

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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January 22, 2006  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany  
Mark 1:14-20  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Jonah 3:1-5,10  
Psalm of the Day: Psalms 62  
Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

## Jesus' Call: Come Follow Me

Have you been called by God? We use the word “call” in a number of different ways. Sometimes we talk about the divine call into the public ministry, which is a Scriptural truth, that God calls some. Even in our text this morning, he called some into the public ministry to serve others by bringing them the means of grace. We also talk about the call to faith. We see that in our text this morning. Through the Word of God, God calls people to turn away from their sin and believe that he has taken away their sins. So in that sense, every person here this morning that is a believer has been called by God.

Those are the two ways that Scripture most often talks about the word of Jesus' call: the call to faith and the call to the public ministry. Sometimes we talk about some immediate call that comes directly to our hearts that God has called us to do this or do that. That happens at times in Scripture, but not as often. Most of the time when I hear people talk about that, I have a little bit of uncertainty because I am much more comfortable sticking with what I see in Scripture. That is the call to faith and the call to the public ministry.

This morning, we get an insight into what both of those are because when we see his call, “*Come, follow me,*” we see it as he speaks the Word and as he calls people to faith in his Galilean ministry, and we see it in calling some of his disciples to be full-time disciples and follow him. While not everyone here may or may not ever have a call into the public ministry, I think there is something we learn about following him as we consider this call of Jesus this morning.

Last week we saw Jesus, in the Book of John, calling people early in his ministry. He called them to follow him. He spent the day with Andrew. He spent the day with Philip and Nathanael. He saw him under that fig tree that we talked about last week. We saw all those things. This sounds like about the same thing, the only difference is that this takes place about nine months later. It is dated for us in Mark. It says, “*After John was put in prison*”—John the Baptist was put in prison about nine months into Jesus' public ministry after his baptism. About nine months after he had talked to those disciples. Some of the disciples had spent time with him on and off. Some of them had been there at Canaan, some were not, when they saw the water changed into wine.

In this text we hear of Jesus proclaiming the gospel in Galilee and then calling them into the full-time ministry. But you notice his call when he went through Galilee. He went around preaching the Word. He served as the great prophet and spoke God's Word to God's people. “*The time has come,*” he said. “*The kingdom of God is near. Repent*

*and believe the good news!"* That is described as proclaiming the good news of God. God's good news that he wants us to hear is to repent and believe that the kingdom of God is at hand. It was at hand to those people along the shores of Galilee, throughout the region of Galilee when Jesus went and preached in his public ministry. The kingdom of God is near for us whenever we are confronted with God's law and God's gospel.

His law and his gospel is what bring the kingdom near to us. It brings the kingdom near to us in the Word. It brings the kingdom near to us in the Sacraments. But God's kingdom comes near to us and it confronts us with the law and the gospel. It lays bare our sin. The things that we try to hide from each other, the things that we can't hide from each other, we can't hide from God. In his Word, when he speaks to us, he lays bare the attitude of our hearts. He lays bare our self-righteousness and our arrogance. He lays bare our feeling of superiority that we know better than anyone else. He lays all of these things bare and then he says to us, "Repent. Turn away from them. Don't continue on in them. Believe the good news that they have been taken away."

God calls us to faith through Word and Sacrament by showing us how desperate we are for a Savior, by showing us that we are sinners. We seem to think that we understand that and we probably have a pretty good head knowledge of it. We have been taught it from little on. But sometimes I wonder if we don't just forget what exactly it means that we are sinners. The very truth of the matter that we are sinners means that the full cup of God's wrath should be poured out on us. The full cup of God's wrath is not something that you and I can take a sip from and live. Sin, something that misses the mark and goes against what God says, separates us from God and it brings God's entire wrath upon us. We deserve hell. We deserve nothing less. We deserve nothing more.

That is the truth of every one of our sins. While you and I are busy saying, "But my sin is not as bad as that person's sin that is in front of me or behind me or next to me" or "I haven't done this or that" or "I have done this, this and this for God, so God must set aside some of my sins"—God's law says to us "No". Your sin separates you from God and you deserve eternal damnation.

If we don't understand that, the good news of God is going to be less good to us, less important to us. We will find other things that will crowd it out of the way. We will find other things that are more important than the good news of God if we underestimate the serious nature of sin. If we think sin is merely a blemish that can be touched up with a little bit of effort, we have a problem. If we think that sin is something that is relative to the times, to the circumstances, to anything else, we have a problem. The good news is that in spite of who we are and in spite of how much we deserve God's damnation, the kingdom of God came near. Jesus lived in our place and he died in our place and he didn't just cast aside our sins or set them aside. He didn't just decide to overlook them. He completely removed them. He took them away completely and absolutely—when he leads us to believe that through the work of his Spirit, then we have been called to believe through the powerful Word of God. Whether that Word came to us at our baptism or that Word came to us later in life, it is what brought us to faith—not our decision, not our efforts, not our goodness, but the goodness of our God. He preaches

the Word to us. He does it through frail vessels like you and I, but he does the work. We present the message and he produces the results. That gives us confidence to live for him.

What does it mean for us after he has washed away our sins and changed our hearts? We see now exactly what he expects of us, what he is looking for in us when he calls those disciples that are there along the Sea of Galilee, when he calls Simon and his brother Andrew. He said to them “*Come, follow me*”—follow him as a disciple. Follow him as someone who is going to learn from him so that they can then go and become fishers of men and so that they can cast the net of the gospel themselves so that God can produce the results.

Does it surprise you that it says *At once they left their nets and followed him*? It sounds as though they dropped them where they stood and this Jesus, whom they had met earlier, who they had known on and off for nine months—they had heard him speak, they had seen some of the things he had done. They wanted to hear him. They wanted to see him. They wanted to follow him. It turns their world upside down. It changes their priorities.

Then he goes a little farther and sees James and John, the sons of Thunder, the sons of Zebedee. There in the boat, preparing their nets—they could have been washing them. They could have been mending them. They could have been folding them so they could go out and throw them easier. Any of those things would have been part of preparing the nets. They are there in the boat with their father and with the hired men. It must be a lot of work. A bunch of people there, working hard. Jesus says, “*Come, follow me*” or something to that affect. *Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.* This is the call into the full-time public ministry.

Some of us here this morning have that ability to serve as full-time pastors and teachers in the public ministry where we represent others. Your sons and daughters, your grandsons and granddaughters have that ability and we would do well to encourage them to consider such. But whether or not we ever become called workers, what it means to follow Jesus for a called worker and for someone who follows Jesus in their daily life is the same.

Instead of focusing this morning on being fishers of men, focus on following him. When we follow Jesus, if you look at this, it reorganizes our world. It turns it upside down. It makes Jesus and our Triune god, our Savior God, the most important thing in our world. They left everything right where they were because now Jesus was their top priority.

Whether we are called workers or not, we seek to, we strive to, we want God to strengthen us through his Word so that we follow him as though he is our top priority—not the things of this world, as we heard in our Second Lesson, but Jesus, our Savior, the God who has redeemed us. Think about what that means. Think of how that sets your life upside down when you are doing this fully and completely.

Do you get up in the morning and go to your work or go do what you do and there are times when you have a hard time dragging yourself out of bed but you think, “I have to or else I am going to get in trouble with the boss. I’ll get in trouble at work. I’ll get a bad review. I’ll get this or that.” And so then we do it because if we don’t, there is a consequence. When we follow Jesus, we now have the ability to get out of bed and say, “Today is a day that I can serve God wherever I am.” If it is working, if it is being a parent, a spouse or whatever, “I can do it all to the glory of God to thank him that he has given me my salvation.”

That shouldn’t be the last thought we should have. That actually should be the first thought we have. It should guide and motivate everything we do throughout the day. It reorganizes our world so that God is what we are focused upon. And as we serve God, we can be the best employee we can be, the spouse, child, parent, or whatever the case may be. But God is first. That is our goal.

Every time we fall short of that, every time we don’t do that, we have sinned against our God. He says he wants to be first. Love him more than anything else—that means not just on Sunday morning, not just when we are sitting in the pew, but every day and at all times.

You and I fall short of that, don’t we? We go through the motions of the Christian life even at times mumbling and complaining under our breath that we have to go to church again. “We have to have family devotions again? Come on, there is something on T.V. I want to watch, Dad.” We mumble and complain about other things and then, even when we are doing the other things, we don’t recognize that God is a part of every breath that we take.

Following Jesus turns our world upside down. It is leaving behind the world and having him first. We fail. If your ticket into heaven had to be punched because you did that every day, you would have no golden ticket.

But Christ did it every day for you. During every waking breath when he was on this earth, his priorities were aligned perfectly with his heavenly Father’s. Now when you were baptized into Christ, that perfection covers you. His death on the cross was the death for every time we have put ourselves ahead of God.

That is the love that God has for us. It goes that deep. It doesn’t just take away the big sins the way you and I think of big sins. It takes away the little sins, the things you and I might consider little sins. It takes them away completely and absolutely. When we are serious students of Scripture and we see this and it humbles us and it thrills us, it also empowers us to become better followers of Christ—to follow him as though he is our top priority and then whether we are called workers or not, to be fishers of men and share Christ with our lives and our words and our actions. To share them not because we have to, but because nothing can stop the love of God that flows through us and moves us to action.