

Sermon
Third Sunday After the Epiphany
Year B
January 22, 2012

Jesus is back in Galilee this week, and He's walking along the Sea of Galilee. As He's walking along, He notices Simon and his brother Andrew fishing...that would be our Patron Saint, Andrew... and He calls out to them; "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And, immediately they left their nets and followed him. Remarkable. They dropped everything and followed Him. But this wasn't the first time that these two brothers had encountered Jesus. Both Andrew and Simon were disciples of John the Baptist and one day when Andrew was with John, Jesus walked by and John exclaimed "look, here is the Lamb of God!. Well...when Andrew heard that he went and found Simon and told him ...we have found the Messiah, and he and Simon took off down the road following the path that Jesus had taken. When Jesus turned around and saw them following him he asked them "what are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi, where are you staying?"

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Jesus said to them Come and see. (John 1:39)

There's a familiar phrase. So they go with him to where he was staying and remained with him that day. At about four o'clock that afternoon, Andrew brought Simon* to Jesus, and He looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter*). And so today we know Simon as Simon Peter, or more often as just Peter. Now, after spending the day with Jesus, Andrew and Simon Peter went back to their homes and their jobs as fishermen. And that is where the gospel for today begins. So when Jesus walks by and calls them to follow Him, they know exactly who He is. Maybe that's why they drop everything immediately to follow Him, but this time it changes their lives forever. Following God's call on your life has been known to do that. Andrew and Simon were good Jewish men. They attended Temple...they obeyed the laws laid out in Leviticus... they were hard working fishermen...they were good sons and husbands. Now they are following this rebel Rabbi... the one the Pharisees and Sadducees call a rabble-rouser... the one they accuse of breaking all the laws, the one they eventually accuse of blasphemy. And Simon and Andrew leave with Him

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to become students of a new way; to become itinerate preachers; to become fishers of men and women. They are Always on the road...they rarely see their families...But oh....the things they do see...

They watch as he heals with a touch of His hand, or a single word from His mouth. They look on in awe as he feeds thousands with five small loaves and two fish. They are frightened and amazed as a raging storm threatens to capsize their small boat and with a word and the wave of a hand, the sea and wind obey Him and become still. They watch him walk to them on water. Can't you just imagine how wonderful it was to be able to be with Jesus every day. To walk with Him...to talk with Him...to see him reach out and touch the leper clean...drive the demon out of a small boy...bring a young girl back to life...to see all the miraculous things He did in the course of living his everyday life? Wouldn't that be something?

The first thing we heard Jesus say to Peter in the gospel today was "follow me". Do you know what the last thing was that He said to Peter before his ascension? The last thing he said to Peter.. again beside the sea, the Sea of Tiberis...the last thing he said to him was "Feed my sheep."

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So we know Peter's call...follow me....feed my sheep. Come be with me...watch what I do...learn from me...come do as I do... come heal the sick, love the unlovable, cloth the naked, visit the prisoner, touch the leper. Come be my disciples and you will know a life filled to the brim ...filled with love and kindness, compassion and caring, sadness, hurt, anger, pain and persecution.

I don't know of anyone today who would do what Andrew and Peter did. Drop everything, leave their jobs, their homes, their families, and relying solely on the Lord, follow Him. I know when God called me to this ministry; I put Him off as long as I possibly could. Years even. But if we are the least bit obedient, God will have God's way in our lives. I've found that when you are strongly called by God, that "free will" thing goes right out the window. God will do what God will do.

We all have a call. We are all given special gifts with which to answer that call. And if we are attentive, God will make His call for our lives known to us. We just have to be still, listen and discern what our special gifts are and then discern how God expects us to use them or the betterment of the kingdom.

I can tell you from my own experience of following God's call,

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there is nothing more rewarding or fulfilling than when you

“delight in his will, and walk in His ways, to the glory of His name.