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**Series: At the Lakeside**  
**Sermon: Calling of the Disciples**

**Matthew 4:18-22**

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

**Sermon**

For the next few weeks, we'll take a look at some of the stories of Jesus by the lakeshore. Seems appropriate right now, as we have the last few weeks of summer before school and fall come at us in full force. And today's story is early in Jesus' career as a traveling preacher. First, he is a one man show, but then, then, he gets some followers. Come, follow me!, we read. I know that this story is supposed to be moving and beautiful, and I can imagine it in an epic movie kind of way – The waves lapping against the shore, the brothers busy mending their nets with their long feathered hair blown by the salty Mediterranean wind. Soft, but majestic music is letting us know that something monumental is about to happen. They look up and see Jesus, back lit by the morning sun they squint their eyes to see who it is; Jesus looks deep into their souls with his pale blue eyes, holds out his hand and says “Follow me” and then zombie-like they drop their nets and follow. This is the image that is portrayed in every children's bible. Jesus says to total strangers, Follow me, and they follow him, not knowing where they go. I know that I'm supposed to be moved by this story, but honestly, I'm a little creeped out by it. We would think it totally cultish if, say, your child pulled out of school, left their job, and started following some unknown theologian and supposed miracle worker... creepy.

You had that here in Oregon, didn't you? Before my time here, anyway, the Rojnesheis? Or how about the David Koresh's of the world? Normal people who, for whatever reason, follow the kookiest folk out there, saying goodbye to family, friends, and what we'd call a normal life.

Even today there is a theology that wishes to take us out of the world, that draws a line in the sand and tells the world “You must cross over to our side in order to know the grace of God”, but this theology knows nothing of the Incarnation and the humble God who left behind everything to become the servant of the world.

There is a theology that wishes to take us out of the world, to segregate us from culture and keep us in tidy little kingdom enclaves - far from the evil that we sometimes face in this world, but this theology knows nothing of the Cross and the Christ who dies for the sake of the ungodly, for the sake of a beloved-enemy, for the sake of us.

When Christ calls us it's seemingly not very glorious. And maybe life would be a little bit simpler if we didn't follow Christ. I know there's a lot of us here who, quite honestly, would rather not be following the Christ, ...but he called you. And to your surprise, despite your best judgment, and your internal ambivalence, something within you said, “okay.”

What is vocation? We typically think of vocation as our job or profession, but the idea is much larger and richer than that, so let's take a look at it, starting with a little word study. Vox is the Latin word for "voice," as in Vox Populi, the "voice of people." The Latin verb "to call" is vocare, as it still is in Italian. The noun form is vocatio. There is a whole cluster of English words that have these Latin words as their root, words that refer to voice, to speaking and calling. For example, when we "speak out" we are being "vocal." The whole collection of words we use to speak is our "vocabulary." And, of course, a person's calling is his or her "vocation." In Christianity, our God is a God who has a voice, a God who speaks and calls. We have a vocation. It might be different from our job, but we have a passion and a calling for something greater than us.

But God's speaking is different than our human speaking in an important way. We make a distinction between human speech and action. But for God there is no such distinction: the Word of God doesn't just say something, it does something. So, for example, in Genesis 1, God creates the worlds with a word. Recall how God said, "Let, there be light! And there was light." Word and deed, meshed together.

Why does Jesus call disciples? To answer that we need some background on what Jesus' ministry was all about. First of all, Jesus comes into a time and place where God was expected. The people had been waiting, longing, hoping for the coming of God's reign in the form of his anointed one, which is the word "messiah" in Hebrew, and "Christ" in Greek.

I don't know why Peter and Andrew, James and John followed Jesus. I don't know if they hated smelling like fish every day. I don't know if their retirement plan had completely tanked and they just spontaneously decided, "Yeah, forget this. Let's follow this guy around and see what happens." The Gospel doesn't tell us why, but apparently they weren't very hard to convince. Jesus just said, "follow me." And they did.

I love this story in the Gospel of John where Jesus is saying crazy stuff and most of his disciples are totally weirded out and deserting him and Jesus turns to the twelve and says, "Well, don't you want leave me too?" Like, "Come on here's your chance to slip out the back door unnoticed." And their response is so great, they say, "Well, if we had something better going on, we'd be doing it, but the truth is, when you speak it is life giving to us."

To me, this is what makes Jesus different than the cult leaders of yesterday and today. Jesus gives freedom. The others restrict movement and ideas. Jesus wants the best for us. The others want the best for them. Jesus died to save us. The others caused death to others, many times to save themselves. Come, Follow Me, for your sake, not mine.

I remember speaking to a college age kid who asked me about other world's religions. What if they are true? What if they hold more meaning and more beauty? What if they bring greater satisfaction than Christianity? Don't you want to explore them and find out?

This kid had a girlfriend of many years, so I asked, "How long have you two been dating?" "Four years." He said.

"Do you think there are other women in the world who are smarter, more beautiful, and will give your life more satisfaction?"

"Well. I don't know. I'm with her because I love her, and she loves me, and she captured my heart." He said.

I said, "That's how it is for me and Christ. I'm not interested in going around trying to disprove or prove the legitimacy of other religions, because what I know is that Jesus Christ has captured my heart. And I want to be faithful to him."

What I suspect is that Jesus has captured our hearts, otherwise we wouldn't be here. Life is too short and too busy to waste time on worshipping a God who has not captured our hearts. I suspect that Jesus has captured our hearts, and so we follow, and Jesus leads us. It becomes our vocation.

And as a church, we also have a vocation. We don't just come to church, we are called to be the church. There's a difference. We are not merely a voluntary association of individuals with a benevolent and spiritual focus, although we are that. But we are more than that, we are called, we have a vocation. A Calling is no longer just for the clergy, but for all of us. And what are we called to be? Disciples of Jesus. And what is a disciple? A disciple is quite simply a follower or a student. One who hears the call of Jesus. Living out the gospel message the best we can. And it is in such moments that "vocation" takes place; when you hear the voice of God calling. And when that happens there is no turning back, because the Word of God has a life of its own in your life.

Come Follow Me. In a time of scary changes and transitions, this is what Jesus promises us –

Not to lead us around... but to lead us through....

Not to lead us around the heartbreak of separation, but to lead us through it.

Not to lead us around the impotence of joblessness, but to lead us through it.

Not to lead us around the confusion of our futures, but to lead us through it.

Jesus promises not to lead us around the cross, but to lead us through it.

Come, leave your nets and I will help you fish for people. Come, leave your worries, and I will give you peace. Come, leave your bitterness and I will give you life that's sweet. Come, leave your hatred and I will give you love. Come, leave your sadness, and I will give you joy. Come, leave your past, and I will give you a future. Come, follow me. And we, along with the disciples, have no way of knowing what lies in between the lines of these two little words that Jesus calls us with: "Follow me." As for me and my house, we will follow Jesus, his message of love. His life of forgiveness. His teachings of peace, trusting in his path. And the family of God said, Amen.