

## The Disruptive Call of Christ©

Matthew 4:12-23

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Picture in your mind the scene on this day when Jesus walks by the Sea of Galilee and calls his first four disciples:

The Sea, which is really a 13 mile long lake, shaped as an oval, is lovely. The climate, because of the land being in a dip in the earth's surface, is warm and pleasant. The Jordan Valley runs through here. The soil is fertile and the countryside is lush with vegetation.

There are nine cities scattered along these beautiful lake shores and the banks are crowded with fishing boats.

Imagine you are standing there visiting this lovely place on this warm, sunny day. A gentle breeze is blowing and it brings you a very definite smell – of fish. Fishing, of course, is the business that provides so much of the livelihood of the village.

You stand there, watching the fishermen at work ... some are way out in the lake, dragging their nets between two boats as they move along the water.

But right here, close to where you stand along the shore, men are casting out their nets into the water and pulling them back in, catching fish in the nets as they pull. It looks like hard work and sometimes they pull in the net and there's nothing. But they don't look discouraged – these fishermen. They seem very patient. Very much at ease with their ordinary, daily work.

They just repeat, over and over, what they do – cast out the net, drag it back in; cast out the net, drag it back in. When the nets have fish, they do what they do with fish, saving them to take to market.

There is something quiet and peaceful, as you watch, even as you listen to the brothers calling out, joking with each other, enjoying their normal day.

But then, something happens that disrupts the scene. A man named Jesus comes walking along the shore toward you and the fishermen. There is something about him that causes you to not be able to turn your eyes away. You are drawn in as you watch him. You are captured by his warmth as he smiles at you.

And you are amazed as you witness what happens next. Jesus goes to the two fishermen and calls out to them.

“Simon Peter, Andrew – come. Follow me. I will make you fish for people.”

What is stunning is that both of the men drop the nets they were pulling in, turn from their lifelong work, nod to one another and set out to follow Jesus. Just walked away from their business and followed along beside Jesus, listening intently as he talked to them.

With your mouth open and your eyes wide in astonishment, you can't help but walk along behind them, curious to see what they will do next. And you are not disappointed because just a little ways down the shore, there are three men in a boat, working on their nets that they have been casting.

Two of them are young – brothers – sons of the older man in the boat. You hear them talk to one another. James and John are their names. Zebedee is their father. They have a family fishing business. Surely Zebedee depends a great deal on his sons for help.

But there goes Jesus, intruding on their normal day, disrupting their ordinary, busy lives. He walks up to where they are sitting in their boats and he invites the brothers to come and follow him as well.

Surely not. Oh, but they do! They barely have a chance to tell their father good bye as they climb out of the boat, leaving Zebedee sitting there alone and they leave it all behind.

And you are amazed, yet compelled to follow as well. And as you do you witness the most touching, powerful acts of God that you never dreamed you would see – people healed of diseases; people changed from hopeless to hopeful; from joyless to bursting with joy. The disruptive call of Christ certainly broke into the normal day for these who were sick and suffering and changed their lives in way they had not even imagined.

Then Jesus turns to you and with his eyes warm and full of love and his voice gentle but powerful he extends that same invitation directly to you:

Come. Follow me. Be my disciple. I will teach you to be fishers of people.

And what will be your answer? What will you have to leave behind? What is it that is so important that it would be difficult to let go of? Can you do it?

And what in the world does it mean to be fishers of people? Don't ask me to do any of that evangelism stuff. That's not within my comfort zone, for sure!

Just when you think you are comfortable with what you know or what you do; just when you think life is good – maybe not exciting, maybe not even particularly fulfilling

– but it’s what you are used to, what you are accustomed to – just when you think this is it with my life ...

We encounter Jesus and it changes our lives.

The encounter is intrusive, disruptive, because it changes everything.

And yet, we want to follow, we are compelled by the power of his call to follow him.

The call of Christ is powerful. It pulls on your heartstrings and it draws you to something you don’t understand fully, but never-the-less, it is so desirable.

I may have told you about my experience of sensing a call from Christ to serve in some form of ministry. I already had answered the call to be a follower of Jesus. In fact, I don’t remember a time in my life when I was not a believer.

This was a different call, I believed. It was compelling and persuasive. It was at a girl’s mission conference and we had heard a very powerful, moving sermon.

I was a senior in high school and I was sure I was in love with the person I would marry. I had dreamed of my life with him – about being his wife and having our children. My mind was full of those young-girl-in-love thoughts when I went to this conference.

And as powerful and moving and compelling as that voice of the Spirit was, I looked at the disruptions and the things I thought would change in my plans and I could not imagine the wonderful plans God might have for me.

And as hard as it was, I stood frozen in my pew and did not answer that call.

The good news is Christ did not give up on me. In my journey of life I went an entirely different path than what I’d imagined on that day. It wasn’t the romantic dream of life that I’d envisioned in my mind either.

But all the time, there was Jesus. Patient, loving, forgiving, full of grace and mercy. Waiting. And at the right time, the call was extended again. And this time, I knew that no plan of mine could ever be better than the one He has for me.

Was answering that call disruptive to the life I had, the life I loved? You bet! There have not been too many days that seem all that normal. But for the first time in my life, I knew I finally was doing what I was meant to do. And there has been joy and fun and fulfillment and a crazy, unbelievable journey.

Now, that’s my story. Not all calls from Jesus are about doing the same thing. Not all calls mean going to seminary or being a preacher or a missionary.

The most important call we can hear and answer is the simple, powerful call that Jesus speaks to us: "Come. Follow me. Be my disciple. And I will teach you all you need to know. I will show you what I want you to do. I will give you what you need every day.

Will it change your life? Probably ... if you really commit to making Christ the priority in your life.

Will it disrupt your master plan for your life? Most likely.  
But you can trust that the True Master has a plan that outshines yours by far!

He calls us all to follow but he gives us all different tasks as disciples and he equips us all to be able to do those tasks. And all are equal in his kingdom.

And the best part is that he is always there and we can be sure that it will forever be very good.

So ... what about being a fisher of people? What does that look like?

What personality traits do you need as a fisher person? (Patience, perseverance, a love for the work, a sense of calm and ability to wait.)

Those could work in fishing for people, maybe. Have you ever experienced asking a friend or family member to come with you to church? Numerous times you may have asked. And over and over they had excuses. Did you give up? Or were you patient, waiting for another appropriate time to ask? Were you calm? Did you show an authentic love for your church, a desire to share that with this loved one? Maybe they finally have started coming. Or maybe you are still waiting.

What are some words that you would use to describe the character of Jesus? (Love, patience, forgiveness, grace).

So, if we are his disciples, that means that we study him, we learn how to be like him, so much so that we finally feel that we embody him. Christ is in us and we become authentically loving, patient, forgiving, full of grace.

Maybe the time will be right to share what Jesus means to you; what he has done in your life. Maybe you will begin to invite people to come to know him as you do. Maybe that will never feel quite right.

But when you are Jesus' disciple you become a channel for his love and grace to flow through you out to all whom you are with. It is the love of Christ in you that becomes the compelling net that brings them into the fold.

**We will be learning a lot about Jesus, coming to know him through the eyes of Matthew this year, discovering what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.**

**Have you answered the call to discipleship? If not, what are you waiting for?**

**Jesus says "Come. Follow me."**

**What will your answer be?**

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