

Why We Worship

Casting the Net Frankton – 3/22/15

Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22 the calling of the first disciples

Proposition: Christ told us to cast our nets, not our poles.

We're in a series of sermons that I have titled: [SLIDE] Why we worship? I think there are times when we forget the why or worshipping. Oh, we come to worship on Sunday. We sit in the pews sing the songs and pray the prayers and read the scripture and listen to the sermon. But somewhere along the way, we have lost the wonder of worship. We remember the how, but we forget the why. Or maybe, to say it better, we may not forget the why, we just take for granted the why. It's old hat now. We do worship every week, and we've gotten into a worship rut. So we're going to spend the rest of Lent, all the way through Easter, trying to remind us of the why we worship. Last time we talked about the magnitude, or the big-ness of God in Martin Luther's words, and how he is worthy to be worshipped. So let's get started with today.

Have you ever noticed that interruptions seldom happen at a convenient time, like when you are doing nothing and hoping something exciting will come along? No, they almost always interrupt something. Dinner. Time in your favorite chair – you know – the one you've had so long and sat in it so often that the cushion has become molded into the contour of the backside of your body. When you read this morning's scripture, that interruption thing is sort of what happened to the four men that Jesus called to follow him. All four of the men in the scripture were fishermen when Jesus called them. The scripture says that brothers Simon and Andrew were working as Jesus came by. It says that they were out in the boat [SLIDE] *throwing a net into the water*. James and John were working too [SLIDE] *repairing their nets* with their dad, Zebedee. None of them were just sitting there waiting for someone to call them. They weren't idly sitting down and watching all the people go by. They were hitting it. They were trying to earn a living by catching fish. But Jesus calls to them to follow him – which they immediately do.

I want to point out something to you. Matthew writes that Jesus saw Andrew and Simon fishing. Matthew doesn't say that the two men saw Jesus first. Jesus saw them first. The same thing happened with James and John. They didn't see Jesus coming, but he saw them. They had probably heard about him. They had probably heard him – he spoke on the lakeshore so often. He knew they were fishermen and he knew he wanted fishermen so he could teach them to fish for people. And since it was Jesus who saw them first it was Jesus who called them. They knew it was Jesus' mission they were going on. They understood who among them was going to be the leader and who among them were going to be the followers. Jesus was going to be the leader and these four ordinary fishermen were going to be the followers.

The same is true with us. It is Jesus who calls us; we don't call Jesus. I think we tend to have a language problem here. We often hear people say that they were searching for something in their life and they [SLIDE] “found” Jesus. I've got news for them, Jesus was never lost; they were. It's not them who suddenly decided one day that Jesus was the one. It was God's relentless pursuit of them. It was God's prevenient grace working within them that allowed them to hear Jesus' call on their life. Jesus calls us, we don't call him. And since it is Jesus who calls us to him, there is

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no mistake about whose mission it is that we are on. It is Christ's mission we are on. It's not our mission where Christ is working for us. We don't get to call the shots; Jesus does. We are not the captain of the fishing boat; Christ is.

So Jesus called these four men and it was time to go fishing. Jesus also calls us and it's time to go fishing. Just like he interrupted their routine and their lives, it is [SLIDE] Jesus who interrupts our routines and our lives. We could be living our lives fat, dumb and happy, just like the disciples were, and Jesus waltzes in acting like he owns us and makes a claim on our life. Here we are living our lazy-boy life, minding our own business, mending our own nets, and Jesus interrupts everything. He specializes in messing with our lives. Jesus comes into our lives and rearranges our priorities. He comes in and messes with our stuff. We think we've got it all together or at least we put up a good front like we do. Then Jesus walks in and calmly upsets the Temple tables. He takes our strategic plans and makes paper airplanes out of them and throws them out the window. He takes our well-thought out initiatives and hurls a monkey wrench in the gears. Everything we had planned becomes instantaneously obsolete. And he smiles while he's doing it. Just like I'm sure he smiled at James and John, at Andrew and Simon when they left their boat and their nets and followed him.

I want to sidebar on Jesus smiling. I'm off the clock here, you're not paying me for this. As Christians, I don't think that we picture Jesus smiling often enough. Especially the way some of you look when you come to church on Sunday morning with your sourpuss faces. I think Jesus smiled quite frequently. I think Jesus smiled as he watched Peter begin to get out of the boat to start walking on the water. I think Jesus smiled when he turned the water into wine so the wedding feast at Cana could continue. I think Jesus smiled as the disciples were collecting the baskets of leftover fish sandwiches when Jesus fed 5000 people on the hillside. And I think Jesus smiled when these four fishermen left their nets and their boats, and for James and John their dad, and followed him. I can see the gleam in his eye as he's thinking, "Just wait 'til you see all the things you're going to see." Here's your homework for the week. I want you to take just a moment each day, I don't care when, I don't care what the circumstances are, and I want you to picture Jesus smiling. Picture Jesus smiling at Peter or Andrew, or James or John. Then I want you to picture Jesus smiling at you. And I want you to smile back at him. That homework shouldn't be too tough for you.

Back to the sermon. And when Jesus called them he said to them, [SLIDE] "Follow me." Do you remember the children's game, Follow the Leader? Someone was chosen as the leader of the group and that person started off while the rest of the kids followed him. On the surface, when Jesus told these four fishermen to follow him, that is exactly what he wanted them to do. He wanted them to follow him on his journey. And by golly, that's what they did. They got out of their boats, they dropped their nets, James and John left their dad, and the four fishermen started following Christ down every path that his three year journey would lead them on. Where he went, they went. If he went to Capernaum, they went to Capernaum. If he went to Jericho, they went to Jericho. He led; they followed.

But there's more to the story than these men just following Christ – just like there's more to the children's game than just following the leader. Remember the game – it was more than just following the leader wherever the leader went. That would have been too easy and probably a lot less fun. When you played "Follow the Leader", you had to do everything the leader did or you

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lost the game. If the leader hopped on his right foot, then all the children following him had to hop on their right foot. If the leader jumped rope five times, then all the children following her jumped rope five times – I never was very good at that. If the leader climbed a fence and walked across the top of it, the children followed – and that’s where I normally lost the game.

This doing exactly what the leader does is the rest of the story of these four men following Jesus. When he called them to follow him, he wanted them to follow his actions as well as follow him on his journey. He wanted them to play Follow the Leader. He wanted them to learn from him. He wanted them to follow the example of his actions so that later, after he was gone, they could be the new leaders. He wanted them to tell other people what Jesus had said and to teach other people what Jesus had done and to teach other people who Jesus was. He wanted them to be heralds and of the good news, not theological professors trying to write justifications for becoming a Christian. He wanted them to relate with people and to relate to others as he personally related the disciples. He wanted them to play Follow the Leader to the max.

One of the biggest problems we face when we answer the call of Jesus is that the call will move us to what we don’t know. It will move us to who we don’t want to know. Jesus’ call on our lives is a call to radical change not only among ourselves, but to a different order in our world. We don’t want to play Jesus’ game of Follow the Leader because [SLIDE] it will move us out of our comfort zone. When we answer Jesus’ call, we’ll hang out where we never thought we’d hang out. When we answer Jesus’ call, we’ll hang out with people we never thought we would hang out with. Jesus’ call on our lives is to leave behind our old habits and prejudices, our old attitudes and preconceptions. It’s a call to take us out of our comfort zone and into unfamiliar territory. Jesus mobilizes us for mission and we must be willing to sacrifice. We’ll be charting unfamiliar waters in our fishing boat so we must be willing to leave behind the comfort of places we know and people who are familiar to us. We’ve got to be willing to sail away from the safety and security of the shoreline and go out in the unfamiliar, unfriendly deep waters. Answering Jesus’ call is just the beginning of a lifelong adventure. It’s not for the faint of heart.

Jesus called the disciples to fish in an unfamiliar way. Think about it. These fishermen were used to going out on the Sea of Galilee and fishing. They knew that sea like the back of their hands. They knew where the fish usually were and where the fish usually weren’t. They knew when to fish and when it was a waste of time to fish. Now they were being called to fish not on the Sea of Galilee, but on the shores of the sea and inland of the sea and not even really close to the sea. They weren’t used to fishing on land, but that is exactly where Jesus was calling them to fish now.

Jesus is calling his church to do the same. The first thing we have to understand is that [SLIDE] we don’t go fishing in the church. The church isn’t the place to throw the net. We fish outside the church. We have to walk out of our comfort zone of the church and into our un-comfort zones where the un-churched people are. When we are fishing for Christ, we’ll end up in places we never thought we would end up and we’ll be with people we never thought we would be with. Jesus hung out with the outcast of his day: the lepers, the lame, the blind, the bleeding, the poor and the hungry. When we fish in today’s waters, we’ll hang out with those same kind of people, the outcast of today’s society: the homeless, the purposeless, the porn addicts, the alcoholic, the drug addict, the drop-out.

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Jesus told those first disciples that they would be fishing for people. He didn't promise them that they would be fishing for people like them. They couldn't handpick the fish they wanted to catch. The disciples were told to cast their nets. And any fisherman knows that when you are fishing with a net, you can't really control what fish you catch in the net. You may be fishing for tuna and a dolphin get caught in your net. You maybe be fishing for mackerel and a shark get caught in your net. It's not like fishing with a pole and line. When you do that, you can choose the kind of bait that a specific fish likes. You can set a depth that a specific fish is usually at. When you fish with a net, you throw it out and you get what you get. So it is when we fish in Christ's name. We throw out our net and we get what we get. It's our job to catch them; it's God's job to clean them.

[SLIDE] Jesus says follow me and I'll open doors.

Jesus says follow me and I'll dream dreams.

Jesus says follow me and I'll transform communities.

Jesus says follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

Jesus says follow me and I'll teach you to use the nets.

See the thing is that Jesus knows someone needs the net. Jesus knows that someone needs to be caught in our net, which is really his net, so they can become clean. Someone needs the net. So...

[SLIDE] We need cast the net in the polluted waters of alcoholism.

We need cast the net in the polluted waters of bitterness.

We need cast the net in the polluted waters of addiction.

We need cast the net in the polluted waters of egotism.

We need cast the net in the polluted waters of materialism.

We need cast the net in the polluted waters of sexism.

[SLIDE] Because somebody needs a word of grace.

Because somebody needs a word of hope.

Because somebody needs a word of joy.

Because somebody needs a word of liberation.

Because somebody needs a word of peace.

We need to follow Jesus and become fishers of men and throw the net out because somebody needs the net.