the Messiah.***" (John 1) So too James and John had witnessed Jesus teaching and preaching. They heard Jesus proclaiming the good news. They listened as Jesus proclaimed. "***The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!***"

So these men knew Jesus and Jesus knew them. "***As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said. ...At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.***" Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him. He calls them to be His disciples. He calls them with His powerful Word. Did you see how powerful that Word is here? These men all follow – at once – immediately! What an awesome response! They set aside their nets. They say good-bye to family. They leave their jobs. They come and follow Jesus.

What does this mean for them to follow Jesus? It means from now on everything will change. Their lives will never be the same. It meant a total commitment. It would mean they would no longer live for themselves but for Jesus. Would following Jesus make them prosperous? Hardly! Will it mean an easier life? Not exactly! Did you notice the context in which Jesus calls these men to be His disciples? It says **“after John was put in prison.”** This was John the Baptist who not only followed Jesus but pointed others to Jesus and told them to follow Jesus. This was John the Baptist who was not just a disciple of Jesus but one who prepared the way for Him. What did John get for this? He was imprisoned and would soon be executed. So now you want to be a disciple of Jesus too, right! So now you too are ready to leave everything else to follow Jesus.

Or sometimes do we pause when it comes to following Jesus? Do we ever question whether or not it is worth it? Do we only kind of commit or half commit our lives to following Him? Do we want to follow Jesus only when it benefits us or is convenient for us? There is an old favorite gospel song entitled **“Where He Leads Me.”** The chorus goes like this: *“Where he leads me I will follow, Where he leads me I will follow, Where he leads me I will follow, I’ll go with him, with him all the way.”* Does not our sinful human nature want to change this song so we sing something more like this? *“I’ll go with him till the summer, I’ll tag along until I’m tempted, I’ll follow if the cost is cheap. If not, I’ll say so long, so long all the way.”*

This is why I pray we understand what Jesus is telling us when He says, **“Come, follow me.”** Jesus means to follow wherever He leads us. Jesus is calling us to put Him first. He calls us to a life of total commitment. Jesus never promises us great riches along the way. Jesus never tells us the road will be easy – in fact He tells us the opposite. But Jesus also assures us that He will be with us all the way. Jesus promises us, as we follow Him, we will see some amazing, remarkable, wonderful things.

What did these disciples see as they followed Jesus? They saw the only person without sin. They watched Jesus obey every command of God. They watched as Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead. They saw how Jesus loved the people. They learned that Jesus truly is the Son of God. They witnessed Jesus speak the words of God and how He taught the people. They saw how Jesus was patient with them and how He took care of them. They saw how Jesus forgave them. They saw Jesus give His very own body and blood for them in a Holy Supper. As they followed Jesus they watched their Savior die for them. They saw their Jesus go to a cross to save them. They were witnesses that not even death could hold Jesus. Andrew was right in saying they have found the Christ. John the Baptist was right in pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

All of this would prepare them for what Jesus is calling them to do when He first said: **“Come, follow me.”** For Jesus tells them: **“I will make you fishers of men.”** Instead of catching fish these men would now catch people. From now on their catch would not be snagged and sold, but rescued and set free! They will be Jesus’ witnesses. They will go into all the world preaching the good news to all creation. Jesus calls us to do the same. You and I may serve God in different ways, but Jesus wants us all to be **“fishers of men.”** Even you kids – sometimes you make the best fishers. Does this help us understand what Jesus is asking of us when He commands us to, **“Come, follow me?”** Jesus is calling disciples to a life of total commitment. Jesus is calling disciples to a life of glorious service. Thank God that you are one of those disciples. Thank God that Jesus has come to you with His powerful Word and said: **“Come, follow me.”**

I wonder what Peter and Andrew would have said if Jesus would have said come follow me and one day Peter you will be dragged to a place you don't want to go. Would they still be so eager if Jesus told these brothers they will both die for Him? According to tradition Peter was crucified on an upside cross and Andrew was killed being stretched out and bound on a cross in the shape of an X. I wonder what James would have done if Jesus said follow me and be my witness. But soon after my resurrection because of your witness wicked Herod is going to take you and cut off your head. I wonder how the apostle John would have responded if Jesus said come, follow me and one day you will see all your brothers here die and you will be exiled and alone on an island called Patmos. If they had to do it all over again I can tell you exactly how they would respond to their Savior's gracious call. They would "***At once (leave) their nets and (follow) him...Without delay they would leave their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and follow him.***" And you don't have to take my word for it, instead spend some time reading theirs! You will see following Jesus is always worth it! We too will experience that truth when we follow Jesus one day into the heaven He has won for us. Until then I pray we: **'Come, Follow Jesus,'** going wherever He leads us, doing the things he asks us to do. Amen.