

Wednesday 15th April 2020



Ministry of the Word  
**Wednesday 15th April 2020**  
by Vincent Gannon

Footnote Reference Point: Marked by \*& a number. e.g. \*1

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:18-22

**Subject:** Part 12 – The King’s Call To Discipleship

***18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.***

Last week we saw the beginning of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee. We noted that His ministry began at the right time, as John was put into prison; John was decreasing as Christ was increasing. We also noted that His ministry began in the right place, in Galilee of the Gentiles, where the people were most open and had the greatest need; and His ministry began by the right proclamation - 'Repent!' Now we will see in these verses, Jesus calling men to Himself and not only that, Jesus gave them a wonderful promise, if they followed, He would make them fishers of men. Throughout the Bible, God has called men to Himself, to follow Him and to serve Him. In fact, God's greatest concern throughout history has been to rescue the lost, out of the sea of sin, so to speak.

John 3 verse 16 says: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son”***  
Winning the lost is also Christ's greatest concern as we see in Luke 19:10 ***“For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”***.

Wednesday 15th April 2020

Throughout the New Testament this message is repeated for example in Romans 6:23 - ***For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

The Old Testament was no different. Proverbs 11v30 says ***'He that wins souls is wise'***. And we know 'wise' in Proverbs is usually a synonym for righteous living. So a righteous person wins souls, He is truly wise! Remember Daniel 12v3, ***'Those who are wise shall shine, Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness, Like the stars forever and ever.'***

The commission hasn't changed. It starts with us. Henry Ward Beecher, a preacher said this: ***"The longer I live, the more confidence I have in those sermons preached in which one man is the minister and one man is the congregation, where there is no question as to whom is meant when the preacher says, 'Thou art the man.'"*** Evangelism is the realization in time of God's eternal redemptive purpose and thereby, winning people to Jesus Christ. In Matthew 4, verse 18 we see the beginning of the King's call to Discipleship, which led to evangelism.

Let's look at it verse 18 - **JESUS CHOOSES HIS MEN**

***<sup>8</sup>And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.***

Most people that head out along the fishing coast of Galilee, do so for a stroll or get some fresh air. But Jesus wasn't going for a stroll to clear his mind, but he was walking with a purpose; to call his men. Jesus had a mission, and He didn't intend to do it alone. Yes, He had the power, the right, the capability, but that was not His plan.

In verse 18 we see the call of two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew, his brother. But when you take into consideration all the other gospels, have you noticed that this was not their first encounter with Jesus, in fact technically, this was the second stage to their ultimate calling? There were a few different calls of the disciples in the gospels and each writer recalls these accounts and chooses one or the other stage. There was a definite sequence of events

Wednesday 15th April 2020

when you put the gospels together. Out of the original 12, we are given 7 of the disciples specific details concerning their call. Each time Jesus called them, He called them into a deeper level of commitment and of a higher level of sacrifice. Each calling had a specific purpose for their walk with Jesus as well as their ministry. (\*1)

The very first call of any disciple is to saving faith because otherwise the rest makes no sense at all. It is very true that salvation is free, you can't earn it, buy it, or work for it or even inherit it from your parents (\*2). It is a free gift of God as Ephesians 2v4 teaches us. It cost God everything but He alone paid the price. It is very important to establish that truth in our minds and hearts. For this is part of the "evangel" (the Christian Gospel). It is not to salvation that Jesus is calling these men here, that happened already - see John 1:42. Just like Lazarus, we have been called by God, up from the dead and out of that spiritual grave unto life in Jesus and to be His witnesses. You and I were brought out of the darkness into Gospel light. Jesus has already laid the first principle of the kingdom, 'Repent', for with this there is no admission into the kingdom.

This day, Jesus called them. He called them to follow Him and they did. They were called to discipleship. The disciples' obedience was instant, they left their nets and followed Him. The sovereign authority of the living God had spoken and they were committed to imitating the One they followed. Jesus hand-picked them individually, and due to their obedience, they became not just partners of a marvellous ministry but also fruitful as Jesus promised they would - John 14:12

***"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.***

God always does the picking. He alone always chooses His partners, and you will find this right throughout the Bible. He chose Israel herself to be a whole nation of partners or as the Bible says ***"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"*** (Exodus 19:6). How can we be certain about this? We read about it in John 15:16:

***If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned***

Wednesday 15th April 2020

and in John 6:70: ***Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”***

and John 13:18

***“I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’***

This means, just as Jesus chose his 12, he also chose you which we see in Ephesians 1:4 -

***“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”***

When you read your bible, you will never read that the men or the nation that God called were perfect, because they weren't. Some of you may not even want them to preach in your church, but on the other side of the coin, we ought to be encouraged because we know that we are not perfect, (well not yet anyway!), but if we are obedient to God, he can use us.

These men would not follow any man who called them, let alone a stranger, but this was Jesus. Jesus who is The Word made manifest as John 1:1 tells us. They heard the voice of their co-Creator, He who created all things and holds all of creation together as Colossians 1:15-18 tells us. It was this Jesus who spoke to their hearts and minds, and they responded, they arose and followed.

Peter and Andrew were by the lake of Galilee which is nearly 700 feet below sea level. Often we see it referred to in the gospels as the sea of Galilee but the well travelled Apostle and Doctor Luke, always referred to it as a Lake. Josephus reported that in the first century A.D., there were some 240 boats that regularly fished its waters, and more additional fishing was done along its shores. This was exactly what Peter and Andrew were doing when Jesus called them. In those days, there were three different methods used for fishing. One was by hook and line, the second was throwing or casting a net from the shore into the water and the last, was with two boats with a dragnet in between them. That was done in the deep water. The reason for mentioning this is that the place was not deserted except for these few men, but there many people around and they were chosen out from among those people, just like you and I were! Jesus met them where they were at. He used what they were doing as a

Wednesday 15th April 2020

metaphor. Just as they threw out a big net to catch a lot of fish, so too, they were going to catch a lot of lost souls, by casting out the net of the gospel.

When Jesus called these men they were the first men of His church and they were the first of the original band of evangelists that He called to fulfil the Great Commission. They were also His first partners in ministry. From the beginning of His ministry, His plan was to use disciples to win disciples. We know He would command them to do other things but His first call to them was, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men".

The calling to bear fruit in evangelism is extended to everyone who belongs to Christ. The "called ones" are themselves to be callers. Speaking of all believers Peter said, in 1 Peter 2:9,

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;"*

Christ mandates that **all** of His followers be fishermen/ women. It is perhaps better in the original Greek it says, "Your place is following after Me" and how so many get that completely wrong, it seems many people come to Christ for fire insurance but do not want to follow after Christ, after his will, after his example. They want Him to serve them and make them feel better, or follow in their own time, how wrong that is.

#### **Now we come to Verse 19 where we see THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP**

The Amplified puts it like this, *"Come after Me (as disciples- letting me be your Guide, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

In this single sentence we find the secrets of discipleship -

1. **The Source Of The Call** - "He said"; which is Jesus, discipleship must come from Jesus  
**The Direction Of The Called** - "Follow"; this includes both intimacy and proximity
2. **The Object Of The Called** - "Me"; we can only truly know the character of Christ if we follow Him and get to know Him, which we are invited to embrace and cultivate Christ's character in our lives.
3. **The Results For The Called** - "I will make you"; Eloquence or education can never serve as a satisfying substitute for a right heart and a right life. Only Christ can give us that.
4. **The Work Of The Called** "fishers of men"; There is a big difference between fishing for fish and men, but God sees the potential and works miracles in our lives to make it possible

Wednesday 15th April 2020

Jesus called ordinary people to do extortionary things. But the focus in these verses, is not on the called, but on the One doing the calling. The King had come to the very region that was considered a place of spiritual darkness and death, and He raised to life His chosen ones. The first task is what? To Follow Jesus. That is the call to discipleship, which of course is to be a student of Jesus, to learn from the Master. The outworking of that will always be evangelism, to reach out to the lost just like Jesus did, (Luke 19:10).

It is very true that the word disciple is not found in the text but the implication is there. Did you know that the word disciple has a number of meanings such as; follower, adherent, believer, admirer, devotee, pupil, student, protégé, learner, upholder, supporter, advocate, proponent. The word disciple and discipleship occur 269 times in the New Testament, while the word Christian occurs 3 times and the word believer twice in the New Testament. The reason for mentioning this is because I believe that this fact is telling us something clearly. If we are saved, then we must be truly His disciples, let me fill this out a little bit more, as to what I mean by that.

When Jesus said “Follow Me”, what question did the disciples not ask? I think it would be natural to say, “Where to?”. But they didn’t ask this nor did they make excuses, unlike some other people we read about in Scripture. They didn’t know where they were going, but they knew who they were following, just like Abraham. If you are a believer, you know that we are not called to fun and games, to a life of comfort and everything rosie in the garden, but we are called to die to sin, to self, to the world. In fact Jesus told us that in this life we would have trouble (\*3). The disciples would eventually learn that they would not be loved by the many, in fact, they would be rejected as was their Master and they would be put to a terrible and terrifying death.

When we are called by Christ we are called to follow Him and not another. Though there are powers (\*4) at work to try and get you to follow them, we must say no, we are to follow Jesus alone. There are many different kinds and types of disciples but true disciples of Christ are firstly those who follow Jesus, the one we find in the bible as well as meeting the conditions that Christ laid out for us. Have you realised it yet that there are conditions to discipleship?

Wednesday 15th April 2020

So far two have been mentioned which are Repentance and Obedience. Another one is found in John 13:34 to 35 which says:

***A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.***

The result of the King's call, is His reason for calling in the first place - "***I will make you fishers of men***". Jesus was going to give them spiritual makeovers. He was going to teach them and then enable them to do the King's business, and thereby, achieve the King's goals which is to extend the kingdom. Richard Parker said and how true it is,

***"The Lord does not necessarily call people who are deemed qualified by others, but those who are willing, and He qualifies them"***

Often people make the excuse that they're not qualified because they don't want to be moved out of their comfort zone or feel like they can't. "*I'm not qualified or I am already very committed to something else*". No matter the excuse we may have or use, we miss the point if we go down that road. The Lord calls us to follow Him and He will equip us for the task He has for us. That may involve great change and we even may find ourselves doing things we thought impossible! This change occurs first in the heart and mind. He makes us the kind of people that can actually shine for Him (\*5).

I am sure you will agree that there is a world of a difference between fishing for fish and fishing for men? It's such a vivid picture, they knew what He was exactly talking about. Did you ever think how you could apply fishing here to discipleship as well as to evangelism? Regardless of your expertise in fishing, a good fisherman has certain qualities. *Like what you may ask?* Well, an expert fisher needs patience, they have to wait; so do we, when we need to wait upon the Lord and also when we are going to be fishers of men. Another good quality an expert fisherman needs is perseverance. It's amazing how many people keep going back to fish, even when they didn't catch anything on their last trip. That doesn't stop them, they go back again. We must be like that, even when we don't see the fruit of our evangelising, we need perseverance, don't give up, go back. Thirdly, they need courage, especially if they are fishing

Wednesday 15th April 2020

in high seas which can see many storms. Regardless of the size of their boat, the sea is always larger. So too, we must have courage and Jesus himself give us this when in John 16 verse 33 Jesus said -

***These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."***

Fishermen also have an eye for the right moment, and know when to stay out of sight. So to be a good fisher of men, a good soul winner must choose his moment as well as his location carefully. They also take themselves out of the picture, hiding their own presence, even their own shadow and making sure that the gaze is fixed on Jesus, not on what they did and didn't do or say, but how good God is. You may indeed be an expert fisherman or woman, and have a wealth of knowledge about all kinds of ways to catch fish, but only God knows the human heart. Now you may have acquired some life skill that God can and will use, but the reliance ought to be solely on the Lord, all the time.

Jesus knew all about the men he picked. Yes they were good fishermen, they knew about patience, perseverance and courage. They had an eye for the right moment, knew when to hide themselves to accomplish Jesus' end. Yes he chose fishermen to become fisher of men. He committed to train them and teach them for he knew all about them. He knew that they were a bit rough and ready. They could be unsympathetic, even lack humility. Oftentimes they were unable to persevere in prayer and even lacked courage. They had little education, little spiritual perception, even probably little religious upbringing given that they were from Galilee. They were often self-centred and inhospitable. We see this when the multitude had come on one occasion to hear the Lord preach, they had brought no food. The disciples wanted to send them away to get their own (Matthew 14:15). When children were brought to Jesus the disciples rebuked those who brought them (Matthew 19:13). Peter thought himself very forgiving when he said he would forgive someone up to seven times (Matthew 18:21). *I wonder if he kept a book on that?* The very night that Jesus longed for their support they were found asleep (Matthew 26:40-45).

Wednesday 15th April 2020

But Jesus wasn't looking at their inadequacies, he knew their potential. Regardless of what others thought, remember Acts 4:13 when the people said - "Who are these people and what do they know?" but look at what the verse says - ***"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."***

Surely this is a great encouragement for us as believers! Jesus picked us not because of what we are not, but because of who he can mould us into, if we are obedient to him. Jesus sees our potential and wants us to go beyond that in His name. I wonder if people can look at us and realise that we walk with Jesus? Jesus promised them that not only would they be his disciples, but he would make them fishers of men.

We know Peter and Andrew's response but let's go on and see the others

**RESPONSE TO THE CALL** in verses 20 to 22.

***They immediately left their nets and followed Him. <sup>21</sup> Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, <sup>22</sup> and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.***

For many, when they have read this call of Jesus, I wonder if they have ever seen or even considered that this Scripture is addressing them personally? *Have you? Let me put it to you like this, when Jesus calls you, what do you do? Obey? Make excuses? Feel inadequate? Take time to respond? "But I'm not a missionary?" "I'm just a busy mother with children?" "I'm just an office worker, a cleaner" "I'm just a student" or whatever, but God can and does call whomever He wills. (\*6)*

Like Peter and Andrew, the two other brothers James and John, also gave an immediate response. They were willing to trust God to lead them. Despite all their human flaws, (and we have them too) they were committed to the call and they continued right to the end. They preserved the course that they were racing on, getting stronger as they went, which we are also called to do as we saw in Hebrews 12v1&2.

Wednesday 15th April 2020

Their response was immediate, it was perfect, it was prompt, but it was also a permanent one. There would no “fair sailing” for it was going to be a life, for each one of them, that was going to have to face all kinds of storms, and they would have to rise to the occasions, deal with all types of winds from every direction, (for example various doctrines). They would be tried, tempted, and tested in the refiners fire. *But guess what?* They were in it for the long haul. Dr William Griffith Thomas said of their response, “*Without hesitation or reservation and without change of heart*”

They did not look back as they walked away from what they loved or had known, they left everything and followed Jesus. *So what is this saying to us? That we have to leave everything?* No, although for some they may have to, and for others it may not be things, but it could be people, it could be a lifestyle, it could be habits that they love, even the way they think and it may very well involve all of that. Surely this is pointing us to the “priorities” we have in life! Again, salvation cost us nothing but discipleship is going to cost, and for some it can cost them their very lives. If you radically change your priorities so that Jesus becomes number one, you will see your life change. You may even see your friends change around you, your job, where you live, what you do for relaxation.

Making Jesus your priority causes a chain reaction in your life. As you grow, you change, as you draw near to Jesus and make Him your priority, you will see people around you in a different light, and hopefully with more love, even for their souls which is why evangelism is really the next step to discipleship.

Whatever else, He should go straight to the top of our priority list. If that’s right, how does that look in my life? Yielding to Jesus means yielding to His authority, trusting in His leadership, obeying His teaching, depending on His plan, and accepting what he has for you in the future. Discipleship costs us everything, for it calls us to abandonment, the disciples had to leave something, in order to go in a different direction.

The call leads to discipleship as we see in the great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20

Wednesday 15th April 2020

***<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go-therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.***

If you want to have a passion for souls, then you need to begin with obedience to Christ. You must obey Him, move out in faith, and watch God take that light and He will do the work. I wonder how many of us really could say with Henry Martyn a missionary - ***“Now let me burn out for God.”***

So many are told nowadays, take care of yourself, put yourself number one so that you don't burn out. And Here was Henry Martyn saying ***‘let me burn out for God’*** That is a totally different way of thinking isn't it?

The great preacher Alexander Maclaren said, ***“Tell me the depths of a Christian's compassion, and I'll tell you the measure of his usefulness.”*** Well, where does it all start? Where do you get such a passion? Where do you get such a desire to burn for God? Where does it come from? It comes right out of the pilot light of obedience and making Jesus your priority.

We've looked at the response of the men to Jesus' call, but what was Jesus' response to their obedience? He loved them and He taught them. In fact he taught them for 3 years. First He spent time with them, they watched and listened to Him. They saw Jesus always being surrounded by people, He wasn't afraid to go where the sinners were. He had no favourites in relation to types of people. He didn't just move in the rich man's circles. It didn't matter what their social standing was. Jesus was available to all and He was totally sensitive to a person's plight and also their heart. Yes Jesus often condemned their sin, but he never put down a person because His motive for doing so was love and that they would have forgiveness.

Wednesday 15th April 2020

Yes, this is what the disciples witnessed and learned, and then when it was time, Jesus let them go out two by two (Matthew 10). They went out and came back with reports. Then in Matthew 28, Jesus told them that he was leaving them, they'd graduated! But His love is so great, he didn't leave them on their own although He was gone, not only had they each other, He said He would send the Holy Spirit to be not just their guide but also their counsellor, their comforter. I think whoever said it is right when he said, "*Evangelism is not taught as much as it's caught,*" like everything else in the Christian life. So, they learned. He trained them, and that's our desire..

As we conclude, we need to really think about what our priorities are as believers, as well as determine what kind of disciple we want to be? If you are having trouble thinking about this, think about the kind of conversation you would like to have with Jesus when you face him. If we want God to use us, we need to be like these disciples, ready to go and leave behind whatever it is or whatever we are doing, to follow Christ.

Amen.

Wednesday 15th April 2020

**Footnotes:**

1. The first call is in John chapter 1. This was their call to salvation - Andrew, John, Simon, Phillip, Nathaniel and James called to salvation. Remember it was when John the Baptist said, "Don't follow me anymore. Follow Him." They took off after Jesus Christ, and that was their call to salvation. Matthew 4:18 is the brother's call to discipleship, and it was the call to them to become fishers of men. It was then they were going to follow Jesus. But it was not into full-time ministry at that point, as they didn't fully depart from everything. For this moment, for this day, for this time, they were called to win souls. They were called to come after Him. There's a third call. Luke records it in chapter 5. It came after the one in Matthew; it's different. While there are some similarities, but there are some distinct differences. Look at Luke chapter 5 for a moment, Jesus came along, and they were still fishing, which indicates that another stage as they had not left their profession permanently. They simply followed Him for that moment in Matthew 4, but now in Luke 5 the call was a little more firm. Jesus was not saying to them, "I want you to just be fishers of men," generally. He said, "I want you to be fishers of men only." This was the next step, and this time Jesus stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, which is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Of course, Luke calls it a lake, as I said, because he's been around. He's seen some big stuff, and that doesn't rank with it. Jesus saw two boats standing by the lake, and the fishermen were gone. He entered into one of the boats, Simon's, and now there's a difference here. They were in a boat. Different than the situation in Matthew. He says, "Launch out, let down your nets," and there's a whole fishing miracle that occurs here. This is a completely different account. What it is, is a time for them to come to grips with a real commitment, and Jesus reiterates it in verse 10. There were, "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, partners with Simon, and Jesus said to Simon, 'Fear not from henceforth,'" doesn't matter you can't catch fish anymore. You remember the story? They couldn't catch fish on their own, not without the Lord. He was going to control the fish.
2. John 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:8-9
3. John 16:33
4. Ephesians 6
5. 2 Corinthians 5:9 and Romans 15:20-21
6. Paul was one of the very few high intellectuals not just in his day, but in all of human history who Jesus called. Look at what he writes in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. I believe we

Wednesday 15th April 2020

can find comfort here in what Paul is saying and realise that you don't have to be exactly like Paul to preach or teach. There was only one ever Paul and there is only one ever you.