

Epiphany 3

Mark 1:14-20

Called To Action

My brothers and my sisters in Christ Jesus, the time has now come. It is now here. The groundwork has been laid; the Word became flesh at Christmas. Jesus has grown into an adult. John the Baptist has prepared the way, pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. He was anointed at his baptism, and now there is no more waiting. As Jesus himself puts it: **"The time has come... Repent and believe the good news!"**

Jesus now begins the trudge forward into his mission to bring that good news to fulfillment, that good news that will be displayed in horrific beauty on the cross. And as he trudges forward, to accomplish the salvation of all people, he needs to gather some followers. He needs to find some disciples who will witness him and be able to bring the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

As Jesus is walking around in his home region of Galilee, this is who and how he chooses: **"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 send you out to fish for people." 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."**

We know this story so well that perhaps the strangeness of it goes unnoticed. Jesus is here to call a troop of people to carry the most important message to all of mankind, and who does he choose here? Some fishermen. You would logically expect something else. The priests, the ones who had religious authority. The Pharisees, who were well known for living, upright lives, and knowing the scriptures. The Sadducees, those with enormous resources and political connections, all of these would have seemed logical choices for the high calling at hand.

But no, Jesus calls this a group of fishermen. Just your average day laborer. No formal education, all of them full-time employed, and two of them out and involved in the family business with their family. They are not exactly highly respectable or wealthy or learned people.

In thinking back on the history of the gospels, you know that these are far from perfect people either. These are the disciples who get reprimanded by their leader when they step out of place. They are people prone to misunderstanding and need Jesus to explain his parables to them very often. Eventually, they will even deny and desert him. There is honestly nothing special about them, just a group of common people sinful people; how could God use them?

The transition to application is pretty seamless. Jesus has entrusted to us, as his followers, the most important and powerful message in the world. It is the message of Jesus Christ crucified for us. It is a

certainty of eternal life granted to us by faith through grace in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and yet so often it becomes easy to look at ourselves, in the same way that we can look at those first disciples.

Most of us look at ourselves and see absolutely nothing noteworthy they could contribute to the service and the spread of that message. I have a common every day job I don't have any formal education. I don't know enough to be able to do something like that. I don't have a wealth of resources or powerful connections. I already am very busy with a job and a family and to boot. I'm not sure if I am the right one to be doing this in the first place. I am hardly an example of what a Christian should look like. I fall into sin over and over again, the same ones and brand new ones, too. I don't think that God has called me to action in the same way that he has called those 12.

But let's look carefully at this text, shall we? What does Jesus say to those men? **"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."** Jesus is saying that he will make them ready for what he has called them to do. Jesus says follow me first. Jesus' first call to action is to follow him. First, the disciples need to be followers. First of disciples follow Jesus they follow him, and Jesus shows them miracles so they truly understand who he is they follow him, and Jesus shows them every human being that he cares about. They follow him, and Jesus explains to them the parables that they don't understand, and eventually five chapters later, Jesus sends them in pairs to go into preach. Jesus' second call is to go out and to do his work.

And through their faults and their weaknesses, Jesus made one thing abundantly clear: the success of their preaching couldn't be attributed to who they were. They were fishermen. They were sinners, but God gave to them. His gospel was entrusted to feeble human minds and people. The power of his word and his gospel. His life and his death to be preached, his Holy Spirit that works through those words and changes hearts and minds wherever they are preached.

What bearing does this have on you as a Christian? Well, God has called you to, and he has called you in the same way that he has called those disciples. If there is one thing that God has not called you to, God has not called you to do nothing.

Perhaps at this juncture in your life, your savior is calling you to action in the first part to follow him. Perhaps your savior is calling you to be close to him. He is calling you to witness the events of his life through the pages of Scripture; he's calling you to action to become more regular in your reading of the gospel message in your private devotions. Your savior is calling to you to become more connected to the means of grace to come at every opportunity that you can in worship and in holy communion to be wrapped oh so tightly in the message of his forgiveness for you. Your savior is calling you to follow him to grasp more deeply the truth of his word in a formal study.

Perhaps at this juncture in your life, God has called you in another way for a different kind of action, not that we ever stop learning from the truth of Scripture. Maybe the Lord has called you to be his

representative in the world around you, to live a life of service with the gifts that he has given to you to serve as a leader among fellow Christians in your congregation. Calling you to take those truths that you know that powerful message that he has given to you and to share it with someone who yet does not know.

And when we look at the disciples, the fear of hesitation fades away because we know success in the power of both of these actions does not lie with us. It is God's power that he works in us in our study of the scriptures and our following of Christ. It is Jesus' life given to us, with the power of the Holy Spirit, and our faith is strengthened by that alone, not by our intelligence or, our jobs, or our age; it is the good news of Jesus Christ that becomes ever so more deeply implanted in our hearts, as Jesus takes us by the hand and leads us through his life.

And this power works as we serve him in the world. God chooses us as lowly human beings to spread that gospel message to others. And it is not successful, because of who we are but because of the power of the gospel message itself, we speak the gospel message. He is granted to us in the 1st Pl. Jesus didn't have to convince the disciples to follow him by wearing a fancy outfit or giving them promises of Grandeur. I mean, Jesus doesn't really promise anything to them except service and John. The Baptist has just been thrown in prison for the service. All it took was a simple message of the gospel and for him to say, follow me.

So you, Christian God, has called you to action, but there is no need to fear. There is no need to hesitate because there is only one thing that is needed to follow Christ's call to action, and that is the good news the gospel when you follow him all you need is the gospel in word and sacrament to strengthen and deep in your faith, for whatever challenges and storms life has in store for you. In your calls to be fishers of men, all you need is the gospel, no special clothes no special job no special life just the message just the message of Jesus and God's power will work in those. Amen.