Come, Follow Me

Mark 1:16-28

Key Verse: 16:17 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

In our lifetime, who we meet is very important. Depending on whom we meet our life and destiny is determined. Some end their lives tragically because they met bad people. Others end their lives happily because they met wonderful people. Jesus’ first four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were ordinary fishermen. After they met Jesus, their lives were changed. These smelly and ordinary fishermen became influential teachers of the world. Think of whom you met, you meet, and will meet, and how you develop your relationships with them. If you still haven’t met Jesus, I strongly encourage you to meet him through today’s passage. Jesus said that knowing him and the Father God who sent him is eternal life. (Jn 17:3) Today’s passage teaches us how Jesus called his first disciples and how he healed a demon-possessed man.

First, come, follow me. (16-20) Look at verse 16. “***As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.***” Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew were fishermen. They were working hard as fishermen by casting a net into the lake when Jesus saw them. Jesus called them to follow him. Jesus invited them. Look at verse 17. “***Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people***.” Jesus called them to send them out to fish for people. In the old NIV it says, “*Come, follow me.* *I will make you fishers of men*.” Simon and Andrew were fishermen who catch fish and sell them at markets. Now Jesus will make them fishers of men. What does ‘fish for people’ mean? These days, people use the word ‘fishing for people’ for negative purpose. But, fishing for people is used for good purpose. It is replaced with ‘outreach’ or ‘recruit’ for salvation.

How did they respond to Jesus’ calling? Look at verse 18. “***At once they left their nets and followed him***.” How could they respond to Jesus’ calling immediately? How did they leave everything to follow Jesus? We can consider three reasons. First, the power and authority of Jesus’ word. Jesus called them, saying, “*Come, follow me*.” Jesus’ word has the same power and authority as when he said in the beginning, “*Let there be light*.” (Ge 1:3). Jesus’ word has the power of creation because he is God. His word has power to raise the dead, to control nature, and to change the course of human history because he is the Creator God. So, Simon and Andrew, both mere creatures, could not but obey God’s word.

Second, they were ready to follow Jesus. Simon and Andrew might have been looking for the Messiah, who would save their lives and deliver his people from the hand of their enemies. According to John’s gospel, Andrew said to his brother Simon, “*We have found the Messiah*.” (Jn 1:41) They were waiting for the Messiah to give them new life. In Jeremiah 29:13 the Lord says, “*You will seek me and* *find me when you seek me with all your heart.”* Simon and Andrew did not know who Jesus was at that time. Still, God let them meet Jesus and follow him because they were seeking the Messiah. Recently, I go out for fishing on campus with a new invitation letter. “Are you still looking for your life direction and searching for the answer to your life? Come to the Bible study.” I believe that God will send students who are looking for the Messiah and searching for the answer to their lives. Our missionaries regularly visit campus and give gospel tracts to students. They believe that the tracts will open the hearts of students who seek God and search for direction. Surely God will send those who are ready to follow Jesus.

Third, Jesus gave them hope for new lives as fishers of men. Simon and Andrew must have been veteran fishermen. They were responsible and hardworking people. They knew how to be faithful to their family and to their community. But they were not happy with their present lives. They knew that life is not just eating, drinking, and parting. They knew that their lives had more meaning and value than just eating and drinking. They wanted to be changed. They needed a new life direction. They wanted to be a blessing. They wanted to live a meaningful and valuable life for God and for his people. Jesus gave them hope for a new and meaningful life, which is to fish for people. Fishing for people means catching people and bringing them to Jesus. Fishing for people is bringing them to Jesus so that they may have eternal life through faith in him. Jesus said to his disciples, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...*” (Mt 28:19,20)

Jesus’ words “*Come, follow me*” mean “Be my disciple.” Jesus called them to be his disciples. A disciple is a follower, student, and learner. Jesus invited them to be with him, know him, and learn from him. A disciple is not born, but made. The word, ‘disciple’ has the same root as ‘discipline.’ A disciple is made through discipline. Jesus called Peter and Simon to be his disciples. It is amazing that Jesus did not call his disciples from religious leaders or teachers of the law, but from ordinary people like fishermen. In modern terms, they are computer programmers, nurses, teachers, social workers and so on. God’s calling depends on his absolute sovereignty. Jesus said, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and send you out to bear fruits—fruit that will last*.” (Jn 15:16) Jesus’ disciples are future leaders. Jesus knew that his time on this earth was limited. He knew the importance and urgency of calling and raising his disciples. Therefore, he called his first disciples Simon and Andrew at the initial stage of his ministry.

Look at verses 19-20. “***When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.***” Jesus’ eyes captured two more disciples, James and John. Jesus called them also. Jesus didn’t delay his calling. Mark’s gospel repeats the immediacy of his calling and their response. In chapter 1, the same kind of words are repeated, such as; ‘at once’ (12,18), ‘without delay’ (20), ‘immediately, (30,42), ‘quickly’ (28)’ God’s calling requires our willing and immediate response as Jesus’ four disciples did.

Second, be quiet, come out of him. (21-28) What did Jesus do after he called his disciples? He took them to preach the word. They went to Capernaum, a town near the Sea of Galilee. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. A synagogue is a Jewish local church, where people gathered and taught and heard God’s word. Jesus taught there. Look at verse 22. “***The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law***.” Jesus’ teaching was different from that of other teachers because it had the authority of God. His teaching had the power to penetrate the heart of sinners. Jesus knew all things in all men because he is the Creator God. Once my senior pastor encouraged me, saying, “You must be a Bible-believing man.” At that time, I asked myself, “Don’t I believe in God and the Bible as his word?” But later when I thought about his comment, I came to realize that I have little faith in the power of God’s word. How much do we believe the power of God’s word in our life? Do we believe the Bible as the absolute truth of God? Do we believe all the promises of God written in the Bible? Do we believe that God can show his miracles even today when we believe in his word? I pray that God may help all of us to be Bible-believing Christians who have Bible-believing faith. Amen!

What happened when Jesus taught God’s word in the synagogue? Demons responded. Demons recognized Jesus as the Son of God. Look at verses 23-24. “***Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, “What do you want us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God***.” Demons recognized who Jesus is because they are spiritual beings. They thought Jesus came to destroy them. Indeed, Jesus will destroy all demons and evil in the last day, but the time had not yet come. Instead, Jesus commanded them to come out of the man. Look at verse 25-26. ***“Be quiet” said Jesus sternly, “Come out of him!” The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.”***  The demons lost their power before Jesus like a dog does before a lion. The demons took the man and ruled over him. The man was beside himself because of the demons. But now the demons lost their power because of Jesus’ command. Jesus is the ruler of spiritual world. He rebukes demons and casts them out. An exorcism occurred. The demons did not come out peacefully, but violently with a shriek. Jesus set the man free from demon-possession. Jesus gave him peace and new life. What a wonderful Savior we have!

Today there are many people who are suffering from all kinds of impure spirits. They have no peace in their hearts because of their demons. Self-control doesn’t work. Counselling doesn’t work, either. Medication has its limitations. They all need Jesus who has power to cast out their impure spirits. One smart girl had no peace in her heart even though she was educated in a prestigious college and married a tall and handsome man. She hated her parents, pastors, church, and God. She suffered from an unknown disease. Jesus visited her and invited her. “Esther, come and follow me.” When she followed Jesus, her peace came back. Her sins were forgiven and her relationship with God and other people was restored. She lives in the peace of heaven now. She enjoys following Jesus as his disciple in Canada.

How did people respond when Jesus healed the man? Verses 27-28 says, “***The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.”*** In the Bible, when God calls his people, he brings with him bigger pictures for their better future. Abraham was a 75-year-old man with no children. God called him to leave his country, his father’s household and go to the land God would show him. God also promised Abraham that he would make him a great nation and a blessing for the world. The time of decision came to Abraham. It was the same invitation. “Abraham. Come, follow me.” How did Abraham respond to God’s calling? Abraham obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. He trusted in God and believed that God would keep his promise. He made a decision of faith. God blessed him as he had promised. When God called Moses, God had a big plan for Moses and for his people. God used Moses as a deliverer for his people from the hand of Egypt. Gideon was a small and fearful man. But God called him with a great hope, saying, “Gideon, you are a great warrior’.

Jesus’ calling of his disciples is not an old story, but a story for today and for you and me.Jesus is looking for those who are willing to respond to his call. Jesus is looking for fishers of men who fish for people. Jesus invites you today, “Come, follow me!” May God raise 12 disciples of Jesus from each campus and increase fishers of men among young people. Let us read verse 17. “*Come, follow me.” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people*.”