

## Mark 1:14-20

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simeon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, repairing their nets. Without delay he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.



We the members of the First Church of West Bridgewater, united by love of one another and the teachings of Jesus hold it to be our purpose to maintain a welcoming house for the worship of God, to teach and study the lessons of our faith, to develop programs for those in need, and to sponsor fellowship opportunities. All this we support in order to build a mutually sustaining and caring community of faith.

## "Looking to Jesus"

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in his wonderful face,  
And the things of this world will grow strangely dim  
In the light of his glory and grace.

The first two disciples (Simon and Andrew) are poor (they have only nets, no boat) and the sons of Zebedee are more affluent (because they have a boat---in Mark's version they even have employees; a small family business and their father undoubtedly needs their strong arms). These four are representatives of those who will follow Jesus in the future. Jesus summons people from the fabric of family relationships and from the midst of the workaday world . . . into a new set of relationships and a new vocation (Sermon Seeds, Jan. 26, 2014).

In her sermon, 'Miracle on the Beach', Barbara Brown Taylor wrote: 'This is a story about God, not the disciples or us. To focus on what the disciples gave up (and whether we could do the same), is 'to put the accent on the wrong syllable.' This 'miracle story,' is really about "the power of God-to walk right up to a quartet of fishermen and work a miracle, creating faith where there was no faith, creating disciples where there were none just a moment before."

**. . . creating faith where there was no faith. . .**

In Christian spirituality, looking upon the face of Jesus, gets deep calling to deep, fanning the flame of faith, that the words of Jesus reveal God's Glory and Truth. Jesus proclaimed: "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Trusting in Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote:

One day  
Youngsters will learn words they will not understand  
Children from India will ask:  
What is hunger?  
Children from Alabama will ask:  
What is racial segregation?



Children from Hiroshima will ask:  
What is the atomic bomb?  
Children at school will ask:  
What is war?  
You will answer them:  
Those words are not used any more  
Like stage coaches, galleys or slavery  
Words no longer meaningful,  
That is why they have been removed from dictionaries.

**. . . creating disciples where there were none . . .**

'Jesus said, repent and believe the good news!' (Mk.1:15c). In Buddhism, equanimity is one of the Four Immeasurable or great virtues (the others being compassion, loving kindness, sympathetic joy). It is evenness of mind, unshakable freedom of mind, a state of inner equi-poise that cannot be shaken by gain or loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. Equanimity is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifferent only to the demands of the ego with its cravings for pleasure and position not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings.

In our religious practice the way in which we free ourselves from all points of self-reference and indifference to the demands of our self-serving ego is by deepening our relationship with Jesus. We do this by praying with Jesus, "Abba, not my will but thine be done.' And when we are lost, we look to Jesus, our inner compass (rather than our mother, father, sister, brother, best friend, or hero), to set us on the right path. When we feel afraid he graces us with his presence. And when we need to step outside of ourselves, and put others before ourselves, he leads us in the way of God's Love.

**'Come, follow me, Jesus said,  
and I will make you fishers of men.'**

Mark 1:17

'When it comes to news, we rely upon trust. More than we commonly acknowledge, our acceptance of what is announced as news depends upon who announces it. Some prior relationship, whether established through viewing habits, professional credentials, or personal relationship, serves as our most basic filter for news. What we believe hinges upon whom we believe. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God." Christians accept Mark's pronouncement, not because there are no conflicting reports available elsewhere, but because we trust the one who says it.' (Journal for Preachers, May/June 2005)

Simon, Andrew, James, Zebedee trusted Jesus, as do we. No fake news about the reign of God coming from him. In his devotional, 'Grace Comes First,' Rev. Anthony Robinson wrote: 'Sometimes we get the idea, and give it to others, that religion is mainly about all the things you and I must do in order to draw a distant God to our side or to get on God's good side. Hard at work, we imagine that if we pray in the correct way, or fast really well, or work on behalf of all the right causes, then God will love us and take our side. So, we come up with endless programs, projects, and practices to do religion better. Church begins to seem as busy and frenetic as a major corporation. "Stop it!" says Jesus. (Just put down your nets and follow me). "You don't need to win God to your side or complete a list of merit badges to get on God's good side. God has taken your side already." In Jesus, God has drawn near to you and will never abandon you. The bridegroom is here and the feast of life is in progress. Trust this and live! Live gratefully, joyfully, boldly, for God has taken your side in Christ and nothing in all creation shall undo that.

(365 Daily Devotionals, p. 117)

The opening statement of the covenant that binds us together as church reads: 'We the members of First Church of West Bridgewater, united by the love of one another and the teachings of Jesus . . .' In this congregation, we trust in Jesus to connect us with the purposes of God, and to make us fishers of people in God's realm of Love.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, put us in touch with the joy of your presence, mercy, and grace, and let it disturb us to life. Amen.