

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Believe in Community

This is a familiar text. Most of us have heard it before, we’ve read it, we’ve studied it, and more than likely we’ve even heard a sermon or two on it. When we hear this text we think back to what we have learned happened. Jesus had just recently been baptized and then tempted in the wilderness. And John the Baptist had been arrested, really he had been turned over. Now let’s look at the main part of the text, our story of the day.

For most of us, we focus on Jesus. And why not? Our Christian calendars revolve mainly around Jesus. The Christian year in three words might as well be summarized as Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection. Of course when we get to this time in our Christian

calendar year we get excited, it's when we get to hear about his life and we hone in. We love hearing stories about Jesus and this story is no different. We love hearing that Jesus simply called James and John to follow him and they immediately dropped their nets and followed Jesus. We love that story.

It's hard for us to imagine literally dropping everything, not even packing a bag, and following someone. To support and believe in someone like that, someone we barely know. This isn't a Disney princess story, this is the calling of James and John. It's a great story. When Jesus calls, you answer, you respond. That's how we see the story. That's our perspective. But the story isn't as simple as that.

What if we looked at the story from different perspectives? What if we took on the perspective of Zebedee? Here we have Zebedee, a father and a fisherman. He has worked his whole life building up his business. And now his sons are older and he has turned his one man fishing business into a family business. The three of them, day after day go out casting their nets early in the morning. Then load up and sell what they can in town. And at the end of the day they mend their nets, tying up the holes and getting things ready for the next day. Only this day, while tying up the holes in their nets, James and John just leave. They don't finish tying up the holes in their nets, they don't tell their dad where they are going or even goodbye. They leave, the boats, the nets, their home, their friends, and even their dad. Leaving him to get the work done all by himself and to pay the bills all by himself while they go off to see the world. That's Zebedee's

perspective. It's a different perspective. A hard perspective for parents, to see their children grow up and answer their calling. A calling that might not look the way they thought it would.

Or what if we took the perspective of one of the brothers. There they are doing their regular daily routine and as they are tying and mending their nets at the end of the day when they see this man. One of the brothers asked the other, "is that the guy?" "I think so," answers the other brother. "What, what are Peter and Andrew doing with him?" "I don't know...." And then, while they are talking, this strange man who doesn't seem strange at all, calls out to them. One brother jumps in the water and then the next, both swimming out toward this man, trying to see what made this ordinary looking man so compelling. I don't know if they had heard him proclaiming earlier that morning when he was on the shore. But I do know that at that time that was a really odd thing to do, to prophecy. No one really knew what that meant. The kingdom of God has come near? So perhaps, PERHAPS, they wanted to learn more and see what this man could teach them, so they swam out to follow Jesus.

Let's see, we've covered our perspective, we've covered Zebedee, and that of the brothers, James and John. It looks like the only perspective we have not covered is that of Jesus. Remember he had just been tempted and John the Baptist had been turned over. This glimpse into the text, this very story we're looking at today is the one thing we see Jesus do before he begins preaching and teaching in the synagogues. So again, remember what has happened. A couple weeks

ago we heard about Jesus being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit so he could begin his ministry. Then he went out into the wilderness to pray before starting this new task. While praying he was tempted. And when he came back into town, he learned that John the Baptist had been turned over. It is in this moment, this moment in our text today, that he gathers before he begins to preach and teach. He calls a community for himself. And who does he call? He calls ordinary everyday people to join him, to go with him. You have to remember, people are people, ordinary or extraordinary, they are people. All people throughout time have been people, and all people to come will be people. People who worry, have fears, who laugh, who think they are funny, who sing songs, watch the clouds pass by, who enjoy a good meal, and love a good nights rest. We're human, they were human. Here Jesus calls these regular people, just like you and me, to join him in community. Jesus probably already knew he couldn't do what God had called him to do by himself. After all being tempted and seeing John the Baptist turned over, it was even more clear that answering God's call is only possible with a community that can support you, and travel with you, and care about you. People who invest in you as you invest in them. So many times we try to go throughout life alone. Yes, we have friends, co-workers, perhaps a significant other but we tend to keep a lot of our struggles to ourselves. We don't ever like to admit when we can't do something or can't do something exactly right. Or even when we might need help. And we are not alone in our thinking, remember, we are human. There are people living right here in this neighborhood who need a community. True community. We need to be that for people. We need

to be the community for all people. We have Sunday morning classes for various ages, toddlers through adults. We have a youth group for high school and middle schoolers, we have a twice a week exercise group for those young at heart, we have a weekly coffee fellowship time for those who can make it, and after school activities for our elementary students. Boy scouts and girl scouts meet here. Craft fairs and pancake breakfasts are held here. Weddings, funerals, and baby blessings, all take place here, in this place. We are becoming that community for all people. But we need to continue expanding ourselves and expanding our love. We need to genuinely love and encourage others, at times going out of our way and out of our comfort zones. We need to remember to invite people to church. Sometimes we don't realize that others don't have a community. Or perhaps don't have a community that loves them unconditionally that they can open up to and simply be themselves. Invite people to rallies and camps. Invite people to family picnics and movie nights. To fellowship meals and coffee fellowships. Invite them to Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday night classes. Whenever you come, invite them to come too. And when we see a need within our community that is not being met we need to create a space. If we see a need to help blended families, adoptive parents, new parents, or single parents. If we see a need for cooking healthy meals or learning to cook for one. For crisis support groups or a new ministry. Just as we are doing with the Community Cares organization by creating a space for foster families and special needs families to meet and receive help, support, nurture and encouragement. The possibility for needs within our community will vary and change over time. We need to take hold

of these opportunities and welcome people in so they can have the love and support of a group, so they know they are not alone. We are never alone, we are community. I encourage all of us to invest time in our community. Because I can't think of a better investment than people. People know when you care about them. They know when you are sincere. And they know when they've experienced love. Nobody can answer God's calling by themselves. Even Jesus could not answer God's call alone. We were made to be in community. We, the living breathing embodiment of Christ, we were made for this. Believe in community. And let's make sure we go out and act like community. Taking every opportunity to love and serve all of our neighbors, while making room for them to be a part of this beautiful community here. Amen.