

State College Presbyterian Church
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Immediately
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23

“Immediately they left their nets and followed him.”
Matthew 14:20

There's suddenness to this event that makes the head swim.

Jesus suddenly summons these two to follow. and they just as suddenly respond.

The whole~ scene lacks what we call "motivation":

What were they thinking? feeling?
What was their background?

What a disappointment to those generations of preachers who built their multitudes of sermons around a million and one fictional accounts of how Peter and Andrew got to the point where they were convinced Jesus was worth running after.

Of how they cogitated and ruminated and chewed the cud on the question of Messiah's coming;

Of how their suspicion began to grow that Jesus and Messiahship were somehow tied together.

Of how they studied the alternatives, interviewed others who were putting forward similar claims.

And then, finally, one day by the sunny shores of Galilee, brought all that thinking and comparing to a head by ditching their boats to follow him.

Matthew, who obviously didn't care a bit for such nonsense, had something else in mind in his narration.

He had it in mind to tell us that Jesus' call and the answer of those two fishermen and something of the quality of the first creation about it:

"And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light."

Now, light didn't hang about, didn't consult its friends, or ask for advice before it appeared.

It just began to shine then and there!

"Immediately they left their nets and followed him"

It has something of the flavor of the first creation.

The word was spoken and they had little choice but to leave their nets and follow.

There's a lesson here somewhere for us in the days just before Lent.

The Gospels are a story of movement - and they climax in the movement of the last weeks leading inexorably to Jerusalem and Calvary.

But the movement does not end at an empty tomb: celebrate victory, then sit back and relax.

The movement follows Jesus to the here to the now.

Jesus never asked a person to accept him: which is a static thing.

There was always an imperative to follow, to be on the move: sometimes gentle, sometimes hard:

There was a day when they were going along the road in their endless travel and a man came up and said to Jesus: "I will follow you wherever you go."

And Jesus replied: "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

Turning away, another man came up to him to whom Jesus said: "follow me."

The man replied, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go back and say goodbye to those at home."

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

In a week and a half Lent begins. That time each year when we give our overwhelming attention to the summons which drew Christ to the cross.

Once again, through these five weeks, the church year will bring us face to face, though we should prefer to avoid it, with the one who summons us to follow now. To follow even to the cross.

And he will not wait for us to question his credentials or debate his authority.

He made the world,

led the children through the sea,

carried them back from exile

healed the sick

raised the dead

set us all free by his cross.

Follow me! he says.

Peter and Andrew had no time:

no time to ask where Jesus was going.

Anyone in his right mind would ask: "Where to?"

I just hate someone saying: "Will you do something for me?" Without saying what they want. I'm trapped into answering in the dark.

Jesus just says "Come on!"

"Where to?" is a terribly important question --- a question of planning and goals.

But those two, Peter and Andrew, never asked it.

At the greatest moment of their lives, when it came to abandoning everything they'd ever been or done.

When it came to jettisoning everything they'd ever loved and worked their fingers to the bone for.

They never asked "where to?"

Incredible.

And the question of means never got asked either.

For if they never bothered to ask "where to?", they obviously didn't think to ask how in the world they were going to get wherever in the world they were going.

That's not the way we work.

That's not the way our world works.

We could not last a minute if someone, somewhere, were not thinking of goals and means.

To think, to eat, to sleep, to work, to raise a family -- it all takes a lot of attention to goals and means.

Yet when Jesus Christ called Simon and his brother to follow by that Galilean shore, they never asked where to or how.

Somehow, that summons blocked out thoughts and imaginings which normally fill a person's head, and they left whatever former existence they'd enjoyed just for the sake of following him.

That was certainly not a reasoned response.

They were suddenly possessed by Jesus. The closest word I can think of is obsession.

It was like the creation story all over again.

Is their experience impossible for us?

So distant in time and culture?

Limited to the overwhelming physical presence of Jesus?

Not so.

Dag Hammarskjöld wrote of a similar experience:

"I don't know Who, or what, put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to Someone -- or something -- and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal. From that moment I have known what it means 'not to look back' and 'to take no thought for the morrow.'"

There's someone standing here; the sight of whom is glorious and magnificent enough to make you forget what people normally bother about, and whose summons is

somehow strong enough to lift you above, or set you beneath all that – and it is thrilling – but also scary – yet he says, “Do not be afraid!” this someone whose very self can become to you a goal, an end, and a way.

For he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

He sums up in his own life and his own word everything which normal people associate with aims and means.

And infinitely more -- because to see him, hear him, follow him, love him, is not merely to have your life enhanced, improved, embellished but to have it transfigured, without resemblance to what it once was a transfiguration that is a renovation as total and complete as if it came from nothing as in creation itself.

And that brings us back to these winter days before Lent, when we bundle up, cocoon, close in – when cabin fever grips us.

A time when He and His call and his mission get pushed pretty far down on our list of priorities.

Then you look up and there's a familiar face saying:

"Come on"

"I'm enough"

He's calling you to himself.

And answering that summons will mean a kind of dying.

Dying to old values, wherever in the world you got them; dying to an old self, to be swallowed up in him.

Perhaps you're wobbling between the yes and no. Go or stay.

You see the disparity between yourself and some ideal looking people who keep popping up in scripture, and you don't dare call yourself a disciple.

Yet in some quiet moment unexpected, off-hand, you hear him summon you -- through a long-neglected and suddenly remembered verse of scripture, from the stanza of a tattered old hymn you haven't heard for years, through the casual word of a friend -- and you've a yearning in you so great it blots out everything else under the sun.

In that moment, Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, dead and risen, spells meaning, glory, beauty, power, infinite love, love without strings, without conditions;

Spells the beginning and the end of everything and everyone -- that one little moment is worth a lifetime.

That moment of "follow me" is what you were made for, what you're summoned to.

Come on, rise up, follow.

It will be like creation all over again.