

January 27, 2008

Isaiah 9:1-4

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

Matthew 4:12-23

<sup>12</sup>Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. <sup>13</sup>He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup>so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

<sup>15</sup> “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,  
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—  
<sup>16</sup> the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
light has dawned.”

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

<sup>18</sup>As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” <sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

One of the big changes that came about with the Protestant Reformation five hundred years ago was the **requirement for holiness**. At the time, if you wanted to be holy and live as a Christian, you needed to become a monk or a nun. You had to recognize that life in the world was evil - and stop it. Quit talking, eat just enough to get by, don't think about making a living or building things or raising a family...**just get out of the world** - and be a Christian.

Of course somebody had to build things, grow food, and raise children - so the rest of the people took care of that. You had to choose which group you wanted to belong to.

Martin Luther pointed out that Jesus taught a different point of view in the Bible. Luther called his insight "The Priesthood of All Believers" when he wrote *The Address to the Christian*

*Nobility* in 1520. **You serve God by living in the world.** You make the world better for people and that builds God's kingdom.

People praised Luther for his insight ... and have been trying to put it out of their minds ever since.

It is still accepted that a person is either "spiritual" or he knows how the world works ... but he can't do both. We hear calls for churches to take care of "spiritual" concerns, but stay out of our "daily lives".

It is still accepted that Christianity might tell us what to **believe**, but it better not try to tell us what to **do**.

Martin Luther did not make up the concept of "The Priesthood of All Believers". (The idea wouldn't have lasted so long if he had. Ideas that last that long come from God.) We have a famous example in this morning's Gospel lesson. Jesus walks by the Lake of Galilee and sees two fishermen, Peter and Andrew, and he says, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Jesus says something about discipleship when he sees fishermen and he continues to call them fishermen even as he calls them to change their lives.

He continues to call them fishermen, but to change their reason for fishing. Jesus doesn't want those people to change their profession. He wants to change their **reason** for doing it.

"Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Other people separate the "spiritual" from "real life". Those people see the world in terms of things they think are important. They think "being better off" means "having more money". They think "strong values" means "knowing who to avoid". They confuse "being educated" with "being sure of yourself". They think that is "real life" ... **You can choose that or you can be spiritual.**

But Jesus comes walking up the beach with a "spiritual" message and he calls his disciples by the jobs they have in "real life". Jesus does not say, "Fishermen? That's no good.

"I'll make you something better than fishermen!" No, Jesus says, "I'll give you a **reason** to fish." He says, "Good, I've found fishermen...God needs fishermen...build God's kingdom...serve people...fish for people."

Until then Peter, Andrew, John, and James had changed a lot of lives...but they had all been the lives of fish. They were practical men. **They knew "real life"**. They didn't get involved with "spiritual" stuff. And they might have stayed that way. They might have told the preacher on the beach that they would listen to his sermon later. Right then they had to take care of "practical matters".

They would be concerned with fishing now and the Kingdom of God later. They could have made that unholy separation, but we would never have heard of them. They would not have changed the world - the way they did by following Jesus when he called them to fish. When you change the **reason** for what you do – that's when you change the world.

Jesus still calls. He calls us to a new life. Jesus calls us with a message that goes deeper than **what** we do. Jesus goes all the way down to **why we do it**.

When Jesus calls us, it may not be to change **how** we fill our day, but to change **why** we do those things that fill it. To start our day with the goal of showing those people we will encounter that God loves them. Going about our "real lives" and our "practical" concerns...because those "real lives" and "practical concerns" are part of his Kingdom.

Think how much the world could be changed and still stay exactly the same. "The same" in so far as the same people would go to the same jobs at the same time. Tomorrow morning the week would begin with the same faces at the same desks, the same people climbing into the same vehicles, opening the same offices, turning on the same equipment, opening the same books...but all of it changed because the people were doing those things for no other reason than to build God's kingdom.

They wanted to be carpenters, and salespeople, and students, and accountants, and bankers...**to serve God**.

Imagine your life if work was not just to get through another day, and make money, and give you something to do. But work was to make the world better for people.

And when Jesus calls us to follow him, it is not just with the work we do...but with everything else about our lives. Everything that makes us who we are...the things we say, how we spend our money, what we hope for, the things we want to learn...every thing that makes us who we are...

We **will** do those things. We will say things; we will spend our money; and hope, and want to learn things. We will go about our lives as surely as Peter was a fisherman. But will we live our lives in the service of God?

Will we use our lives to make this world a better place for people? Jesus was happy that those men were fishermen...**but he wanted them to be more concerned with people than with fish.**

What is the focus of our lives? In this part of town a lot of people would say "computers". A banker may say, "money". It might be "books" for a student; a carpenter could say "nails" ... A fisherman might say, "fish".

Jesus calls us to have a better focus for our lives. **Jesus calls us to make the world better for people to live in.** To take our lives, whatever they are, and live them for God and his people.

We are used to identifying ourselves by what we do. As quickly as we tell someone our names, we tell how we earn a living, or how we spend our time, or what we did before we retired. Instead of thinking of ourselves by how we spend our time, **let's think of ourselves by how we serve God.**

Those hours that we fill during the day, are they good for the world? Do they make an effort to show people God loves them?

Jesus wants your life to make God's love live in the world.

He did not tell even the apostles to stop being who they were. He said, "Be who you are in the service of God". He did not call those people away from "real life". Jesus walked **into** real life and blessed it with a meaning that only he could give it.

Jesus does the same for you.

God has given you your life. He does not want you to turn your back on it. Jesus doesn't call you **away** from real life...he gives you a reason to live it.

God wants you to love your life as much as he does...and that's more than you can ever know.

God looks at your life and he sees more than a way of filling a day, and making a living, and getting by. God looks at your life and he sees a chance to love the world through what you do.

With his help, we will let him.