



Matthew 4:20–21

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.

In the first chapter of Matthew's gospel Joseph takes centre stage, in chapter two it's the Magi and evil king Herod, in chapter three it's

John the Baptist but chapter four is all about Jesus.

We've seen three scenes so far. In the first, Jesus does battle with the prince of this world, the epitome of evil, Satan himself. In the second scene, Jesus begins to preach in Galilee, the land of the Gentiles. In this, the third scene, Jesus calls his first disciples, the first Christian missionaries, and before our eyes Christian mission and the Christian church is born.

Let's just think about this scene for a moment. You'd think a great king would choose to surround himself with warriors, with the finest soldiers, like King David did, to take the battle up to Caesar. But as we've seen, Jesus isn't interested in doing battle with puppet kings, he's come to do battle with the real

adversary, the one who's really in charge of this world, Satan. But then you'd expect him to surround himself with the religious elite, with experts in the Scriptures like the Pharisees and Sadducees. Instead, Jesus chooses fishermen. He casually walks along the shores of a lake and calls out to normal, working class men. And both yesterday's and today's passage have invited us to put ourselves in the sandals of these four fisherman who amazingly sacrifice everything to go and become missionaries working alongside Jesus.

Yesterday Peter and Andrew left their nets and livelihoods at a word from Jesus. Today, James and John leave even more. They leave not only their nets and livelihoods but their business and their father – just as suddenly and decisively.

Picture them there, unlike Peter and Andrew, they were standing in a fishing boat. It's likely the morning after a long night out at sea. Their nets were much larger, and far more work, because they were used for trawling. After a long night of fishing with their father and their hired crew, James and John are preparing the nets for their next outing which would have taken up much of the morning after a night of fishing.

Then they hear Jesus calling out to them from the shore, likely using the same words he did to call Peter and Andrew, 'Come, follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men.' There was such power in his words that, in that very moment, they left everything and followed him.

Let's try and put ourselves in their place. They would have seen themselves carrying on the

family business for the rest of their lives. They might even be able to afford another boat, maybe even a third. They'd watch their sons grow up, working alongside them until one day with pride they'd pass the business on to them – perhaps like Zebedee is thinking about doing soon. Then they'd spend their retirement alongside the picturesque lake Galilee being provided for by their children and grandchildren. All that changed forever in a moment; all that given up in a moment, so that they could go and fish for men.

Now while I think we can all appreciate the sacrifice they made of leaving everything and following Jesus this passage does raise some questions. Was it right for them to leave their father in the lurch? To turn their back on their family commitments and up and leave and go off with Jesus? And these are important

considerations. But again here, as we learn from John's gospel, it's likely that James and John were already well acquainted with Jesus, having already been involved to some degree in his ministry. And so while the sacrifice was still as great, this was a decision that had been weighed over time. And it's like that their family would have been involved and certainly given proper notice of their intentions. Matthew's just trying to highlight for us how much was given up, and how willingly, the moment Jesus called.

Also, we've noted that Capernaum became Jesus' new hometown after he was rejected in his hometown of Nazareth. And Capernaum likely isn't very far from here. We read in the gospels that Peter's home, where his wife and mother-in-law live, becomes somewhat of a base of operations. So while these verses are

showing the immediate willingness of these four men to follow Jesus anywhere, practically, at least for a time, they most likely remain with their families and in their homes, even if they are no longer fishermen, but disciples of Jesus.

But you know, even being disciples of Jesus would have ended up being very different to how they had imagined. In those days, disciples would approach Rabbis (great religious teachers) to ask to follow them. But here we see that it is Jesus who calls his followers. Training under a Rabbi would have been all about his teaching, when you mastered it, you moved on, perhaps even to become a Rabbi yourself. But training under Jesus was about far more than his teaching, it was about him. We don't come to him for his teaching, we're ultimately committed to his person. And far

more importantly than that, he's committed to us. He chose us and he's committed to us, so much so that he died for us, and he promised that nothing will ever be able to separate us from his love.

And you know, following Jesus today is still very different to what many anticipate. Christianity isn't like a club that you sign up for. It's not about you getting out what you put in. Christianity isn't something to master and then move on from. It isn't a Sunday morning activity or even a good place to instill moral values in your children. It isn't just another part of a well-balanced life. Christianity is a commitment to a vibrant and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. He's chosen you, hand selected you, to be his missionaries in this world, to be blessed beyond all imagining, to be bearers of the enormous privilege

of carrying out the work of his kingdom in this world.

It's worth just stopping and thinking about this for a moment. It's so easy for us to plan ahead the weeks and months and years. Our plan for the house we live in; our plans for each next stage of our careers; our plans for our relationships and our finances and our retirement. But God calls us to put our plans in his hands. And there's a great verse in Ephesians that shows just how exciting that can be, it's Ephesians 3:20,

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Whatever you imagine for the rest of your

life, God is able to turn it into something far greater, if you give over your plans to him. And through the words of our passage this morning he is calling out to you as well, 'Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'

Perhaps take a moment now as well to pray about how you're going to respond to God's call? What could following him look like for you today? How can you willingly give over your future plans into his hands? Jesus calls normal people out of ordinary lives and empowers them by his Holy Spirit to go on to do extraordinary things for the kingdom of God. What can you get involved in that is truly extraordinary? How can you make a difference for Jesus for generations to come?

Thanks for reading, I'll see you again tomorrow.