Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Jesus Changes Everything*, these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

**The Point:** Following Jesus is an adventure, and you are invited.

**Introduction:** I remember sitting in a seminary class one day, and a student requested that we pray for him over the weekend. He was going to preach at a church “in view of a call”. One of the other students was from a different country, and he asked what that meant (he spoke English very well, but he was not familiar with some American idioms). The first student explained that he was preaching a trial sermon at a church in the hope of becoming their next pastor. This sparked a discussion on various clichés that we use in the church. The professor who taught our class commented that he never liked the phrase “surrender to the ministry”. He said, “That suggests some kind of battle was going on, and that wasn’t the case with me.” The student sitting next to me whispered, “It was with me!” I replied, “Me, too!”

Some people respond immediately when they hear the call of God, and they have my full respect and admiration. However, I must confess that I was not one of them. I was about sixteen when I first began to sense that God was calling me into the ministry, and I fought it for more than a year. I was aware of my own inadequacies, and I didn’t see how God could use someone like me. Nevertheless, God uses people in spite of their deficiencies. We see this truth in the calling of the first disciples.

I. **The message.**

A. “After John was put in prison” – This denoted the beginning of Jesus’ great ministry in Galilee.
   1. Up to this time, Jesus had been preaching largely in Judea.
      a. Evidently there was some overlap between Jesus’ ministry and John’s (John 3:26-36).
      b. After John was imprisoned, Jesus returned to Galilee.
   2. Galilee was often looked upon with disdain.
      a. It had a larger Gentile population than Judea.
      b. Jewish religious leaders mocked the thought of the Messiah coming from Galilee (John 7:40-42, 50-52).

B. Jesus’ message was threefold.
   1. “The time is fulfilled” – That is, the time for God to reveal Himself.
      a. The Greek word translated “time” is *kairos*. In this context, it speaks of a definite, fixed time determined by God.
b. “The Kingdom of God” – Jesus did indeed come to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. However, it was a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36-37).

2. “Repent” – This speaks of a change in mind or attitude.
   a. This change is so radical that it also leads to a change in behavior.
   b. There is no salvation without repentance.

3. “Believe the gospel”
   a. The word translated “gospel” is the Greek word euangelion. It was often used in Roman culture to speak of good tidings.
   b. Jesus’ good news was that the Kingdom of God had arrived. During His earthly ministry He would reveal how people become a part of that kingdom through His death and resurrection.

II. The messengers.

A. Jesus called four men to be His followers.
   1. When Jesus later chose twelve apostles, these four men were included (Mark 3:14-19).
      a. John and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-40).
      b. Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus (John 1:41-42).
      c. James was the first apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:1-2).
      d. John outlived all the other apostles.
   2. Why did Mark focus on these four men?
      a. Peter, James, and John were Jesus’ inner circle.
      b. Peter was Mark’s mentor (1 Peter 5:13).

B. What kind of men were these?
   1. They were ordinary men (Acts 4:13; 1 Corinthians 1:27-31).
   2. They were flawed men.
      a. Peter was aware of his own depravity (Luke 5:8), and later denied Jesus three times.
      b. James and John were known as “the sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). This suggests they were rather quick-tempered.

III. The mission.

A. Jesus said He would make them “to become fishers of men”.
   1. Just as they drew fish into their boats, God would use them to draw people into His kingdom.
   2. Jesus was not talking about an immediate transformation, but an ongoing process.
      a. God is still smoothing off our rough edges, and will continue to do so until we get to heaven.
      b. In the meantime, we can learn from our mistakes.

B. Our mission has still not changed.
   1. Our Lord still wants us to bring people into His kingdom.
      a. God draws people into the kingdom (John 6:44), but He works through the testimony of believers.
      b. Without Jesus, people have no hope (Acts 4:12).
   2. God still uses us in spite of our faults and frailties.

Conclusion: Adrian Rogers used to tell about an interesting experience he had when he was pastor of First Baptist Church in Merritt Island, Florida. In those days they had...
an annual event called “The Week of Champions”, in which famous athletes would come and share their testimonies. That year one of the speakers was Paul Anderson. He was a world champion weightlifter, and he was reputed to be the strongest man in the world. He was also a devout Christian, and he gave a very simple but powerful testimony: “If the strongest man in the world needs Jesus, so do you.”

A few weeks later Dr. Rogers was giving the invitation at the Sunday morning service, and a college student came forward. He said he wanted to be baptized. Dr. Rogers asked the young man if he had trusted in Jesus as His Lord and Savior, and he said that he had accepted Christ during the Week of Champions. Dr. Rogers asked, “What night?” The student said it was the night Paul Anderson spoke. Dr. Rogers said, “That was some testimony he gave, wasn’t it?” To his surprise, the student didn’t remember! The student explained, “It wasn’t what Paul Anderson said that spoke to me. It was what George Wilson said.” Dr. Rogers tried to remember which athlete he was, and then he remembered: George Wilson was a paraplegic in a wheelchair. During a time of free testimony before the service, people had lifted his wheelchair up on the stage, and he shared what Jesus meant to him. The student said, “When I saw the joy and peace on his face, I knew what he had was real. I thought if God could do that for a paraplegic, maybe He could something for me, and I accepted Jesus as my Savior.”

Think about it: the main speaker that night was the strongest man in the world, yet God used a paraplegic in a wheelchair to bring someone to Jesus. Don’t ever think you’re too flawed for God to use you. When you make yourself available to Him, and obey Him when He calls, you will be surprised at what He will do through you.

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