

Mountains and Lakes

Week 2: Calling of the First Disciples

Matthew 4:18-22

Good morning! It's so good to be back after a little family vacation. We had great time together and made a lot of fun memories. I hope you are able to get away a little bit this summer for a time of rest and relaxation.

As we get started today, I want to take a little poll. When you find yourself in need of some time away, where are you most likely to go? Show of hands...

How many of you want to go to the mountains? Get some fresh air. Do some hiking and exploring. Disconnect from crowds of people.

How many of you are like "get me to the water!" You want to go to a lake or the ocean. Lay out by the pool. Or sit on the beach in a nice chair with a good book to read and just relax.

How many are like, "just let me stay at home and you all can leave so I can get some peace and quiet!"

During the summer, a lot of us travel to the mountains or lakes or oceans to get some rest, or go on an adventure. Reconnect with family. Mountains and lakes become the backdrops of our photos and provide the landscapes that we use when we tell our stories.

And long before they became vacation spots for us, mountains and lakes served as the backdrop to some of the most powerful moments in Jesus' life. And so we thought it would be fun this summer to follow Jesus through the mountains and to the lakes and to use the topography of Jerusalem to retell the story of his life and ministry.

And today, we're traveling with Jesus to the Sea of Galilee, which is actually just a lake that sits about 70 miles north of Jerusalem. Typically, when we see water in the landscape of the Gospels, it's the Sea of Galilee; this region Jesus spent so much of his time.

So, for all you "get me to the water" people, that's where we'll be hanging out today. If you haven't already, go ahead and turn to Matthew 4.

On June 21st, 2021, four years ago yesterday, Tim Bedwell, our Video Director who makes all those cool videos we use, also known as Boyd, sent me and Tim Thompson a text with a meme. And if you scroll through the last 4 years and 1 day of messages in that group chat, the *only* thing you'll find are funny memes that we've shared with each other. It's beautiful.

And last July, during the Olympics, Boyd dropped this gem in the chat...(Lifeguard) It turns out there are a lot more memes like this one...(Bing, Grass, BMW, Nokia)

I think we laugh at these because we get it. Over my time in ministry, talking to countless people over meals and cups of coffee, I've noticed that there's this fear we have of being useless. This fear that many of us struggle with that we're not doing anything meaningful with our lives. We're not making the impact or leaving the legacy that we thought we would.

We want to know that our lives matter, but for most of us, our lives just feel so *normal*. Our routine of going to work, changing diapers, taking the kids to practice, warming up leftovers, doing laundry and yardwork...it just all feels so mundane and insignificant.

And, because none of us want to feel that way, what we do is we end up chasing significance. We try to prove ourselves. We measure our worth by our performance, our productivity, our image and how other people think of us. We hustle to be amazing because, deep down, we're afraid of being forgettable. We're afraid our life will be the equivalent of playing grass in the school play, and so we strive and we work harder, hoping we can be enough.

And I think that's especially true for some of us dads. You want to be the hero for your family. God designed you to be the provider, the protector, the spiritual leader of your home, but if you're not crushing it in all those areas, it's easy to feel like you're falling short.

But, what if your significance is less about what you do and more about just being available? I think that starts to take some of the pressure off.

You can clock in at work and carry yourself with grace and integrity, even if it's not your dream job. You're showing up and doing what you said you'd do. People notice that.

You can listen to your teenager, even if you don't have a brilliant answer for the problem they're facing because the most powerful thing you can give them is your attention and empathy, which is what they really want more than your great advice (*somewhere my daughters just said, "Amen!"*).

We put all this pressure on ourselves to be significant. To be amazing. When really, the best thing we can give to someone else is our availability. It's our open hands and attention. And, when you boil it down, I think that's what Jesus was looking for when He called His first disciples. When He invited these four guys in our text to follow Him.

Look at it with me. Matthew 4, starting in verse 18...(READ Matt. 4:18-22)

So, Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee and sees these two brothers fishing. And it all sounds so accidental when we read it in our Bibles, but the original language gives a sense of purpose and intentionality. Jesus is on a mission to invite these guys to follow Him. He's been watching them. He knows them. And now he's inviting these ordinary, uneducated, unqualified fishermen to be His disciples.

And, his invitation to “Come, follow me” in verse 19, he’s not just saying, “I want you guys to go where I go.” He’s saying, “I want you to become like me. Do what I do. Live how I live.” It’s an invitation to a life that is completely transformed by Jesus.

And what I find really interesting, especially for us today, is that Jesus takes their current skill set, fishing, and reframes it for Kingdom purposes. He says, “I will send you out to fish for people. He wants to take what they already know and transform them into tools for Kingdom impact.

And we see all four of them *immediately* drop everything to follow Jesus. They left their nets, their boats, their family. They completely reoriented their lives around following Him. And so, this wasn’t just a moment of surrender, it was a moment of repurposing. The disciples are aligning themselves with Jesus to become more like Him and Jesus is taking these guys and setting their lives on a new course.

He’s giving new purpose and meaning and significance to what they do. And it’s not because they were amazing...it’s because they were available.

And I think that’s so important for us to remember when we read passages of Scripture like this. We see these big, dramatic ways that people left everything behind to follow Jesus and we measure our own faithfulness by that. We either write it off as something we could never do, or that only the *really* faithful followers of Jesus do.

Or, we live with this low grade sense of shame that we’re not truly following Jesus unless we sell our house and quit our job and completely upend our lives. And then guys like me come along and reenforce that feeling by teaching this text, pointing to the outcome, and saying, “If you really want to follow Jesus, go do that! Drop what you’re doing and leave everything behind!”

That’s how I’ve read this text and, honestly, that’s how I’ve taught it before. But, what I’m learning is that the same outcome of this text is not the goal, but having the same heart is.

Having a heart that is open handed and available to be transformed by Jesus. A heart that is reoriented to live and love like Him. A heart that allows Him to repurpose your everyday, mundane moments and turn them into opportunities to make an impact for His Kingdom. I think that’s what Jesus is inviting all of us into.

And for these first disciples, it meant leaving everything behind to follow Him. And that may be what it looks like for you if Jesus so chooses, but more often than not, living this kind of transformed, reoriented, repurposed life for Jesus means driving into our neighborhood and praying for our neighbors by name as we pass by their homes because that’s the mission field Jesus has called us to.

Living this kind of transformed, reoriented, repurposed life for Jesus might look like:

Staying late at work to help a stressed-out coworker finish a project because you know they're going through a hard time at home. It's seeing your job as an opportunity to show the people you work with the love and compassion of Jesus.

Being intentional about the coffee shop you go to, not just because you like their coffee, but because you want to build a relationship with the baristas and, maybe one day, ask how you can pray for them.

It might be inviting that kid in your child's class over for a playdate and sitting down with their parent over dinner.

Helping your neighbor mow their yard, not just to do them a favor, but to live out what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

This is what it looks like for us to live a life that has been transformed, reoriented, and repurposed for Jesus. It's not just the big acts of surrender. It's the little moments of living and loving like Jesus that add up to a life that is faithfully following Him.

...Over the years, I've put a lot of pressure on myself to do something amazing for God. When I first started in ministry, I wanted to change the world. But, I've come to realize that I can barely even change myself, let alone anyone else!

But I'm learning that's okay. Jesus isn't asking us to be amazing. He just want us to be available. Be available to be used by Him wherever we are, in whatever we're doing. We don't have to chase significance in God's Kingdom. He's just asking us to be faithful to Him, even in those mundane, ordinary, insignificant moments of our life. Which means, **The call to follow Jesus starts where you already are.**

It's an invitation to live and love like Jesus in your home, at your job, in your neighborhood; when you're on vacation, or shopping for groceries, or walking on the B-Line. The call to follow Jesus starts where you already are. To be transformed by His love and His grace there, and to help others experience it, too.

And you don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to have it all together. Like those first disciples that Jesus called, you just have to be open and available to be used by Him.

So as we close today, let me ask you, **What would it look like to be used by Jesus where you already are?** Is there a place where Jesus is saying to you, "Come, follow me." An area of your life that He's inviting you to surrender to Him or to allow Him to reorient or repurpose? How does Jesus want to take where you are and transform it for Him?

Maybe today that invitation from Jesus to follow Him is echoing in your heart. It might be the quiet voice of Jesus whispering,

“Let me into that part of your life that you’ve kept to yourself and hope no one else finds out about.”

“Let me walk with you into your everyday, ordinary routines and show you the difference you can make for me.”

“Let me repurpose what feels mundane and use it to build my Kingdom.”

Your daily life isn’t an obstacle to following Jesus, it’s the place where following Jesus begins. So, maybe today, you just need to invite Him into those places and say, “Here I am Lord, open and available for you.”

Or maybe today, you’re ready to say that for the first time. You’re ready to step out of your old life and into the new life He offers you. We’ll have people up front and in the back who would love to talk with you, pray with you, and walk with you as you say “yes” to Jesus.

Communion

Reminder that the invitation to follow Jesus isn’t for those who are perfect and have it all together. It’s for those who are open and available. Jesus doesn’t need your perfection; He wants your heart.

So, as we take communion this morning, you can have the freedom to come to Him openly and honestly, knowing that His sacrifice on the cross has set you free from the guilt and burden of your sin and He has put you back into right relationship with the Father.

Let that freedom lead you to say once more, “Here I am, Lord, ready to follow You.”