

Lay Down Your Nets

Mark 1: 14-20

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¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Mark 1:14-20 (NRSV)

They didn't ask questions. That's what always astonishes and terrifies me about this story from Mark. Jesus shows up by the Sea of Galilee, calls out to Simon Peter and Andrew, tells them he's going to upend their lives and give them a new vocation, then commands them to follow him without a backward glance or a thought for the family fishing business. Mark records no questions asked by either of the fishermen. In the space of one more sentence, Jesus issues the same call to James and John with the same results. In a flash they're out of the boat and following Jesus.

I'm wondering what has such claim on our lives that we would drop everything and go?

The word "follow" has certainly evolved. We have redefined "follow" with "I've been following that in the news" or "I follow her on Twitter" to someone saying they have influence because they have so many thousand "followers." We need to look more closely at what Jesus was saying.

The story opens with Mark's announcement that something is up. Mark uses particular words -
+ repent + believe + Kingdom of God or Reign of God

What comes to you mind when you hear or read repent? Think about that for a bit...

Common responses may be – to be sorry for something we have done or failed to do
In the original language of the Bible, repent does NOT mean feeling sorry for "getting caught" and then berating ourselves for doing something wrong.

Mark's audience "heard" it differently. Their meaning of "repent" – the Greek word "metanoia" leaned more towards - turn around, to go a different direction.

Repent is an action – an inner action, inner shift, resetting inner compass.

Go in a different direction and believe...

What about that word believe? I believe Marin County is one of the best places to live. You can argue with me, but that is what I believe.

Again, Mark's congregation would have heard this differently. The Greek word means "faith" and the meaning of this word is deeply connected to trust.

Change your direction and trust...that the Kin-dom of God, reign of the Holy One is here...and it is near

- something special is happening
- the time is right, the time is ripe
- in God's time kairos
- God is about to break into the lives people...AGAIN...in yet another way

For those Mark was preaching to and writing for, a long held dream is about to begin yet again...the kingdom of God. Those fishermen would have heard and hoped that just might have meant that Rome was no longer going to be in control. After all...whatever Caesar said...the people had to do. The lake those disciples were fishing in...Caesar owned it. And since Caesar owned it, if you wanted to fish in it, you needed to get permission from Caesar's kingdom.

Andrew, Simon, James, and John - those guys...in Galilee - had to have Caesar's permission to fish. Perhaps those four saw an opportunity to get out from underneath the thumb of Caesar's overbearing, land-hungry, war-making machine.

Turn around and go a different direction,
...have a change of heart
...and trust that God's kingdom is here

Jesus is issuing an invitation to a new way of life.

Notice what Jesus says - I WILL MAKE you fish for people. This seems to indicate there will be some learning and on the job training for these four adventurers, four disciples. The rest of Mark's gospel, in part, is that learning, growing, stretching the followers of Jesus encounter and being fully and authentically human.

Jesus invited those four people to follow him, in a way that fit them. Do we do that when we invite people to church or invite them to experience something that is transforming our

spiritual lives? Our whole lives? Do we invite people in a way that “fit’s them?” in words and actions?

The disciples “let go” and laid down their nets and left immediately. They let go of what was holding them in the old direction, to undertake a new direction. It would involve sacrifice, commitment, challenges.

This story invites us to rethink what following Jesus means.

- We have a sense that following the ways of Jesus is part of our spiritual life
- We’re not sure we completely know what that means or how it should look in the world.
- We know it requires intention, commitment.
- By any measure, we’ve got a long way to go.

So let’s go back to this moment, before the disciples were disciples, when they were just fishermen, minding their own business, and Jesus calls them to follow him.

Listen to it this way: *As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were **fishermen**. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you **fishers of people**."*

In that moment, Jesus isn’t just giving them a different job, he’s giving them a different identity, a different orientation in the world. Instead of being *fishermen* – sustaining yourself in the world and contributing to the whole through this certain set of skills – you are going to be *fishers of people*– oriented toward Christ and thus toward other people. You will change, by turning away from the sea and toward your sisters and brothers around you.

In other words, You are no longer a *fisherperson*. You are a *fisher of persons*.

“Follow me.” Jesus says, “and this is what will happen.”

Jesus is not calling them to follow a way of thinking or believing.

He is not saying, Acquire more knowledge, or Live differently.

He is not giving them a checklist to make sure they are honoring God or living a worthy life.

He is calling them to follow him, a person. Bonhoeffer talked about this as the *Who* instead of the *How*. Jesus doesn’t give them a *How* – *How should we live? How should we follow? How can we please God? How should we believe, or behave? How do we know if we are doing it right?*

Instead, the living God stands before them and calls them as people, to follow a person – the person of Christ. *Who is this calling to me? Who am I called to be? Who am I called to be with?* A short time later, they will look at him in the calm aftermath of a suddenly calmed storm and ask, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

This one who calls you is Love Incarnate. Christ sees you as a *who* – and shifts your *who* away from whatever it is whatever you thought it is that tells you *who* you are by telling you *how* you should live or believe. Jesus turns your *who* back toward God and out toward the world God is transforming and redeeming, to seek other *whos*, with and for these other *whos* in the world.

It is not, *How* do we follow? Or, *How* do we know if we are following?
But, *Who* are we being called by, and *Who* are we called to?

Jesus says there is no better time. Eternity is fulfilled now. *Right now* God's reality is fully here. God's way is unfolding right around and in and through and despite us.

So repent! which doesn't mean feel really bad and apologize. It means, *turn in a new direction, open your mind to this reality, wrap your head and heart around it. Shift your way of seeing to God's way of seeing.*

And "believe the good news" means *trust it*. To say, "I believe you" is one thing. To say, "I trust you" takes that belief to a whole other level. So here is what Jesus is walking around on the earth, strolling across the beach that day, saying to people, "Wrap your head around this good news and trust in it: God's reality is right here, now."

So follow me, Jesus says. Come join me in this new reality. Let me lead you in it.

And he finds first Simon and his brother Andrew, and then James and his brother John, and calls them with each other, because discipleship is not a solo gig, it always connects us deeply with God and each other.

Follow me. I will be with you. I am here. I will lead you.

When we are living in the *who* of following Jesus, it costs us our illusions and our disconnection. We trade our way of seeing for God's way of seeing and then we recognize that we actually belong not just to ourselves, but to each other. We are responsible for each other, to listen, to care, to open our lives to one another. And when we are with and for each other, we are joining Jesus, who is the embodiment of God, right here with and for us. This is what following Jesus means.

"Hey fisherpeople, Jesus called out that day, follow me and I will make you fishers of people!" Join me and I will take away what you thought your life was, and give you back your life for real. Wrap your head around this truth and trust in it: The opportune time is right now. God's reality is here. And it is found when we share ourselves with each other, when we open ourselves to Christ, who sees us as we are, and who calls us to follow. Amen.

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<https://kara-root.blogspot.com/2018/01/join-me-in-this.html>