



Do What Is Yours to Do Today

TEXT
Matthew 4:18–22

May 10, 2020 — Sermon by Rev. Tom Are, Jr.

This passage is what scholars identify as a “call narrative.” They are all through the Bible. God calls Abraham: *Go to a land that I will show you.* God calls Jeremiah: *Before you were born, I appointed you a prophet.* On the Damascus Road, God calls Saul to be an apostle to the Gentiles. God, complete with an angel, calls the women on Easter to go to Galilee. Jesus calls the disciples, *Come and follow me.*

It’s all pretty dramatic. It’s all pretty clear. When God calls someone, they never say, “I’m sorry, I’m confused, could you go over that again?” These call narratives are so precise that it makes you wonder, does God still call people?

Jesus said, “Drop your nets and follow me,” and that’s exactly what they did. I love this story, but I confess, calling has never happened that way to me — so clear, so instantaneous, so verbal. I’ve never heard the voice of God like that. Maybe you have; it’s not all the same for everyone. But we read a story like this ... they just dropped their nets and all was clear. It can make us wonder, maybe God doesn’t do that anymore.

Well, let’s look more closely. When they drop their nets and leave the boats, they are doing more than leaving their business behind. They are leaving their worldview behind. Jesus is not just inviting them on a trip; he is calling them to see the world the way it really is, and to see themselves as they really are. They are journeying to a new kingdom — one that belongs to God.

One of the traditions we have at Village, a tradition we are not able to observe this year, is every Mother’s Day we gather around the font here or at our Antioch campus and we celebrate baptism — often of children so young they have no idea what’s going on. In baptism, we as a congregation declare to the world that these children belong to God. And our call from God is born right there: in our baptism. Baptism calls us to live like we trust we are God’s children.

In the movie *The Lion King*, Simba is the son of Mufasa, the king of the jungle. Mufasa dies and Simba is grieving. In the midst of his despair, the crazy baboon Rafiki tells Simba that Mufasa is actually alive. Rafiki leads Simba to a pool of water that he might gaze in. He looks. “That’s not my father; it’s just my reflection.”

Rafiki says, “Look harder and you will see Mufasa, your father, lives in you.”

And then, like it was at Jesus’ baptism, the voice from the clouds speaks: “Simba, remember who you are.” Everything changes after that.

I think Jesus walks by that seashore and says, “You think you are fishermen. But I know who you really are ... you are God’s children, and you are to live every moment of your life as a child of God.” Our call begins when we remember who we are.

A few summers ago, Carol and I were visiting Nathan in New York City and while there, we watched a delightful play called *Come From Away*. It was in town in February. It’s the story of how on September 11, following the attacks, the skies emptied of their planes, and thousands of passengers from all over the world landed in Gander, Newfoundland, a small town with a large airport. For days, the citizens of Gander welcomed the world. It’s a wonderful play, great music; it will make you laugh and cry.

But one of the features of the play is that everyone plays multiple roles. The same person might be a schoolteacher in Gander and also play a passenger from

somewhere in Europe. They don't really change costumes, so the acting challenge is to make sure the audience is never confused about whether you are the shopkeeper from New Delhi or the librarian from Gander. They pull it off really well.

What they don't want you to see is that behind all of those roles there is a real person who is none of those roles in reality. The woman who plays both Beverly and Annette, well, in real life her name is Rachel Tucker.

Here's my point. We play multiple roles in our lives: spouses. Many of us have jobs we do. We are parents and children. We have roles in the community and carry various responsibilities. But the call of Christ is to live in all of those roles true to our identity, to be Christian in all that we do.

You may not have ever heard a voice ... I haven't ... but you are all called. Your call may include some specific tasks or work; we will talk about that next Sunday. But the first and most basic call that is shared by all of us is to be Christian, to follow Christ.

Because this calling involves your whole life and can't be splintered off to its own realm, it can be a bit overwhelming. That's why we need to keep coming back to this story.

Jesus said, "Come follow me, and I will show you what your life is for." And immediately they dropped their nets and followed him.

You know, that's all they did this day. The truth is, they didn't know everything he would teach

them. They didn't know the deeds of power he would perform. They didn't know how he would always see the folks that the rest of the world passed by. They certainly knew nothing of the cross or of resurrection. They didn't know how he would call them to live like he lives. All that would come, but on a later day.

But to get there, they had to drop their nets today. Compared to a lot of things, it was a small thing, but it's what was theirs to do today. Our call is to be Christian — to live as a member of God's family. It's a big thing, but sometimes the biggest thing is accomplished in small ways: just dropping your net.

Anne Lamott reflected on being a mother, and she said, "Parenting happens while you think you are doing something else. You think you are driving the car, but that little guy is in the back seat watching; what you are really doing is parenting. You think you are talking about the neighbors, or setting the table or shopping, but what you really are doing is parenting. ... for your children are learning what you think is important, what you value, how to be a grown-up. Parenting happens when you think you are doing something else."

Calling is like that. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ happens when we are doing whatever it is we are doing. We are Christians while we work or invest or parent or even while we are deciding what to eat today. We are Christians as spouses, as neighbors, as parents or children or friends. Everything we do is the stage on

which our trust in Jesus Christ is displayed. It is the biggest thing in our lives, which often shows up in small choices, like dropping your nets.

I spoke with a member of this congregation. She travels and has a car service to get her to the airport. A couple months ago, she got a call from the service: "I'm sorry, but we are cancelling our service because of the virus. I apologize for this inconvenience. I know you have already paid your deposit; we will return that to you."

My friend said, "You know, just keep it. I'm sure this is a hardship for you. Just keep it."

She said the caller began to cry. "I'm sorry," she said. "It's just everyone I have called has yelled at me; I wasn't prepared for kindness."

You think you are just talking on the phone, but what you are really doing is bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

In everything we do, we are bearing witness to Jesus Christ, so remember who you are: You are a child of God. And then do what is yours to do today, but remember you are doing it as a member of God's family. That call is for you.

This sermon was delivered at Village Presbyterian Church, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, KS 66208.

The sermon can be read, heard or seen on the church's website: <http://www.villagepres.org/current-sermonsermon-archives.html>.