

SEPTEMBER 2016

JESUS' FIRST DISCIPLES Matthew 4:12-25

O Lord God Almighty, because you have always supplied your servants with the several gifts which come from your Holy Spirit alone, leave also us not destitute of your manifold gifts nor of grace to use them always to your honor and glory and the good of others; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Grace to You and Peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ--

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is my stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? {Psalm 27:1}

THE GOSPELS PRESERVE stories about how the very first disciples begin to follow **Jesus** long before his death and resurrection. These stories recall the past; they also describe the present. They tell what happens with these early disciples. They also illustrate what happens with subsequent disciples, even with you and me.

SPRINKLED THROUGHOUT TODAY'S Gospel story are geographical references. The references are not accidentals. They provide an important dimension of the story of revealing how **Jesus** acts in ways that are sure to surprise us.

ONCE JOHN THE BAPTIST'S ministry is over and done with, the time is ripe and the ministry of **JESUS** to begin. He does not go to the same holy place, to some religious center. *I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, be united in the same mind and the same judgment.* {1 Cor. 1:10} Instead, he withdraws to Galilee, heathen Galilean, Galilee of the Gentiles, a place where, according to Jewish belief, pure faith has been distorted.

IT IS TO Capernaum, a city of this area, located on the Sea of Galilee, that **Jesus** goes. This is no quiet fishing spot. Capernaum is a bustling city. Commercial fishing amounts to big business. From among the fishermen **Jesus** **calls his first disciples.**

AND WHO ARE THEY? Two pairs of brothers. **Peter and Andrew, James and John.** Brothers who work shoulder to shoulder in the family business. Such ordinary circumstances are not rejected through the **call of Christ**, they were enhanced. *Brothers in the flesh become brothers in the **FAITH**.* Those who harvest the wealth of the sea are *made fishers of people.*

THUS **JESUS** DOES not go to some perfect place in search of disciples. He goes instead to a questionable place, one whose wounds cry out for immediate attention--a city of bustle and business! And when he **calls people to relationship with Him**, he does not forget that they are bound to others through ties of **love and labor.**

CHRIST CALLS **HIS** disciples as they are. **They do nothing to deserve his invitation.** In this Gospel, we hear no account of the merits of these four, but only his call. *Perhaps he calls people of consummate weakness in order so much the better to make his power known.*

WHILE WALKING BY the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you **fishers of men.** {Matthew 4:18-19]

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN is to do, what you and I are to do, disarmingly simple. We are to follow **Christ!** *He calls us in our circumstances, not in spite of them.*

OUR LACK OF fitness is no obstacle. *Christ does not look for us to be fit, but make us fit!* Our CALL and our COMMISSION go together. By calling us, **CHRIST** EQUIPS US. He makes it possible for us to follow him, to participate in the mystery of his death and resurrection, and to make that mystery visible to others. *This is what discipleship requires!*

Amen

A Spiritual Writing Meditation
Loren E. Streiner, *Lay Minister*
Mount Calvary Lutheran Church



*May Loren's love and passion for God's word, shine through his words as he encourages all of us to grow in grace. Please enjoy **The Faith Focus**; a series featuring spiritual writings from Loren.*