

## New Hope Sermon: Life Upended, the Call – Mark 1:16-18, Luke 5:1-11

The two questions I want us to consider today are: How has your life been radically altered because you have become a Jesus follower? And what is the identify marker in your life that distinguishes you as Jesus' disciple? Jesus's call upended all of the disciples' lives. Today we begin with Simon Peter.

### Peter's call

The Gospel of Mark opens in Chapter one with Jesus' call to Simon Peter and Andrew at the lake. If we put this together with the passage in John 1 and Luke 5 we can understand how this call happened in Peter's life. It was progressive and accompanied by a miracle.

The story starts in the gospel of John, chapter one. Andrew had been following John the Baptist, but after Jesus was baptized by John, it says in verse 35 *that John was there with two of his disciples and he said look, the Lamb of God.* (At least one Bible commentator thinks that the other disciple, next to Andrew, was actually John (the gospel writer), thus authenticating his eye witness account of Jesus from the beginning.) *Those two disciples turned and started to follow Jesus who asked, "What do you want?" "Rabbi they said, "Where are you staying?" Jesus replied, Come and see." So they went and saw where he was staying and spent the day with him. After that, Andrew went to find his brother, Simon and the first thing he said to him was (21) "We have found the messiah" and he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John and you will be called Cephas which when translated is Peter, the rock. A new name because Jesus saw who Peter could become.*

Peter's introduction to Jesus began with "Come and See" – Jesus' invitation to Andrew and then what Andrew's invitation to his brother (Jn.1:39). Professor Gary Burge, (who teaches at Wheaton and wrote the NIV Application commentary on John), says:

Come and see. Peter and Nathaniel will not know the truth about Jesus until they have had their own personal experience....This is a conversion template for gospel writer John. Throughout the Gospel many people will be challenged to 'come and see.' Conversion is not about knowledge alone; it is about coming yourself and appropriating a relationship with Jesus personally. In each case the experience of discipleship carries one more dimension. John the Baptist, Andrew and Philip each bring others to Jesus quite intentionally. Converts make new converts. They speak what they know about Jesus and they bring other people along so that they too will 'come and see'... "People who have a personal experience of Christ, who 'come and see', do not simply have a scholastic understanding of the Christian faith, but remain where he is and are transformed by being with him..." Personal piety ('loving God') must be wed to theological sophistication ('knowing God'). Christian faith is both commitment and content." (Gary Burge, NIV Application Commentary, John, Zondervan, pp.83,85).

In Mark's account of the call, notice that Jesus said to Peter and Andrew "Come follow me" (Mark 1:17). The call was first to become a personal disciple of the Lord. This is more significant than we may realize:

"Prophets did not call people to follow themselves but to follow God (compare I Kings 19:19-21). The sages of Jesus' day never called people to follow them, only to learn Torah from them. Jesus' call of the disciples is therefore dramatically authoritative and matches the biblical pattern of God's calling of humans: a command with a promise, which is followed by obedience (see Gen.12:1-4)" (David Garland, NIV Application Commentary, Mark, Zondervan, p.69-70). Again, this experiential aspect of knowing God first. From that came the purpose of obedience "and I will make you fishers of men."

To demonstrate that call in the Peter's world of fishing, we turn to his encounter with Jesus in Luke 5.  
<sup>1-3</sup> *Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and*

were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.

<sup>4</sup> When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, "Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch."

<sup>5-7</sup> Simon said, "Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets." It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.

<sup>8-10</sup> Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself." When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon.

<sup>1</sup> <sup>0-11</sup> Jesus said to Simon, "There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women." They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.

There are three things that would have impacted Peter in this encounter.

Jesus was teaching a great crowd at the Lake of Gennesaret. The crowd was probably pushing and shoving to get in position to see and hear this new teacher. Clamor and crowdedness probably made the situation less than ideal. Verse 2 says "Jesus saw at the waters' edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets. One boat was manned by Simon Peter. Jesus got in to Simon Peter's boat and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. So, the first thing is he taught the people from Simon Peter's boat, involving Peter from the beginning and drawing him further into Jesus's orbit of influence. Likely Peter was in the boat that they pushed out from shore so Peter heard everything Jesus said.

Observation #2.: When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep water and put out your nets for a catch. Peter's response makes perfect sense, "Master we've worked hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow." Jesus' request didn't make sense to an experienced fisherman. Yet verse 5 says: Simon added, But, because you say so, I will let down the nets." Why do you think Peter obeyed Jesus' command? Apparently something in Jesus' teaching must have caught Peter's attention. Remember in another scripture Jesus spoke with authority not like the scribes.. So as exhausted as he was, Peter brought his washed nets back into the boat and headed out into the deep of Lake Gennesaret. Already he is heeding Jesus's words over his own experienced sense of what was feasible.

Then comes the miracle. Point #3: Verse 6 says "they caught a large number of fish so that their nets began to break. Peter was an experienced fisherman; they had fished all night and caught nothing, but here at Jesus' word they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break – a miracle that Peter understood as a fisherman.

Yet, Peter's response to this miracle is so interesting. I like the P.B, Philipps translation: "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself." Candid Peter. Do you remember your first response when you were introduced to Jesus and he called you to be a disciple? Were you delighted, hesitant, doubt-filled? Did you know what you were getting into?

Peter's response was fear. He seemed to sense right at the beginning that Jesus would upend his life and he was right. But from the beginning, Jesus knew Peter's heart. Verse 10 says, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men." What in the world did that mean? The early disciples had no idea.

Note the combination of all these factors leading up to Peter's call: being introduced to Jesus by his brother-in-law who had already spent a day listening to Jesus's teaching, Jesus telling Peter of his new name, spending time with Jesus, listening to his teaching, the miracle of the catch of fish when

they had tried all night and caught nothing. Verse 11 is Peter's ultimate response: *When they pulled their boats up to shore, they left everything and followed him.*

Peter was entering into a new identity. He was entering a new lifestyle of itinerant ministry. That meant he was leaving his wife and family; he was leaving his familiar surroundings and vocation all because this young prophet whom John the Baptist called the Lamb of God intersected his life and gave him a new calling, a new vocation and a new identity. "You will catch men."

### **A new identity marker and vocation**

What is the identity marker in your life because Jesus has called you to be His disciple? How do people recognize that you're a follower of Jesus? What have been the costs for you in answering his initial call to be that disciple? As we walk in the shoes of the early disciples and read their stories from their perspective, I think we need to understand how radically up-ended their life became when they said yes to Jesus.

"Having God as an identity marker is nothing but a label, a language, and a lifestyle. I'm a Christian, I talk like one. I act like one. But having God as your identity changer is so much more. It's lavish abandon to who God is and who He's made me to be. Holding back nothing!" (Lysa Terkeurst) In that upending of their vocation and identity, there were also miracles. The first disciples weren't just following anyone. Jesus could even command fish in lake to jump into their net. They saw Jesus heal multitudes of people. In fact, soon after Peter follows Jesus then Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law and the healing was instantaneous. Jesus will so often confirm His call in our lives with miracles that shows His presence, his power and His Lordship.

For me that series of miracles came in the first 3 months when I was testing to see if the Bible was really true. I discovered that each of the signs of a Christian indicated in I John were becoming true to me – I had a love for people of all backgrounds that I had never had before; I found my prayers answered and that had never happened before; the Bible began to make sense to me and that was radically new, and I had the inner assurance of the Spirit (whom I didn't even know or understand at that time) that I really was a new child of God, a member of God's family through faith in Christ. None of these things were things I had orchestrated or even made possible. They were all God's wonderful works of His power and love in my life, and we call those interventions of God in our lives miracles. Then, as my walk as Jesus' disciple began and I grew in Christ, He also gave me a new name.

Have you ever been called a name that was God's direction for your identity? Not your surname or even your childhood nickname. When I went to camp for years as an elementary school child, my camp nickname was Lulu – definitely not a name I wanted to use as an identity marker! But a defining incident occurred to me at an Urbana Missionary Convention several years ago.

An Asian colleague and I were teaching a class at Urbana on the roots of prejudice. I was dressed in an Indian sari and my Indian colleague was in western dress. Halfway through the presentation I asked the students what their impressions were of me – an Anglo woman in sari. Some students assumed I was a Hare Krishna devotee and wondered how I could be a speaker at Urbana. Others thought I just wanted to look pretty – and saris are pretty but desperately inappropriate in the middle of winter in Urbana when one's bare back rests against a cold metal chair. But in that class of about 200 students, a Chinese student stood up at the back of the room and said "I know about you – you are a hard-boiled egg." It didn't feel like a compliment☺. So I quickly prayed to the Lord silently and said, "Help, Lord. I have no idea what's coming next." Outloud I said to the student, "Excuse me, sir?" He went on: "I'm Chinese and I am a banana – I'm yellow on the outside but white on the inside. But you – I've been watching you – you are white on the outside but yellow on the inside."

An identity marker. Why was this so significant in my life? Two reasons. First of all, this comment was before Asians were routinely called or called themselves bananas or coconuts. And second, I come from a wealthy Caucasian family of status in New England and the only non-whites my parents associated with were servants. Not friends. In fact, I never even met the family of Lottie, the African American woman who worked for my parents. I wasn't even allowed in the kitchen to help her cook or just chat with her. Caucasians ruled OVER others in my background. But when I became a Christian in college, God brought me into a family of faith that was distinctly multicultural and began to align my heart with His heart for the world – that people of every nation and language and tribe and culture would be worshipping the Lord Jesus in heaven. Dear friends began to come into my life who were of many different backgrounds. My non-Christian parents never understood that. But I became passionate about training people to reach out cross-culturally and that brought me to Wheaton for my first masters in Intercultural Communication so I could more effectively train others to be global in their relationships.

So being called a hard-boiled egg was both shocking and illuminating to me. I was particularly grateful my new identity marker came from a Chinese banana who had been watching Peter and my presentation. A hard-boiled egg. It was an encouragement from God to keep serving with internationals and immigrants whom others avoided or rejected. That direction continues to grow as partnership with internationals is the focus of Keith's and my life. In fact, that Chinese student's name for me was so precious I even made it the title of my first book – an ESL discussion-based curriculum called *Of Bananas and Hard Boiled Eggs!*

### **Application**

Following God's call does NOT land us in our comfort zone. It didn't for Peter and it hasn't for me and the millions of disciples between our two centuries! But it is a wonderful opportunity to allow the transformation that only God can make possible. A transformation that takes a lifetime. I am still learning how to navigate the complexities of cross-cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural ministry. But when God calls, God equips and God can take you to places and people you never could have imagined outside a walk with Him. For a Caucasian woman from a wealthy non-Christian family this new identity has been transforming indeed. I hope I meet that Chinese student in heaven and can thank him for being God's messenger to me.

What about you? What name is an outsider calling you, as they watch your interactions with those who are different from you? How is Jesus' presence and reality in your life seen through your call? May your call involve an identity marker that gives you God's direction and helps you bring others to Christ and serve others in His name. Then the story is all about Him. Amen.

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