

Every and All

Matthew 4:12-25

Cradock Presbyterian Church

January 27, 2013

There's a timeless message here. And it applies to you and me as just as much as to the people in our passage. That's because it's a message for *everything* about us humans, and for *ALL* of us.

Look, even the very beginning of this passage tells you it's about "every" and "all." "The people who sat in darkness" is about ALL the people. It's about everyone who sat "in the region and shadow of death." I mean, how could you be in darkness and your neighbor right beside you is in light? Doesn't happen! The light shines or doesn't shine on *every* body. This is Jesus saying "everything under the sun, all people" will see this great, liberating light. The very next thing Jesus says is: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near."

Now, a word about that. "Repent" means to turn around, or to turn back. Literally! That's a good thing to know, considering what's coming next. He comes upon Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, busy fishing. They were obviously casting from the shore, because the text says that Jesus, *as he was walking BESIDE the Sea of Galilee*, came upon these guys. Then he started talking to them. That tells you something. It means they weren't out on a boat fishing. And being fishermen and not having a boat means they were pretty poor. Struggling, you'd say. They probably owned their nets, and some tackle, but little else.

And then there's James and John. You probably missed the contrast, when you read the Scripture. Simon Peter and Andrew were poor; James and John, on the other

hand, were *in a boat* with their father; Mark's version of this story tells us that their father *had hired hands!* That can only mean that the father's business was thriving, and he was wealthy. He had to be, to own a boat! So the brothers were well-to-do. James and John are from the good side of the tracks, so to speak. They're really quite different than Simon Peter and Andrew.

So what does it all mean? Here's something: in our section of Scripture, ALL those Jesus called *followed him*. In fact, throughout the Gospels, there's only one example I can remember of a person who didn't follow when Jesus said, "Follow me." That's the rich young ruler. More on that in a moment. EVERY person touched by Jesus followed him.

Now consider this: Jesus said that he was going to make Simon Peter and Andrew "fishers of men," that's the old translation, which is actually literally correct. Who were the next people he called? More fishermen! That's making a point: *EVERY one who Jesus calls* is a "fisher of men."

So, what does it take to be a "fisher of men." First, you have to *turn around*. Jesus isn't going to go the way you're going, or the way you want to go, or the way you think you should go; he's going to take you where you need to be. Better yet, he's going to lead you to where HE needs you to be. Next, you have to *leave it ALL behind*. You have to "turn away" from EVERY thing. No wonder this section of Matthew starts with Jesus saying "Repent." You have to turn around your life! And what is "every thing?" It's literally *everything*. ALL that you have, or care about. That wasn't much for Simon Peter and Andrew; it was a LOT for James and John. Since their Dad owned the

business, they were gonna inherit it when he died, and they would have continued to be well-off. But they left *every thing* and followed Jesus. Contrast that with the “Rich Young Ruler;” he was wealthy, too, but he wouldn’t “leave it all behind.” The last thing it takes to be a follower of Jesus, is to *follow*. Not to be a “follower,” but to follow *Jesus*. It means trusting his leadership – it means trusting HIM – and it means accepting that you are less, not more. Humility, that’s the ticket.

Jesus, it says, “went throughout Galilee.” That means to ALL the places in that province. He cured *every* disease and illness; that means to ALL the people who needed him, he was there. He was powerful. His fame spread throughout “all Syria.” Hey! I thought he was in Galilee. He was; he also got to the non-Jewish area of Syria. Not only that, but our passage tells us he went to five other regions, too – and you know what? That’s Matthew way of telling us that Jesus was *everywhere*. And judging from how Matthew describes things, it means that EVERY TIME he met up with people, ALL of them were powerfully affected; all of them, in a sense, became followers, since they were following him all around the Middle East.

It’s just too bad all those “followers” let the things of this world get to them. They kinda “turned back” again to their old ways, their comfortable ways, to their wealth and this-worldly things. And at the end, when they thought those things were threatened, they yelled “Crucify! Crucify *him!*”

You and I know the rest of the story. Because of a small group of people who followed him after his resurrection, risking their lives – did we mention that lives are part of “everything?” – there arose a whole movement of “fishers of men.” What they did was

bring Jesus to people who needed something to follow besides the things of this world. Every time someone “turned away” from what they were doing, or from their wealth, turned away for a little while from this world, turned away to hear, *really* hear, the Good News – *every time*, those people followed Jesus. If that was true then, is it true now? Can we encourage people to be the ones who “turn away” from the things of this dying world and to turn to the one who offers them eternal life? I think we can.

So that’s our job, as those ones who claim to follow this guy Jesus. We’re supposed to get people to “turn away” long enough to hear, *really* hear, the Good News of the free gift of salvation that we have, that EVERYbody has, if they want it. And we’re supposed to offer this gift of grace to ALL people. When we do this, do you think we’ll be successful? I wonder if that’s even important, success. All you and I should do is proclaim the Good News, and *trust God EVERY TIME* to take care of the rest, including taking care of us. That’s *really* being a follower of Jesus. That’s even being a *leader*, at the same time. That’s what we do when we become, ourselves, “fisher of men.” What do you hear Jesus calling you to do? Will you turn *to* him? Will you put aside everything that gets in the way, and follow? You can do that! That’s something to pray about, as Lent draws ever near, and the opportunities to lead people grow...