

Jesus Wow! Part 6

Four Fishermen Follow Jesus

Mark 1: 16-20

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Sermon Summary

The first four men to be called as disciples were all fishermen. But nothing like the sophisticated modern fisherman who has technology to assist. In Christ's time, fish were caught using a small 'casting' net – thrown from the shore or the shallows – or a larger 'drag' net deployed from a boat.

Jesus saw fishermen at work – and selected them to “catch people” for the Kingdom of God. These fishermen worked the Sea of Galilee, a fresh-water lake about one quarter the size of Lake Taupo and the 2nd lowest in the world [meaning it is below sea-level and is therefore described as endorheic, having no outlet into an ocean]. It contains many species of fresh water fish, and, in Jesus' time, the lake had 16 ports from which fishermen came and went.

In ancient times, the opportunities for employment were limited. Most sons followed their father's work. Only the exceptionally gifted found different life paths. Jesus' father was a carpenter; Jesus followed in that trade. The four fishermen in our story (Simon Peter, Andrew, John, James) followed their fathers into the fishing industry. Fishing (like carpentry and other similar trades) required no study other than learning on the job. Our fishermen could be described as successful because they employed other men as well.

When Jesus came by them at work, He called them to “follow him”. This was an amazing command. While many adherents followed Jesus, they did so voluntarily. The (eventual) twelve disciples were all called by Jesus; they were destined to be the core of His ministry; they were destined to follow Jesus throughout His ministry; they were chosen (with the exception of Judas) to continue Jesus' work after his death and some to leave an account of that ministry.

At the time of their calling, the 4 fishermen were intellectually 'ignorant' and steeped in the Jewish culture of their day. For the next 3 years, Jesus had to laboriously teach them a new 'theology.' Jesus wanted new trainable people to eventually train others. They were to cast their nets out into the world to catch people for the Kingdom of God. The last command Jesus gave to his disciples is called **The Great Commission** as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mark records (Mark 1:17), “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” Then the very next verse is rather astonishing, “**At once** they left their nets and followed Him.” Now why did the fisherman answer Jesus without delay? Why did they

comply immediately? And secondly, and, how could Jesus demand so much of them? At first take, one's answer could simply be, "Jesus Wow!"

In the first case, they could respond immediately because Jesus was not exactly an unknown quantity. All four had had previous knowledge of Jesus – in His unique personage. For example, Peter already had seen Jesus at work and called him "Master" before the command "Come follow me". The moment is recorded in Luke 5:4-6. This unique moment begins with a carpenter telling a tired fisherman where to fish; Peter agrees, then has a freak result. **These men realized the power of Jesus.** So, before they were called, they had had a personal encounter with him which gave them an inkling of what he might be.

When Jesus spoke the command to them, it was no ordinary human voice expounding something – it was the sovereign voice of God at work. The power of the Word that created the universe was the same power at work now directing ordinary men to do something extraordinary.

Normally, young men of intellectual talent went to a Rabbi to be taught. But here, the authority of Jesus to call others to a particular assignment is of divine origin. All the people Jesus called to himself had one distinguishing factor – they **believed** Him. In Mark 10:17-22 is the story of the rich young man who wanted to follow Jesus, but did not because he loved his own wealthy lifestyle more. There **is a cost** in following Jesus. A poignant reminder about this cost is found in Mark 10:28-40. When Jesus told the disciples that, "many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Mathew 19:30), He is indicating that the high rank one has in this life will **not necessarily** be given in the next. Nor does it imply that heaven is the complete reverse of this life. The ranking in heaven is **not** that of this world. Jesus became a humble person when He washed his disciples' feet – a very low job indeed. Now He sits on the Throne of the Universe.

Following Jesus is the benchmark of a Christian. But how could Jesus demand so much from his disciples – as He does of us?

Jesus only asks that we follow and copy Him. If He can do it – in his humanity – then so can we with the help of His Holy Spirit. "Though our Lord was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that we might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Finally, we should always remember this, "that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Discussion Questions

1. Have you managed to do any "fishing" these past several weeks?
2. What is life like when Jesus becomes Lord of someone's life?