

# TORN NETS AND A BROKEN WORLD

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Mk. 1:14-39

John the Baptist had been cast into prison by Herod Antipas because John had criticized him for taking his brother Phillip's wife. Peter and Andrew, and James and John had been John's disciples. But they had met Jesus earlier at the baptism and were drawn to Him. Now back in Galilee, in the northwest seacoast town of Capernaum, known to us as Tell Hum, the home of Andrew and Peter. Jesus walks along the beach and calls these very same men to follow Him in discipleship. It was a crucial time. John, their former Rabbi, was in prison; they were trying to make it in the fishing business; and Jesus, the Rabbi, comes along where they are working and making ready to work, and He calls them to follow Him. And all four of them, without question, rise up and follow Him. This was the beginning of the Great Galilean Ministry, the year of overwhelming success, the year of miracles and healings, the year when men found it exciting and breathtakingly exhilarating to be alive and follow this Master and Teacher. Later that excitement would turn into fear and dread; the disciples would deny Him, and run from Him; and only a small band, mostly women, would stay by His side. But after the Resurrection, and after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they became a mighty army for God.

## I. THE FIRST THING WE SEE IS THE CALL OF JESUS AND THE HEARING OF THAT CALL.

### A. THEY HEARD THE CALL AND WE MUST HEAR THE CALL.

Jesus called them to follow Him. It was customary for the disciple to follow the master, or the Rabbi to whom he was attached. In fact the disciple was to walk behind the Master and never before Him according to custom of the day. The one they had followed, John the Baptist, was now in prison. Now they hear another voice, preaching the same message, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They know that this is the One that they had met in Judea, and that John had commanded them to Behold Him. Therefore they left everything behind and followed Jesus.

"Follow me." Henry Turlington writes in the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, "Jesus' call was strong and demanding, similar to a military order. The personal nature of the call, 'Follow me,' would have been especially appropriate to disciples of an imprisoned John: their prophetic leader is no longer here, and the one mightier than he claims their allegiance."

They had heard Jesus before, and they would hear Him now. In the Bible the word hear is related to hearing and doing. But they had to hear first before they would do anything. And the Lord of men said to them, "Follow me!" He says the same to us; but are we listening?

In the Old Testament, young Isaiah had that great vision of the Lord who was high and lifted up. Then he listened, and he heard God say, not just to him, but to the heavenly council, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?" Because Isaiah heard, he cried out to the Lord, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

The Christian must heed this call, for if not, he is not a Christian at all. Jesus is our commanding officer, and when He says, "Follow me!" we must hear and we must follow.

Jesus calls today. Are you listening? Will you say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me, send me."

There are many in the world that have never heard the Gospel. Don Curry serves in the Sind desert of Pakistan with the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship. He visited a village of animists and told them the story of Jesus. They were intrigued by Jesus' love and compassion, and His willingness to die for them. They asked Don, "When did this happen? Ten or fifteen years ago?" "No," answered Don, "2,000 years ago." The man who asked was very sad and asked, "What terrible things have we done, that God should have kept this wonderful story from us?" God did not keep this goodnews from them, but man did. We must hear Jesus' call before we can follow Jesus.

## **II. WHEN JESUS CALLS, WE MUST ACCEPT HIS CHALLENGE.**

This challenge is, first of all, a challenge to leave the old behind. Abraham knew such a challenge and he left family, land, culture, and religion behind, and set forth on a journey that would lead him to Shechem, Bethel, Egypt, and back; and also led him to become the father of many nations. His name was changed from Abram to Abraham. Jacob was confronted with the need to leave the old behind also. At the Brook Jabbok--this deceptive man who stole the blessing and the birthright of his brother, who feared for his life when he learned that his brother Esau was awaiting him, --at the Brook Jabbok he wrestled with an angel throughout the night, and in giving up the old life, he became Israel, one who prevailed with God. This same challenge confronted Saul of Tarsus, that little Jew with the energy of an army. God struck him down outside the Damascus walls, and when the scene was over, the scales fell from his eyes, he was filled with the Spirit, and he became the mightiest Apostle of them all. But he had to leave everything behind before this could happen.

These four disciples were involved in the drudgery of their work. They had these circular nets that they cast into the waters. The nets surrounded the fish, and they were pulled aboard the boat. Andrew and Simon were doing their fishing. On the other hand, James and John were mending their nets, torn by use. Without mending they could get no catch. Work, work, work. There is great drudgery in work, even if that work is fishing. On the Saturday morning *Today* program a man from Minnesota was shown bemoaning the snow. He said, "We've had a bad winter. We should be in Spring, and I should be fishing." We enjoy fishing---unless that is our job. Peter even went fishing after the Lord's death and resurrection; for he hadn't quite left everything behind.

But besides the drudgery of past work, there was also, some comfort in the familiar that they must leave behind. None of us enjoy leaving the familiar for the foreign, the comfortable for the new. I once used the analogy of sleeping on a mattress with springs sticking through, and learning to sleep around the springs. We learn to be comfortable despite the circumstances, by dancing around the circumstances. We may hate our work, but we love to hate it, and we refuse to change because the familiar is more comfortable to us. But we must leave our comfort zones behind.

The second challenge of Jesus is to look to the new. Jesus promised, "I will make you fishers of men." Isn't it interesting that the metaphor of the nets fits into this so

well? What Jesus was saying to their fishing experience was to Andrew and Simon, “Look, you must fish for men just as you cast your nets for the fish. First you must have faith that you will catch them, and, second, you must not discriminate about the kinds of fish you catch.” And He is saying to James and John, “You must mend your nets to serve the world. Torn nets will not catch fish or broken men. To minister to a broken world you must mend your nets.” And we all know how badly our nets are torn, and how badly the world is broken. The mending of our nets requires our repentance for our lack of compassion, and our promptness to put Jesus’ words into action and to become words to the broken world.

### **III. TO ACCEPT JESUS’ CHALLENGE AND TO FOLLOW HIM IS TO FIND THE CONFIRMATION OF HIS PROMISES AND THE COMFORT OF HIS PRESENCE.**

David Livingstone gave his life for Africa in his following the call and challenge of Jesus. His heart was buried in Africa, and his body was buried in Westminster Cathedral, if I am not mistaken. He said that wherever he went, Jesus went with him, and even in the vast jungles of Africa. He was never alone. He stated, “Jesus is a gentleman, and when a gentleman gives his word, he always keeps it.” In our cynical age that statement is, no doubt, challenged by many. But Jesus has absolute credibility, and He said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” Livingstone took the Lord at His word.

Surely Jesus lived up to His promises to His disciples. He made them ‘fishers of men.’ Peter caught 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost. James, the first martyred Apostle, caught his share too. John outlived them all and had great influence and success in the world of that day. Andrew led Peter to Jesus, so much of Peter’s success must be given to him. In Romania, Andrew is the patron saint, whom they say started the Church of Romania. The promise was true. They lived to see the fruit of their labors.

These disciples first followed Jesus into the synagogue at Capernaum and saw Him perform a miracle by casting the unclean spirit out of a demon-possessed man. Jesus healed this broken man and they were a part of that great victory. Better to leave nets un-mended than to leave men broken by sin. Then they all came from the synagogue to Peter’s simple home. There they heard that the mother-in-law was sick. Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up and the fever left her and she ministered to them. Later that evening almost the entire city of Capernaum was at the door, and along with Jesus, they ministered to broken men, as with His power He healed all who were brought to Him. Who brought these broken men to Jesus? These disciples of course; and so should we. Our nets can be mended later, but broken humanity needs help now!

His promises came to pass after His death and resurrection. But His comfort was theirs as He was present with them when no one else but they, themselves knew it. They saw with the eyes of the Spirit and with faith, and the Lord actually accompanied them. James Stewart of Scotland in his book, *The Gates of New Life*, said that Jesus gave men the greatest happiness of all by helping them overcome the three greatest enemies of happiness, worry, boredom, and self-centeredness. But he also says that the Christian life is not just the happiest life, it is also the hardest life, and the holiest life. And then he made one other claim about the Christian life—it is also more hopeful than any other life. With Jesus’ Presence, these disciples had it all!

No life is more exciting than the Christian life. Jesus calls us, and when we hear Him and say, "Here am I: send me!" He leads us to the most healthy, happy, and wholesome life that we will ever find. The Christian life, lived by following Jesus gives us joy unspeakable and full of glory. Following Jesus gives us immeasurable excitement! Following Jesus is not for the unwilling—it is too hard for such souls. It is for real men and real women who find real life in Jesus Christ.

If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart. If you want life, real life, wonderful life, follow Him. It is my deepest hope for you that you will come to possess that great happiness that I have in Jesus. "I have decided to follow Jesus, No turning back, no turning back." Have you decided to follow Jesus? He says to you, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men, Follow me and your life will be filled with joy and with meaning." Will you be His disciple? Will you hear and follow Him?