

**The Messiah Has Come
(A Study in Matthew - Week 9)
Matthew 4:18-22
“The Calling”**

Introduction

... since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable.

Romans 11:29

As we have discovered earlier in this study, Matthew's gospel doesn't always tell the story of Jesus in a chronological fashion. His purpose in writing was to convince his mostly Jewish audience that Jesus was indeed The Christ, the promised and long awaited Messiah. Therefore, he included the things in his narrative that he felt (as directed by The Spirit) were the most pertinent proofs of The Savior's qualifications. And although this particular book is perfectly suited for achieving its desired purpose, there are things that Matthew omits, and the careful student of Scripture must search the other three gospel narratives in order to obtain the entire story.

The fourth chapter of Matthew is a perfect example of some noteworthy omissions that leave a less than perfect timeline of Jesus' beginning ministry in Galilee. For example, Matthew does not mention the elapsed time between Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and His subsequent journey back to Galilee. If we only read from Matthew's account, we might assume these two events were one right after the other, when in actuality, there was a great deal of time (perhaps as much as a year) that Matthew leaves out of his book.

Another example of his purposeful omissions is in the telling of Christ's calling of His disciples. If we read only Matthew's account, we might be led to believe that Jesus had but one encounter with these men, and immediately called them into the ministry. This is actually not the entire story, for a reading of both the gospel of Luke and the gospel of John will show us that there was indeed more than one encounter, possibly as many as three separate meetings that these men had with Christ before they left everything to follow Him. And I, for one, believe this is an important distinction. For it shows that Jesus not only chose these men, but repeatedly sought them out in order to draw them to Himself.

I find this truth to be encouraging, because when I read of Christ's unending patience with these imperfect, and often weak and self-centered individuals (much like the rest of us), it demonstrates to me, the love our Heavenly Father has for His children. The disciples that Jesus chose for Himself were not high ranking members of society, but rather, they were blue-collar working men whom, if not for Jesus, there would be no historical record of even their existence. But by His power, they turned the entire world upside down, thus proving the words of The Apostle Paul:

Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world — what is viewed as nothing — to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, so that no one may boast in his presence. It is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus. Who became wisdom from God for us — our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption — in order that, as it is written: Let the one who boasts, boast in The LORD.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

So, let us look together at the callings of these “regular guys” this morning, bearing in mind, if you ever feel ill-equipped, inadequate, or unworthy to serve Christ, then congratulations! You are exactly the type of person that God is looking for! Today, we will examine the three part calling these men received and the same calling that we receive today; The Calling to Faith, The Calling to Follow, and finally, The Calling to Fish. Please allow me to explain.

The Call To Faith (Salvation) (John 1:35-42; Luke 5:1-11)

The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, The Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. When Jesus turned around and noticed them following Him, He asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher") "where are You staying?" "Come and you'll see," He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found The Messiah", (Which is translated "The Christ"), and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He said, "You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas" (Which is translated "Peter"). John 1:35-42

This passage is the actual recording of when some of the first disciples officially met Jesus. Two of His first followers had been disciples of John the Baptist. And after hearing John's testimony about Jesus, they decided to investigate the matter further. John gives us the name of one of the disciples, but the second one he does not call by name. Is this a mystery then? A formal study of John's Gospel will reveal that John never one time used the word "I", nor names himself *anywhere* in his writing. He has no problem whatsoever in naming all the other cast of characters surrounding Jesus, but never himself. So it stands to reason that this second "unnamed" disciple is none other than John himself.

So, how did Peter and James (John's brother) first hear of Jesus? They heard from their own brothers, who had both left John the Baptist in order to get to know The Savior. It was John the Baptist's testimony that led them to discover Christ, and it was their own testimony that brought their brothers to Him. Why is this important? Because each of us came to faith in the same way. Someone testified, by sharing God's Word with us, and we were led to discover Jesus for ourselves.

Let this be a teachable moment for us. Before we can ever be called to follow Christ or serve Christ, we must first be called to faith in Christ. Spending that day alone with Jesus was sufficient enough evidence to Andrew and John that Jesus was indeed The Messiah. But their brothers would need a bit more convincing. This leads us to Luke's account of Simon Peter's conversion experience.

As the crowd was pressing on Jesus to hear God's Word, He was standing by Lake Gennesaret. He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then He sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

"Master," Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets." When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, they came and filled both boats so full they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, LORD!" For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners. "Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people." Luke 5:1-11

And *THAT* was the day, when Peter (and I also believe James) were called to saving faith in Christ. On that day, Peter proclaimed Him as "LORD". That is the day when they saw Jesus for Who He truly is. And you cannot begin to serve Christ, until you first come to know Christ. I cannot help but wonder if John and Andrew looked at their brothers that day and said, "We tried to tell you! But you just wouldn't believe us!" Which begs the question: Have you been called to a saving faith in Christ?

The Call To Follow (vs. 18-19a)

As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. *“Follow Me.”* He told them... **Matthew 4:18-19a**

The reason that Christ left Judea in the first place was to avoid a confrontation with the Pharisees before His time had come. And what did He need to do in the meantime? To call and equip His disciples. So this is the proper order of things. First, we are called to faith in Christ, and then we are called to follow. You cannot become a disciple (the word in the Greek *mathetes* means student or learner) until you first become a Believer. So after these men had come to faith, it was time for them to leave everything and follow after Jesus, for there was much to learn.

What most people do not understand from the Gospels is that after these men initially came to faith in Christ, they went back to their old livelihood. They simply went back to fishing. But Christ came after them, for He had so much more in store for them, than just saving them to send them back to their fishing nets.

We know that what Matthew described of their calling was a different time than when Peter came to faith after the huge catch of fish that broke his nets. And how do we know this? Because in Matthew's account, the men are using a different type of net. The word he used to describe this particular net was one that was cast from the bank to catch fish along the shoreline. They weren't in their boats on this particular occasion.

Christ, Whom they had already come to believe in, then called them to follow. And the text goes on to say *“they abandoned their nets to follow after Jesus.”* This is another step in our callings, if you will, the next level in our progression of faith. For just as these men had to be trained by Christ in order to be used by Christ, the Believer must become a *disciple*, before he can become a *discipler*. This is what these men did for the next three years of their lives. They were taught by The Word of God. They became students (disciples), so that they could one day become so much more.

The only way that we can mature in our faith is by becoming a follower of Christ, a *“learner”* of His Word, so that we are prepared to make a difference. The night before Jesus went to the cross, He told His disciples that if they would abide in Him then they would become fruitful (**John 15**). A close reading of the gospels will reveal that up to that point these guys weren't very solid in their faith, or even their understanding. And they certainly weren't very reliable. But something changed in them after Christ was crucified and resurrected. They became empowered by The Spirit and were great “fishers of men”, for Christ had poured into them all they needed to reach their full potential that God had always seen in them. But it took The Spirit and The Word to bring it all together.

If we are to become effective for Christ, we must first become learners and followers of Christ. This is how baby Christians are transformed into faithful witnesses. There can be no shortcut to maturity. We grow as we follow. And God's Word teaches us the way in which we should go. To become a leader, you must first learn to become a follower. Which brings us to the final stage of our calling. “Follow Me”, and you *will become*.....

Earlier, I asked you if you had come to a saving faith in Christ. And now I am asking you if you have become a follower. **You cannot stay where you are and go with God.** If Christ has called you to faith, then He has also called you to follow, to become a learner, if you will, so that He may train you for the ministry He has in store for you. You were not saved to sit on a shelf. You have been born again for a purpose. And in order to be prepared to fulfill that purpose, you must first be taught at the feet of the Master. He is The Only One Who can prepare you for service. Have you answered His call to become a learner? Are you a disciple and follower of Christ?

The Call To Fish (vs. 19-22)

"Follow Me." He told them. "and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing the nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him. **Matthew 4:19-22**

The third and final calling is the call to *fish*. To become "*fishers of men*". Notice what Jesus said to them. He didn't say they were fishers of men, and a simple reading of these guys exploits will certainly back that up. They were too busy trying to decide which one of them was Jesus' favorite, or worried about kids getting too close to Jesus, or where they were going to find bread to feed the multitudes, or even how they could survive a storm at sea! No, these guys didn't start out as "*fishers of men*" material. But Jesus never said they were, what He said was that He would *make* them fishers of men. For you see, not a single one of us has the ability to do anything for God on our own. Our only hope for successful ministry is for Christ to do His work through us. This is why He has so famously said:

"Apart from Me, you can do nothing..."

John 15:5 (NIV)

So first, we are called by Christ to *Faith*, and then to *Follow*, and finally, after He has prepared us... to *Fish*. For as He does His work in us, as we go from lost, to learners, and finally to leaders, as we become His workmanship. We become *fishers of men*.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do. **Ephesians 2:10**

So the question we must ask ourselves today is, "*Do we really want to become all that God desires for us?*" And if the answer is yes, then we must be willing to go beyond a simple belief in Jesus and surrender ourselves completely so that we *belong* to Jesus. Once these men were convinced of Who The Savior was, they had to make a decision to give up everything in order to follow Him, so that they could become what He had preordained for them to become.

The disciples of Christ were just eleven ordinary men (excluding Judas), who were able to do extraordinary things, simply because they gave Christ full control over their lives. They left family, friends, and even their only means of making a living in order to seek first the kingdom of heaven. And by so doing, they exchanged the common and temporal for the eternal and supernatural. They left everything they knew and never looked back, and we must do the same as well, for the callings to greatness have not changed.

First, there is a call to saving *faith*, to see Christ for Who He is and believe in Him. Second, there is the call to *follow*, to become a learner and allow Christ to teach you His Word and His ways in order to equip you for the third and final call, and that call is the call to *fish*; to be willing to give your life to reach others for Christ.

There is a famous painting that depicts the Christian experience as it is meant to be. It shows a man clinging to a cross firmly implanted in a rock, as the stormy sea rages all around the man. With one hand, he clings to that cross and with the other he is reaching out to rescue another man who is drowning in the sea. That is a beautiful picture of what we are to become, by clinging to Christ as we reach out to fish drowning men out of life's stormy sea. This is the highest honor a person can have in this life, to know Christ, and to bring others into the safe harbor of His salvation. Listen closely today and hear His call to you:

"Follow Me, And I will make you fishers of men."

Truth!!!