

ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Matthew 4:18-22

INTRODUCTION:

Consider what comes to mind when you think about a politician, a CrossFit fanatic or a millennial. Odds are you have certain mental associations with each. Now, what comes to mind when you hear the word Christian? Odds are you associate that word with certain characteristics as well. The broader culture also forms impressions of what a Christian is and whether or not they are one.

The first followers of Jesus didn't call themselves Christians. It was a derogatory term used by people outside of the faith. In Acts 11:26, we see that the first Christians were known as disciples. The word Christian is used three times in the whole Bible; the word disciple is used 281 times. Disciple is a far more accurate and compelling description of what it means to follow Jesus. And, as we will see, the concept of a disciple exposes the fact that many who claim to be Christians are not actually disciples of Jesus.

MAIN TEXT:

As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. “Follow me,” he told them, “and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Matthew 4:18-22, CSB).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

- All Hebrew boys went to Torah school starting at age 5.
- By age 10, all young boys knew the Torah, and the best students went on to study the remainder of the Old Testament. The rest returned home to work in their families' businesses.
- At about age 17, if a boy wanted to go on and make a career out of religious studies, his next step was to find a rabbi he admired and apply to become one of his disciples (talmidim).
- When he found one, he would go and sit at his feet. That was his request to learn. And the rabbi would examine him with questions and put him through a series of tests to see if he was worthy to be his disciple.
- The rabbis could choose the smartest, most talented boys to be their disciples.
- Another reason the rabbis were so picky is that when they chose a disciple, they were choosing someone whom they believed could become just like them—to not just know what they knew, but to do what they did.
- For several years, these young disciples (talmidim) would follow their rabbis, imitating them in every way. The goal of a disciple was to be like the rabbi.

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

I. JESUS DOESN'T CHOOSE THE BEST, HE CHOOSES THE WILLING.

As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

In Matthew chapter four, Jesus, this new rabbi, chooses Peter and Andrew, who are fishermen. The fact that they are fishermen shows you what? They were part of the B-team. They weren't the best of the best.

Ladies and gentlemen, let that sink in: When Jesus chose His squad to build His movement, He chose the B-team! So, of course, they went to follow Him. This rabbi had chosen them—guys without much potential or personal power—to follow Him and to become like Him, to know God like He knew God, to know what He knew, to do what He did and be filled with His power!

John MacArthur: *"God skipped all the wise of the day! The great scholars were in Egypt; the great library was in Alexandria; the great philosophers were in Athens; the powerful were in Rome. He passed over Herodotus the historian and Socrates the great thinker and Julius Caesar. He chose men so ordinary it was comical. No Rabbis, no teachers, no religious experts..."*

Jesus chose the B-team because His work in the world wouldn't come from their abilities for Him, but from what He would do through them.

People with a lot of talent and ability would only get in the way because they would never learn to lean on His power. Jesus taught that His power in the weakest vessel was infinitely greater than the greatest talent without Him.

God wants to use you in your family, at your workplace. Stop making excuses that you are not able. He doesn't need your ability; He requires only your availability. As we often say, He doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called. Have you made yourself available?

II. HE CHOSE US, NOT WE HIM.

"Follow me," he told them ...

As I explained, the normal way this all went down is that if you were among the best of your class, you applied to a rabbi, and if he liked what he saw, he'd choose you back. Now, his selection gave them a great deal of confidence. If they were struggling, they could say, "Ah, but my rabbi believed in me! He chose me." But Jesus started the process back even further. They didn't even come to sit at His feet. He came seeking them when they weren't even looking for Him.

Some of you are struggling now—marriage, career, parenting. Believe this, friend: If you are Jesus' disciple, then He chose you!

You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. (John 15:16, CSB)

III. OUR PRIMARY CALLING IS TO BE WITH HIM.

"Follow me," he told them ...

He didn't tell them where they were going or what assignment He had for them. His primary call is not to do something; it is to become like Him. To become like Him, you have to know Him. To know Him, you have to know His Word.

You have so many outlets here for this—weekly messages, small groups, special studies. If you are really serious about being His disciple, you'll take advantage of a lot of these. Get His Word inside of you until it dominates all your thinking and all your behavior. Until you think it and talk it and quote it.

IV. TO FOLLOW HIM, WE HAVE TO LEAVE ALL.

Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Why identify these two things? Because these are usually the two most significant things in our lives:

- Boat: Our careers (the way we take care of ourselves)
- Father: Our most significant relationships

To follow Jesus, He has to take precedence over both. Most of you won't literally lose your father and mother over Jesus ... Some might. For some, God may tell you to change careers. Maybe God will tell you transfer your job to be part of a church plant or leave your job and carry the gospel overseas. For many of you, it probably won't be that dramatic. But you'll have moments where you decide which holds greater sway over your life.

V. HE COMMANDS US TO SPIRITUALLY REPRODUCE.

"Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fish for people."

Following Jesus means you subject everything in your life to His lordship. You forsake all that He has forbidden and pursue all that He has prescribed. Just like He was a fisher of men, His followers would become fishers of men. This is an essential part of being a disciple. It's not something that only a few of us do; it's something that each of us does. There is no such thing as a non-reproducing Christian.

How do you prove you are a disciple? By bearing fruit. And if you are not bearing fruit, you have reason to question whether you are a disciple at all.

My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples. (John 15:8, CSB)

Jesus tells His disciples how to bear fruit in His famous Great Commission:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20, CSB)

In Greek, the words go, baptize and teach are all participles that derive their force from the one controlling verb, make disciples. Which means that everything we do grows out of the call to make disciples. Jesus summarized His ministry, Luke 19, by saying, "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." If we are His disciples, that's how we'll summarize our lives, too.

In his book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman said:

"When will the church learn this lesson? Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. Nor can occasional prayer meetings and training classes for Christian workers do this job... Individual women and men are God's method. God's plan for discipleship is not something, but someone."

CONCLUSION:

You are God's method. We want to see you become this, this year. We want you to commit to it. And don't let it intimidate you. Disciple making is simply teaching someone to follow Jesus as you follow Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus has promised to help you. So, identify your *one*. Ask God to help you identify one person you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, bring to faith in Christ this year.

Can you imagine what would it look like if every one of the people here this weekend did this, and asked God, “God, give me one person I could bring to Jesus”? If every one of our small groups made it their goal to reach one person for Jesus? If each one committed to reach one?

INVITATION:

Are you a disciple? If not, maybe you are the *one* today.