

*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.*

I remember an event leading up to the Billy Graham Crusade here in Cleveland some year ago - a Saturday morning rally for men at the Cleveland Convention center. Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys, was the headline speaker but some others spoke as well. No matter who it was that spoke they began with a story that went something like this: I was headed down the wrong road – drunkenness, drugs, dishonesty, divorce, deceitful living. Someone witnessed to me, telling me about Jesus. I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior and now my life is different – things are good with my family, at work, and with my Lord. Jesus saved me. To speak in that group you needed to be able to tell that story. But what about all of us who have never had courage enough to sin in ways that make a shamble of our lives?

Peter and Andrew were fishermen, the day Jesus called them they were casting their net into the sea. James and John were fishermen also - part of a more prosperous operation. Their father worked with them and the hired men.

Fishing was an honorable profession. Every day many families were nourished by fresh fish – healthy protein. In the fishing business there are good days and bad days – but being along the seashore or out on the water in the fresh air and sunshine does not sound so bad – these days folks pay a lot for that opportunity.

In our gospel reading there is no sign that Peter and Andrew, James and John were looking for a change - no sign that their lives were in shambles – no sign that they were looking for Jesus. Jesus came along and said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left everything and followed Jesus.

So let us not begin with what is wrong in your life or mine today. Do not go searching for fears or shame or sins that Jesus can take care of – for when you and I see Jesus as the solution to our problems that leaves us in the center. Jesus becomes a fix-it man – our focus is on us. But for Peter, Andrew, James and John the focus was on Jesus.

They followed and saw what Jesus was doing – how he healed the sick and confronted evil. They feasted with him – and when others found fault with them for not fasting or for picking and eating some wheat as they walk along on the Sabbath, Jesus defended them. Jesus sent them out on their own for a time – inviting them to battle evil with him. But every time they focused their eyes on themselves, thinking they knew more than Jesus or were afraid or imagined all the glory they would one day have Jesus rebuked them. He leads – they were called to follow.

They left good things behind - their daily work and their families. You who have gathered here this day have left good things behind to be here also: You could be home learning about the world or out helping poor people. You could be taking time for family or time to enjoy yourself. Instead you are here following Jesus out to the Sea of Galilee – seeing him call Peter, Andrew, James and John and hearing what happens. You are here to declare your love for a God you know through Jesus - opening your hands to receive the crucified and risen life of Jesus into your own self. What will happen in you because you came here today? Only God knows.

In the past year some of you offered yourself through the Family Promise program because of Jesus. Some of you helped organize, purchase, cook, set up and carry the things that were needed to provide a temporary place here for people with no home. Some of you gave up nights in your own bed to sleep on a cot here. Every one of you who has helped could focus on what your helping cost you. You could think about what you gave and then ask whether you got enough good feelings or satisfaction to keep on helping. If this program is designed so that you could feel good about yourself that is exactly what you should do. But maybe this program is not about you.

Most all of you who helped had reasons to be disappointed. Some of you were disappointed with the other members of Christ's body who did not do or act the way you thought they should. Some of you were discouraged by

how complicated helping can be or how complicated people who need help can be. Some of you were wishing there had been more people to serve through the program. If things did not always go so well with Peter, Andrew, James and John why should we think things would be easier today? But Jesus did not give up on them and Jesus will not give up on us. He has been able to use whatever we have offered to bring blessings to some families that are homeless.

Family Promise is not for us or about us any more than Sunday morning worship is for us or about us. Jesus is at the center; his love for all is the purpose of the program.

Jesus is leading. Follow. .