

Our Calling

The Great Invitation: What happens when we take our call seriously

Mark 1:16-20; John 1:35-45

February 11, 2018

Welcome again to worship. It's so good to be with you today.

Last week, I began a short series called "The Great Invitation: What happens when we take our call seriously." We are talking about sharing our faith with people in our circles of influence, what I call FRAN: friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors.

Okay, I've just caused half of you to go, "Ugh, does he have to talk about that? Can't we have just a nice, short sermon on love?"

Well, what if I enticed you with some football. Yeah, the season's over; you're going to miss it today, so let's put football and evangelism together with the "Evangelism Linebacker."

EVANGELISM LINEBACKER

Ouch is right. That's a strange way to think about evangelism. And therein lays the problem. So many Christians think you've got to be weird or do strange things to be an evangelist. They think evangelism is somebody on a soapbox preaching on the corner or blowing people up like the Evangelism Linebacker or the guy with the rainbow colored hair. Remember him? He would get a ticket to sporting events and be positioned in a strategic place so that the television camera would catch him with his shirt.

We think the only way to do evangelism is with strange methods, and we worry we might offend rather than reach people, so we think it's best to leave evangelism well enough alone.

Yet reaching people for Jesus is one of the things Christ's wants us to do. It is call of everyone, not just pastors or well-known evangelists. If we are so bold to believe and declare that one man (Jesus), one event (the crucifixion), one place (on Calvary) made the difference for all eternity, that no one came come to the Father and eternal life except through Christ, then **we** must be the voice, telling the story, passing the gospel and its peace along. We are the messengers.

We see numerous occasions in the New Testament of individuals sharing their faith. We looked at Philip and the Ethiopian last week. Other times, it is simply one person meeting Jesus and telling someone else about Him. How many people in your life have heard you talk about your relationship with Jesus.

I want us to look at Christ's calling for every one of us. So turn to page 6 in your bulletin and let me read from Mark 1:16-20:

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.¹

¹ Mark 1:16-20 (NRSV)

This passage tells of how these four – Simon, Andrew, James and John – were called to be Jesus’ disciples, active in His ministry. “Follow me,” Jesus says, “and I will make you fish for people.” That is each and every one’s calling as a disciple of Christ.

I want to share 3 things about this calling, and I invite you to jot them down.

First, our calling is hard work.

Do any of you like to fish?

I don’t like to fish. It seemed like when I fished as a boy, I never caught anything. Never. Only once did I ever catch anything. We were on a camping vacation and went fishing for supper, but none of us – dad, my brother, or me caught anything. Now, mom was counting on us to bring home food, and we had nothing. So dad found out about a fish farm close by, and for a few bucks, they would let you drop your hook into a pool and bam, you’d catch a fish. And that’s what I did: lower my hook and bam, a fish hit it. No work to catch fish like that.

But that’s not real fishing, is it? And I’m talking about real fishing here, when it’s your livelihood. You’ve seen that show, “Deadliest Catch.” Those fishermen work really hard at their occupation.

Same way with Simon and Andrew. The passage says they were “casting a net into the sea – for they were fisherman.”² They were not lazy. They were hard workers.

When Myra and I were in the Holy Land, we saw how fishermen of Jesus’ day fished.

FISHING IN THE SEA OF GALILEE

Fishing with nets is hard work. Christian service needs those who know how to work. It’s not easy. It is not simply coming to church and sitting for an hour. Our calling is hard work.

There is a story of Billy Graham when he was visiting a city for one of his crusades. He had finished writing a letter and began to look for a place to mail it. After walking around for a while, he came across a young boy. He asked the boy if he knew how to get to the post office. The boy gave Billy Graham the directions and before leaving, Billy said to the boy, “Come on over to the arena tonight and I’ll tell you how to get to heaven.” The boy looked at him and replied, “How can you know how to get to heaven? You don’t even know the way to the post office!”

Being a fisher for people is hard work; you got to know what it takes and how to get there. But God needs us to do the hard work of introducing the people on our FRAN list to Christ. Besides, dying for our sins was not a cakewalk. Our calling is hard work.

Second, our calling is necessary work.

Look at verse 19:

*As [Jesus] went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.*³

Mending one’s nets is not fun work, but is necessary work. It doesn’t do to throw out a net that’s full of holes; the fish just swim out of it.

So mending demonstrated that these men were not adverse to doing humble duties – a good trait for Christian service – especially when you know it is necessary.

Paul wrote in Romans 10:

² Mark 1:16 (NRSV)

³ Mark 1:19 (NRSV)

For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”⁴

We must take God’s great message of salvation to others so that they can respond to the Good News. How will your loved ones and neighbors hear it unless someone tells them? Is God calling you to take a part in making His message known in your community? Think of one person who needs to hear the Good News, and think of something you can do to help him or her hear it. Then take that step as soon as possible.⁵

Friends, our calling is necessary work.

Finally, our calling is essential work.

Look what these four men do:

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.⁶

Notice the critical word here: immediately. Simon, Andrew, James and John immediately left everything behind because being a fisher of people is essential work.

In Mark 5, we find the story of the healing of the Gerasene demoniac. Remember, he lived in the cemetery, among the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones. Of course, Jesus delivers and heals him. Afterwards:

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said, “No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been.” So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.⁷

The man that was once mad left all that behind him, went home, and shared his faith with the people he knew.

Friends, that’s what each and every one of us needs to do, but sadly, we are apparently not.

As of last Sunday, we’ve not had a single visitor to worship in 2018. Not one visitor this year has come to church. Church growth experts tell us that we need 5% of the people in worship to be visitors, and we haven’t had a single one. Where do you think that trend lead us?

We have been called to be fishers of people. It’s hard work. It’s necessary work. It’s essential work.

⁴ Romans 10:13-15 (NLT)

⁵ Life Application Study Bible, Romans 10:15

⁶ Mark 1:17-20 (NRSV)

⁷ Mark 5:18-20 (NLT)

I've put in the bulletin space for you to write down the people on your FRAN list, the Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, and Neighbors you know who are unchurched, who do not go to church, who need Jesus.

Folks, it is our calling to introduce them to Jesus, to be part of the Great Invitation and see what happens when we take our call seriously.

There were 4 Christians: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was a special job to do: share our faith.

- Everybody was asked to do it.
- Everybody was sure Somebody would do it.
- Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it.
- Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job.
- Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.
- It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody.
- And Nobody was saved.