



January 25, 2009

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

Mark 1:14-30

“Immediately”

Simon, Andrew, James and John, they were fishing. It was not the kind of fishing we do at the Fox River. When I moved in here St. Charles, I was surprised to see people who were fishing.

It was really strange and mysterious to me the practice of fishing “catch and release.” Where I come from, we don’t catch fish simply to throw them back into the water. To catch a fish and throw it back in the water – well, it just seems cruel. If you aren’t going to take it home and eat it, why would you want to catch it, torture it by poking holes in its lips, and then -- throw it back in the water?

Simon and Andrew, they were fishing not to have fun but to make a living. They were so busy. Suddenly, Jesus came and said, Come and follow me. I will make you fishermen for people. It’s kind of like a job offer.

Let’s think about it. You got a job offer.

Someone whom you do not know comes to you and says “Hey, I got a new job for you. Come and follow me.”

What would you do? First of all, you would probably ask more detailed information about the job.

There would be so many things you would need to know before you make such a big decision, changing your career, like figuring out the job duty, your gift and ability, salary, benefit, promotion, working environment, distance, school system, so on. Well, it will take a couple of days or months.

You may not accept any kind of job offer without getting any detailed information and having enough time to think it over.

In this story, there is no suggestion that these disciples had ever seen or met Jesus before. There is no getting-to-know-you. Suddenly Jesus just appears and proclaims and the disciples leave their homes and family and drop everything. They ask no questions, there is no hesitation, just that familiar phrase that Mark uses again and again in his Gospel: 'Immediately'

How could they follow Jesus immediately without any questions, investigations, or any further discussion?

There is no way we can make others do something for us without building a relationship. One of my friends, a Korean pastor told me this story. When he was a young, brave pastor, he got a new appointment. The first thing he did at the new church was moving the location of the piano. And then he lost almost 50% of his church members.

In terms of our experience and common sense, this Bible story in which Jesus calls his disciples and they followed him immediately, is very awkward, strange and not understandable.

So, some scholars have tried to offer a different perspective to fix that puzzle. They said, Jesus grew up in Nazareth. And the Sea of Galilee, it's only about fifteen miles from Nazareth. So, it's possible that Jesus went over to the Sea of Galilee periodically and met other young men like Peter and Andrew. Perhaps they camped out together, or maybe they went fishing. And, while they were together, they talked and shared their hopes and dreams for the future, as well as their faith. These other young men realized that there was something special about him, something that demanded their allegiance. In this sense, Simon, Andrew, James and John were not strangers, but friends.

It's just a theory. But a very powerful theory supported by many people.

So, what do you think? Do you think these fishermen, the first disciples, had a long time relationship with Jesus before they were called? Or do you think they never met Jesus before the time they were called?

But this is my point. It is not important which theory you choose, which idea you stand for because it may not easy to follow Jesus anyway in either case. Whether

we have a long time relationship with Jesus or not, we would not follow him easily.

So, following Jesus is not a matter of time. I have seen many people who come to church so many years but never change their life. I have seen so many churches which have long history but never been a light and salt in this world. It's not a matter of how long you have had a relationship with God.

There was a man I still remember. He was an active member of the church I served. At that time I invited him the Tres Dias, a kind of spiritual retreat program, like "Walk to Emmaus". He refused my invitation. He said, "I am scared." I was wondering why he was scared. He said "I am really afraid that God would call me. I don't want to be called." What a simple and clear reason.

Why can't so many people follow Jesus even though they have long time relationship with God. Can we just say simply I don't want to; I don't want to be called?

Also, following Jesus is not a matter of believing. How many times we proclaimed what we believe, "I believe in God the father almighty.." I believe in God. You believe in God. We believe in God. But are we following him? Can we just simply say I don't want to, I don't want to be called?

Also, following Jesus is not a matter of trust. Many of us would say I trust God. I know that God will be with me in any situation. He will lead me and guide me when I walk through the darkest valley. But the truth is even if Jesus is with me, we don't want to walk in the dark valley anyway. I trust God. But I don't want to follow him. So, can we just simply say I don't want to?

Recently, I found out that is really not a matter of trust. I have had hard time with my picky son at the dinner table. Like many other kids, he doesn't like all kinds of vegetables. I tried to convince him how it is good and even yummy. I said "Hey, look at me, I'm eating. Wow, it taste so good." But he said NO. I was getting upset and said, "You never trust me, huh?" He said, "Dad, I trust you. But I just don't want to eat those stupid green things".

Yes, it's true. We love God. We trust God, We believe in God. But we don't want to follow him.

Why don't we want to follow Jesus? Why can't we say "Yes"?

I think we know the answer. We have fear. Fear of giving up something we have, our career, family, friends, home, money, and all the components of our current life. We heard so many stories of his followers, his disciples, their suffering, persecution, even dying for their faith.

Jesus, I love you, I trust you, I believe you, but I don't want to follow you because I don't want to lose something I have.

That's why we have to say, "NO, I don't want to". Yes. We have great fear of following Jesus.

But do we really need to give up everything we have to follow Jesus? Does following Jesus mean losing something I have, something I love?

I don't think so. I think the meaning of following Jesus has been distorted in some point. Following Jesus does not mean giving up everything. It does not mean sacrificing my son like Abraham, It does not mean martyrdom. It does not mean being a missionary.

When we think of calling, following Jesus, we may think of dramatic changes, extreme situations, and something too much for us, something beyond our power. You don't have to be Peter. You don't have to be St. Paul. You don't have to be Mother Theresa.

Let me tell you something.

I have had a dream, my long time desire, living unmarried to serve God, called celibacy, a fully devoted life for God. But I got married because I thought it was too hard for me to give up many things. I didn't have a confidence in single life & giving up many good things to follow Jesus. Now as a pastor, as a follower of Jesus, I have a family, wife and three kids. Now I feel sometimes that I would better be single to serve God. I realized that serving God as a husband and father is much harder, more difficult than serving God as a single, because I was called to serve God in two different places, Church and home.

Actually, you got one more mission field than mine, Church, home, and your work place. So, I really appreciate and respect all lay people who are serving God at church as ushers, greeters, choir members, Sunday School teachers, and committee members.

As we read Gospel, we remember the 12 disciples, but we don't recognize 70 disciples, 500 disciples. As we read Acts, we remember the names, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and Silas but we don't remember Agabus, Jason, Aquila, Priscilla,

Gaius, Aristarchus, Sopater, Secundus, and Tychicus, all the helpers and companions of the apostles. God's history is not written by only few great people but also so many unknown servants.

Matthew 22:14

For many are called, but few are chosen.

We are invited. We are called. Just say "Yes" immediately. God doesn't want us to do something we cannot. God does not want us to give him everything but just a small thing.

Jesus did not ask his 12 disciples to feed 5000 people by themselves. Jesus just asked for something they have, whatever it is. It was a small lunch box which belonged to a little boy, to feed 5000 people.

You are following Jesus when you read the Bible for your children, when you show your smile to your friend, when you welcome a stranger, when you sing in the choir, when you bring some books for a book sale, when you donate your blood, when you help and support a refuge family. You are following Jesus.

All the great miracles start with those kinds of small things we do for God.

Do not be afraid of being called. Just say "Yes" immediately.