

*14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." 16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.*

For every movie made, about two hours of film gets projected onto the movie screen.

Thousands of hours of film are left on the cutting room floor.

This morning I'd like you to follow me to the room where Mark was cutting and pasting.

Let's imagine some scenes the Holy Spirit suggested Mark should leave out of his gospel.

Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee - boat after boat was lined up there. He looked up and saw the sign, J. R. Prudent and Sons, fishermen. Before him stretched a fleet of boats, all polished.

"Jimmy, Freddy, sons of J.R., come follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

Jimmy and Freddy were curious. They hadn't come to be so successful by closing their ears to new possibilities. But they were sons of their father as well.

"Tells us more," they asked Jesus.

"The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near, turn your life in a new direction, believe that God is ready to rule over your life."

"How is God going to rule over our lives?" they asked Jesus.

"Through me," Jesus replied. "As you follow me, and learn faith from me, you will gather people into God's nets. You and people like you will become God's harvest; God will rule more and more hearts and lives. God will become the king of all by becoming your ruler."

"Sounds like a good idea, certainly the world could use more of God. But we can't leave. We've got to stay and pay off the debt on the boats. Our children need us home every night. Father and mother depend on us to run the business they began. Maybe someday Jesus we can follow, when the boats are paid for, and the kids are off on their own, and Mom and Dad have died."

"Today is the day," said Jesus. "Today is the day to let go and follow."

"Sorry Jesus, We hope someone else is free to follow."

Jesus rushed on after wiping the dust from his feet as a sign.

Soon he came to a single boat. Bobby Cautious, charters. Under the name was the promise: We only sail when the weather is clear and calm, and never far from a safe harbor.

“Bobby, come follow me,” said Jesus.

“Where are you going?” asked Bobby.

“Where God is leading,” answered Jesus.

“But where will that be,” asked Bobby.

“Where people are in need,” answered Jesus.

“What about money, Jesus?”

“Bring some along, if you've got any, or leave it behind for the poor. I believe God will clothe us and feed us as God does the grass of the field and the birds of the air.”

“Sounds to me like you are quite a trusting soul, Jesus. But I want to be safe, to know that tomorrow night, every tomorrow night there will be bread on the table and a warm place to sleep. Sorry, I can't follow you.”

As Jesus turned a flash of sunlight caught his eye. Everywhere on the next boat in line were shiny surfaces, polished to reflect. “Gilbert Narcissus, Captain” the sight proclaimed.

“Gilbert, come follow me and I will make you a fisher of people.”

“Why would I want to do that?” responded Gilbert. “What would be in it for me? Will you pay alot, offer an early retirement, good benefits, all Monday holidays off? Will you make me rich so that I can buy a speed boat to race around on Sunday afternoons? Will you make me famous so that the crowds will admire me as much as I admire myself?”

“Gilbert, I promise you will be freed from your bondage to yourself, freed to love God and others. Come, follow me.”

“You've got to be kidding. And leave all of this. I've got it made.”

And then came the moment that made it into the script: “As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea - for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother, John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.”

We don't fish, except for sport. And Jesus in the flesh that grew in Mary's womb does not walk the shores of this lake. But the call to follow Jesus comes to us just the same.

We know more than they did. How Peter and Andrew and James and John would see stormy seas and calm, sights that would bring them joy beyond imagining, and terror and despair. Their lives that might have been "gray, every day the same for fifty years," were full of color and life. We know how God used them to fish for and catch thousands of people.

But the real story for them is of God's love in Jesus, God's touching their lives in Jesus. We believe that the real story for them is of an eternity of being in the love of God.

And what of Freddy and Jimmy and Bobby and Gilbert? We know that the prudent brothers were not saved by their prudence, that death came for them and that everything they had lived for was forgotten and turned to dust. We know that Bobby faced a storm for which there was no safe port, that in the end he could not save himself from death. We know that Gilbert's joys were but for a moment, and death was his end.

Jesus calls us today. "Follow me. I have work for you to do, gifts for you to give, people for you to touch - faith for you to learn. Follow me and death will not own you. God will rule over you. You will be alive: now and forevermore."

And we are tempted to be just like the folks that got cut out of the script. We choose an hour of TV over an evening of serving those in need. We choose more security in our bank account than food for the hungry. We hear Jesus call and act as if there is no rush to follow.

Is our Lord wiping the dust off his feet as a sign against us?

Jesus suffered and died for you, took all yours sins upon himself in love for you - was raised to eternity to prepare a way for you.

"Leave behind the old habits, the old ways, the old securities. Take a chance," says Jesus. "Come follow me."