

I HAVE DECIDED

to

FOLLOW

Jesus



January 24, 2021



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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Like and Follow Us On:



Prelude

Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship:

When we worship together, we remember the call of Jesus in our lives; we support each other as followers of Jesus; we gather in Jesus' name to celebrate his love. Let us rejoice in our calling as God's children and disciples for Jesus Christ!

Hymn: "Jesus Calls Us," vv. 1,5

Reading the Word: Mark 1:14-20

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

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 fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Ministry of Music

Message: "Following Jesus"

Imagine with me that you are at work or sitting on your front porch or raking your lawn or taking a walk or doing something that you would normally do during a regular day. As you are engaging in whatever activity it is, Jesus shows up and says, "Drop what you are doing, and follow me." What would you do?

Most of us assume that, when Jesus appeared to the men who were fishing and told them to follow him, they just – well – they just dropped everything and followed! The scripture passage tells us that the first two, Simon and Andrew, left their nets and went with him, and the second two men, James and John, left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired hands as they followed Jesus. They had no idea what awaited them, but they heard him say that he would teach them to fish for people.

Fish for people? How would they do that? They certainly couldn't use a net or fish hooks to reel them in, and what were they supposed to tell their unwitting catches who might not be as receptive to Jesus in the same way they were? For years, I always read this passage as a call to evangelism, a call to bring people to Jesus and help them learn how to follow him, too. That certainly is part of what Jesus was calling Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John to do that day, but I think there is more behind this story.

At the beginning of the gospel of Mark, Jesus appeared at the River Jordan and was baptized by John, then he went into the wilderness where he was tested and tempted. When he emerged on the scene in Galilee, he probably had already been interacting with a number of people, and by the time he arrived to the shore where the men were casting their nets, he may have already become a familiar face with a familiar message: "The Kingdom of God is at hand!"

For Jesus, the search in finding disciples was a reflection of his ministry: he called the unexpected, the ordinary, hard-working folks who would be transformed by his message. It was a call to a new world, a new vision of God's kingdom here on earth, and one that offered love, forgiveness, and eternal life. In order to be part of that new movement, the fishers had to leave what was their regular, ordinary jobs and move to a new place in their lives, in their thinking, and in their hearts.

In one of the churches I served had a growing Sunday school, and the combined fifth and sixth grade class needed a teacher, or two to share the teaching responsibilities. We asked over and over again for someone to step forward, but had no response. Then, we decided to ask one of the kids to give a plea during the worship service, and he stood in front of the congregation, with his speech, ending with, "We really are good kids!" After the service, two women came forward to volunteer. They said that they couldn't resist that invitation, and they taught the class for several years, enjoying every moment. Sometimes God calls us to serve through others.

Maybe Jesus stands in our yard or at our door to call us to serve in some way. There are so many places where we can serve as his followers, and sometimes, it takes a small event or experience to open our eyes to it, and then say, "Yes" to that call.

In another church, one of my 90 year old ladies kept lamenting that she couldn't do anything any more and felt so useless as part of the church family. I asked her if she could write cards, and she said she could. So, she became our "sunshine lady" who sent birthday and anniversary cards to everyone in the church. In addition, I asked her to be a prayer support and to pray for those to whom she sent the cards, as well as follow the prayer list. Her calling, when she felt she could do nothing, was to do what she could, and it was a meaningful and powerful ministry with the church family.

Like this woman, not all of us are called to leave our homes, jobs, and lives behind. Maybe Zebedee, the father of James and John, had his own calling by staying in the boat and sharing the love of God through his work as a fisherman. The call of Jesus is always about setting our hearts right with God, committing ourselves to serve God in whatever way we can, and to share the love of God with others. We are asked to make Jesus our first priority, and leave behind the worldly things that get in the way of following him faithfully. It's a learning process and always a work in progress that grows as we grow in faith.

How are we called? What gifts and talents can we share? Where is our passion for sharing Christ with the world, whether it's close to home or called farther out of our comfort zones?

Steve Garnaas-Holmes has a blog called Unfolding Light, and he posted this reflection for today's scripture passage (www.unfoldinglight.com):

God, can I hear the call?

Do I listen?

Raise my head from my consuming tasks to listen for another voice?

Do I recognize your voice when I hear it?

And when you call, call me to service, to healing, to justice—
what do I need to leave behind to get up and follow?

What nets entangle me,
the familiar, the safe, the comfortable?

Will I let go of people's kindness?

A sense of entitlement to peace and security?

Do I see the webs of injustice that benefit me and hurt others, entangling nets I have
tended and mended—
can I let go?

Give me heart to let them go,

let them go,

let them go,

and get up

and follow you.

May we recognize the call of Jesus in our lives and follow. Amen.

Prayer:

Jesus our Savior, you stand at the shoreline of our lives calling us to follow you. When we take that step and make that commitment, we give our lives and our hearts to you. Help us to remember that our call may lead us to new places or invite us to share the love of God wherever we have been planted. Remind us that, when you call us, you lead us to the ways in which we can grow in faith, in confidence, and with joy as we serve you in this world. We know you don't call us to ministry and then abandon us, but you continue to walk with us. Thank you for your guiding presence that leads us throughout our lives. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn: "Would I Have Answered When You Called," vv. 1,4

Blessing



PRAYER LIST

Townley Family, Erin Frane, Jim Slater, Jeanne Westcott,
Bill and Gayle Gardei, Earl, Dennis Hoskins, Charles Gilman,
Barbara Clement, Vicki Fernandez and her daughter, Harry Junkins,
Fabio, Fred, Sophia, Barbara Glidden, Stebbins daughter-in-law, Jen,
Danny Westbrook, Dan Strange, Bobbie Noble, Earl Dixon, Bill Stover,

Pastor Sue Ellery & Family

Durgin Pines Residents & Workers,

Riverside Rest Home Residents & Workers,

Kittery Estates Residents and Workers

Those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19

Those in nursing and assisted living care,

Our Denomination – Our Church Family



FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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