

The Three Calls of Discipleship

Text: Mark 1:16-20

Introduction:

1. Occasion & setting: Christ is walking by the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is a large freshwater lake approx. 13 miles long (21 km) and 7 miles wide (11 km) and was a significant location in the ministry of Christ. It is called by four different names in Scripture: the “Sea of Chinnereth” (word means “harp-shaped”); the “lake of Gennesaret”; the “Sea of Tiberias” and the “Sea of Galilee”
2. The account: Christ calls two sets of brothers as His first full time disciples. But this was not the first call from Christ in their lives. In this study we will consider the three calls of Christian discipleship in these men’s lives and the challenges they present to us.

I. The Call to Salvation (John 1:35-42)

It is important to note that the call in the passage before us was not a call to salvation. Some misunderstand this and teach a “just follow Jesus” Gospel which is superficial and vague. These men had already accepted Christ as the Messiah prior to this event under the influence of the ministry of John the Baptist. Salvation is the start of true discipleship.

A. They Had Repented of Sin

1. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist (Vs. 35). John was the famous preacher of repentance, administering the baptism of repentance. To become a disciple of John, Andrew would have repented and received Christ as Messiah and Saviour.
2. Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon (Peter) and leads him to Christ.

B. They Had Received the Saviour (Vs. 29, 36, 41)

1. John’s preached Christ as Messiah and Saviour of the world. John described Christ as “the Lamb of God” who would take away the sin of the world. Christ was the fulfilment of all the O.T. types and pictures.
2. You cannot start on the journey of discipleship until you respond to this first call to repent of sin and receive Christ as Saviour!

II. The Call to Service (Vs. 16-17, 19-20)

Generally, all of God’s people are called to a life of service for the Lord but the call of these men was more specifically a call to full time Gospel ministry. Not all receive a call of this nature but all should serve the Lord faithfully in whatever vocation He has placed them in.

A. The Men of the Call (Vs. 16 & 19)

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1. Their Identity
 - a. Simon & Andrew
 - i. Not much is known about their background. Peter would become the more visible of the two and was vocal and outgoing in personality. Andrew was more of a behind the scenes man but a man who quietly brought people to the Saviour.
 - ii. Appears they were partnered with James & John in the fishing trade (Luke 5:10)
 - b. James & John
 - i. Their father – a man named Zebedee. Appears to be a man of some means as he had “hired servants” (Vs. 20) and his son John was known to the High Priest at Jerusalem (John 18:15)
 - ii. Their mother – a lady named Salome (Matt. 27:55-56) who was sister to Mary, Jesus’ mother (Mk. 15:40; John 19:25) making James and John cousins of Christ according to the flesh.
 - iii. James would become the first Apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2) whereas John would go on to be the longest living Apostle.
2. Their Industry
 - a. They were humble men – God calls ordinary men to serve an extraordinary God. God calls insignificant men to do significant things for Him. Christ did not seek out his disciples in the halls of Herod’s palace or the hierarchy of the High Priest but amongst the humble fishermen of Galilee. So far as the world was concerned, these were “unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts 4:13)
 - b. They were hard working men. “When God looks for someone to use in a special mission, He looks for the person who is already busy, the energetic individual” (Wuest). Consider some other examples of men who were called whilst engaged in activity:
 - i. Moses was called whilst keeping sheep
 - ii. Gideon was called whilst threshing wheat
 - iii. David was called while keeping his father’s sheep
 - iv. Elisha was called while he was plowing a field
 - v. Saul and Barnabas were called while actively serving in their local church (Acts 13:1-2)

B. The Mandate in the Call (Vs. 17, 20)

1. The Duty of the disciple – to be a follower of Christ

- a. “come ye after me” = this figure of discipleship based on the respectful practice of disciples’ allowing their master to walk

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ahead as they passed along (Hiebert). The disciples whole focus is to be upon following the lead of Christ

- b. How different this is to running ahead of Christ with our own ideas and plans and then seeking to compel Him to endorse and bless them!
 - i. To be a good leader, you must be a good follower (a submissive spirit)
 - ii. To be a good teacher, you must be a good learner (a teachable spirit)

2. The Destiny of the disciple – to become a fisher of men

- a. “I will make you” = this is a promise from Christ. He is the one who equips and enables His servants to do what He has called them to do. These men would be shaped, molded and prepared by the hands of the Master for the great task of reaching others for Christ.
- b. “to become” = they weren’t fishers of men yet but through a process of training they would become fishers of men. While we never stop learning and growing the Master’s School, we note the principle laid down by Christ of a definite period of intensive training for full time ministry. “Their call was to enter upon an intensive course of training to be made ready for this work” (Lenski). This training was more than just development in knowledge. It involved the shaping of the whole man for the task.
- c. “fishers of men” = they would become soul-winners for Christ
 - i. Christ used terminology they would readily understand as fishermen.
 - ii. Fishing required patience, skill, care and hard work. In the spiritual realm, these same qualities would be needed. It would involve reaching (‘casting’) souls and then building (‘mending’) lives. The work would be both evangelistic and pastoral.
 - iii. Becoming a soul-winner is a by product of faithful discipleship with Christ. This leads to a challenging question: Are you a soul winner? If not, this highlights a problem in our discipleship because if we follow Christ fervently and closely, we cannot but catch Christ’s fire and passion for the lost.

III. The Call to Sacrifice (Vs. 18, 20)

This call is implied in and connected with the call to Christian service and covers two main areas:

A. The Finances (Vs. 18)

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1. 'straightway' = these men were responsive to the Saviour's call. There was immediate surrender.
2. "they forsook their nets" = They held the things of this life loosely. There was a definite separation from the fishing business to the preaching of the Word of God. A call to full time Christian service means the work of God takes precedence over all other secular employment. This does not mean that a man may not need to do some tent making (e.g. Apostle Paul) from time to time but his priority and passion will be the ministry and wherever possible, it is preferable he be able to give his full time and attention to the Gospel ministry.
3. This involves the walk of faith (i.e. learning to trust God for the supply of daily needs)

B. The Family (Vs. 20)

1. For the Individual
 - a. The ministry call meant James and John had to leave the family business and much of what was familiar to them.
 - b. The ministry call would mean embarking on a life where the family had to learn to trust God for the supply of basic needs.
2. For the Spouse
 - a. We know that Peter was married as he had a mother in law (Mk. 1:30)
 - b. Peter's wife would participate in her husband's step of faith to obey the Lord. She would miss his presence when he was away on a preaching tour with Christ. She would find it difficult when he came home late for tea after a busy day of ministry. She would share his burden of trusting God to supply their family's needs.
3. For the Parents
 - a. There is no protest from Zebedee despite the fact this would have been difficult for him. We get the sense from Scripture that Zebedee and Salome were godly people who supported their sons in their high calling.
 - b. "As for the parents of these apostles, they represent all mothers and fathers who generously give their sons and daughters to Jesus, even though they are their pride and joy, partners in their daily affairs, and the anticipated support of their old age." (John Phillips)

Conclusion: Have you heeded Christ's three calls? Have you responded to the call of salvation? As a Christian, are you following Christ to serve Him faithfully? Is there any sacrifice made for the Lord in our lives?