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Whom Are You Following?

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TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 (NIV)

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

Luke 5:1-11 (NIV)

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

In our text today, we encounter Jesus, who has begun his public ministry, and he's traveling around in the Jerusalem area and he's preaching and speaking about the good news of the kingdom of God. And crowds are starting to gather because he speaks as one with such authority. People are encountering Jesus for the first time and being drawn to him. And we pick up the text today where it says "One day, as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Galilee, the people were crowding around him and listening to the Word of God." The Word of God was being taught by Him. He was a rabbi, and he would have known the Old Testament scriptures and he would speak about these scriptures and bring revelation and understanding to people about them. It's very important. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." And he was out feeding people spiritually with God's word. And He himself is the word, of course, "In the beginning was the word, and the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." And at this time, the people were encountering the living word of God, the living Christ. And he was expounding on the word to them in the form of a man.

And he saw at the water's edge two boats. It's interesting. Luke must have interviewed two individuals or some individuals who were here and found out that Jesus looked and saw two boats there and they were left by fishermen who were washing their nets. They'd been out fishing and of course, all the gunk that gets caught when you're fishing, you know, if you've ever thrown a fishing line into the water in a pond or lake somewhere, oftentimes it gets entangled. And you've got to get rid of the stuff on the fishing net all the more when you have fishing nets at the end of a time of work, the fishermen were washing their nets. Now the scripture says Jesus got in to one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon. It's important to think here that Jesus is not doing this happenstance. This is the sovereign God of the universe and he knows exactly what he's doing. And he sees the two boats and he knows who this individual is, this gentleman named Simon, and he chooses to get in to his boat and he asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

Now, this is fascinating. I don't know if you've ever done this, if you've ever entered someone's workplace and started to mess with their equipment. But, you know, Simon is a professional fisherman. This is his job. Jesus is a rabbi. He's a spiritual leader. And Jesus is putting Simon in a unique and challenging situation in front of a whole bunch of people. He

gets into his boat. It's like going into someone's workplace and messing around with their tools. I don't know if you've ever been to a farmstead, but you don't often walk into a farmstead and just get in a farmer's equipment and ask him to do something for you with his equipment. There's sort of a treading on Simon's turf going on here. Jesus climbs into Simon's boat and asks him to go out and he could teach from there. Jesus knew that his voice would be amplified coming off the lake, and so he was going out there to be able to speak more clearly and easily to the people.

But he's also doing something here with Simon. When he had finished speaking, it says he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch." Now, this is even more fascinating. Here is Simon, who has been fishing all night, the scripture tells us, and he's wrapping up cleaning his nets. And Jesus messes with his boat and he gets out there and then he starts to tell him how to do his profession. I mean, this is just an intrusion of Simon's life. And Simon has to figure out how to handle this right in front of all of these people.

You know, I've been a minister for over 30 years now, and it's always interesting when I start to visit with people. And then the question comes up of what I do or what we're doing and how we're serving in the world. And I always wonder how much to tell them about being a minister. Should I tell them I'm a speaker? Should I tell them my wife and I own some businesses? Because the minute you tell people that you're a spiritual leader, you never know how they're going to react. It's just a unique situation, a unique profession to be in with all of the different opinions and ideas in the world. And how do you know which spiritual leaders you can trust and which ones you can't?

And Simon is in this situation. This rabbi has come along. He's messing with his boat now. He's telling him how to do his profession right in front of all these people. This tells us something about Jesus and it's something we should keep in mind about him. And that is simply this: because of who he is, because he is the great I am, because he is the Messiah, the alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the firstborn over all creation, the one who was and is and is to come... Because of who Jesus is, He reserves the right to meddle in our lives, to meddle in our professions, to meddle with our stuff. Because in reality, the truth is, it's in the end, not Simon's boat. And it's not his profession. It's what God has entrusted to him. And now God is there, face to face with Simon, and he's starting to meddle in his life. And Jesus is like this because of who He is and because of his great love for us. He reserves the right to meddle in our lives.

And so, Simon appropriately, he says, “Master,” and he he's giving some respect here to Jesus in front of all these people, “Master.” And then he starts to challenge Jesus a little bit. And he talks to him about his profession. He says, “You know, we've worked hard all night and we haven't caught anything. I mean, I've done this before. I know what's happening out on the lake here. I know that the fish aren't there right now. We've worked hard all night. We haven't caught anything.” But he says, “Because you say so.” Simon is doing something here that is really good. He's listening to Jesus and he's going to do what Jesus says, even though it makes no sense to him. “Because you say so,” he says, “I will let down the nets.”

I wonder if Jesus has ever asked you to do anything that didn't make sense in your life. Not only does Jesus, because of who he is, reserve the right to meddle in our lives and our professions, our personal lives, our professional life, but he reserves the right to actually tell us what he wants us to do. And he's doing that here. He's coaching up Simon to go out and put down the nets. And Simon says “Even though it doesn't make sense to me, I'll do it. I'll let down the nets.”

When we obey Jesus, there's no question about it as we read through the scriptures, if you and I choose to obey him, there's always a blessing on the other side. It may be a physical blessing in this lifetime or an intrinsic spiritual blessing we experience in our hearts and our souls or a blessing for all eternity. But to be sure, we can't do so much as give a cup of cold water in Jesus' name without being rewarded by this. And now Simon is going to go out and put down the nets in response, in obedience to what Jesus has said to him. When they had done so, the Scripture says, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. Now Jesus is not only messing with his profession and coaching him up on how to do it and his stuff, He's starting to allow his equipment to be broken. His nets are tearing. They had caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break, so they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled the boats so full that now the boats are starting to sink.

I mean, you have to just think of the comedy of this situation, the nature of it. If you're if you're there, if you put yourself in Peter's shoes, he's like, Simon's going, what is going on right now? We're out here. We're catching all these fish. The nets are tearing, my boats are sinking. We need some help. He'd never seen anything like it because Simon Peter had now come face to face with one the likes of whom he'd never met before. He had come face to face with the savior of the world, the one sent from God, the long awaited one, the Messiah, the melchizedek of Israel. This is Jesus the Christ God in the flesh, who humbled Himself, took on

the very nature of a servant, was found in human likeness, in appearance of a man. And he was on his way to the cross to give his life as a ransom for many. Simon Peter's coming face to face with the king of kings.

Have you ever had such an encounter? When you come and I come face to face with Jesus in our souls, in our spirits and we encounter him, we are always changed. We can't be in his presence without being changed. Simon is changed here. When Simon Peter saw this, the scripture says, he fell at Jesus' knees. I don't know if he was still in the boat, he was probably in the boat beside Jesus, and the fish are all around flopping. The nets are tearing the guys are in full-on work mode trying to deal with all that's happened. And Peter falls at Jesus' knees and he says to him, "I am unworthy, Lord. Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." He has encountered the blazing light of the glory and the holiness and the power and the majesty of Jesus. The Prophet Isaiah would say, "Lord, I am a sinful man, a man of unclean lips among a people of unclean lips." Simon is starting to repent to acknowledge his sinfulness before God. Romans 3:23 says all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He's acknowledging that he is not worthy of being accepted by Jesus.

Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man. I fall short of your intent for my life. I had no idea who you were and what you're like. But now I have tasted of your goodness and. And I am just simply repenting. I am a man of unclean lips among a people of unclean lips.

And not only Peter, but also James and John. He and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish. And James and John are mentioned here, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

What's happening here is Jesus is starting to recruit his team, his team of disciples. This is the calling of the first disciples. Simon is repenting, and I'm sure James and John are as well. They're acknowledging their sinfulness before God. And Jesus says to them, to Simon specifically, "Don't be afraid." It's a word of grace. It's a word of forgiveness. Jesus knows he's going to go to the cross and pay the penalty for Simon's sin. And he can cast our sin as far as the east is from the West. Your sinfulness – yes, it's a stench before God, but Jesus is going to take that sin upon him and the burden of that sin and absorb it on the cross. And so, Jesus gives him grace here. He's. He's inviting him onto his team. "Don't be afraid, Simon. I want you in my family." And he's opening up his heart to Jesus, Simon is. As many as received him, the Scripture says to them, God gives the right to become children of the most high God. How great of love the father has lavished upon us that we should be called the children of God. Simon is getting recruited onto Jesus' team and James and John are.

And then then he says, “Not only do I want you on my team, Simon, I want you in the game for me. I want you doing my work.” He says, “From now on, you will fish for people. You’ll become a fisher of men.” You’ve been a professional fisherman for real fish. But now I want you in the world reaching out with the gift of life from me to others and calling others to repentance to join my family. And I want you in the game for me. I want you on my team, Simon. And I want you in the game. And James and John – these are the first three disciples. Jesus is starting to build the church. He’s calling together the people of the church.

This call goes out into the world today. He calls to us. He meddles with our lives. He meddles with our professions. He can meddles with our personal, every aspect of, our personal. Jesus reserves the right to come in and invite us to follow him. And the question this text begs is whose team are you on? Are you on his team? Truly, I mean, are you on his team and are you in his game? Are you doing his bidding? It’s as if God were reaching out to a lost world through his people, through the church. It’s as if we are his ambassadors. And God is making his appeal through us to a lost world. And that appeal is, would everyone please be reconciled to God? This is our hope. The greatest challenge humanity faces is the sinfulness of the human heart. And he’s dealing with this in Peter, and he’s inviting Peter and James and John to be a part of his work, now, the great redemptive work, the saving work of God Almighty God, through the work of Jesus and then through the work of his spirit. And of course, these three men would become great leaders in the early church, helping advance the kingdom of God in many miraculous and powerful ways. The Scripture simply says these massively filled boats they pulled up on the shore, left everything and followed him. Are you on his team? Are you in his game?

And the deeper question is whom are you truly following with your life? We don’t follow a president. We’re strangers in a strange land here. We’re just passing through. We’re foreigners. We do have political leaders and such, but our greatest allegiance is not to them. It’s not to medical professionals. It’s not to other spiritual leaders in the world. Our allegiance is to Jesus the Christ. Are you truly following him or have you gotten distracted from the great I am? Whom are you truly following? The text clearly today bids us to come like Peter and James and John and follow him. I sure hope that he is the greatest, most prioritized person in your life. If not, join with Peter and James and John in repenting, putting him back on the throne. If you’ve never done this, why not today? Why not now? The great I am is calling.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you for this chance to look into your word and the calling of your first disciples. We want to be your disciples as well. We want to follow hard after you with our lives, whatever that means. Help us be open to the wooing of your spirit, the calling of your spirit, and help us give allegiance to you with everything we have – to have you, Lord of our lives, to give up any time, anywhere, any thing at any cost. For your name's sake. Do this in your people in the world, Lord, strengthen us in you and give us a deep, abiding heart for you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.