

# **“Ordinary People Do Extraordinary Things”**

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

3<sup>RD</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany

January 26, 2014

The gospel lesson for this morning is taken from the fourth chapter of Matthew, verses 18 through 23. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. As Jesus walked 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 fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. God bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word today. We ask you to open our hearts and minds. Give us ears to hear and minds to remember as we are changed more and more into who we were always meant to be in Christ. Amen.

The sun was just beginning to color the sky yellow and orange as it peeked above the skyline. In a moment the sun's light would chase away any dark sky as the sun was pulled up higher. Jesus was walking—probably walking and thinking as many of us do. As he walked he heard the waves touch the shore line by Capernaum; this is where he'd made his home. He walked a little further and heard

the waves taper off one by one against the shore. As he walked head down he saw bits of white water break off and then stroll back into the sea. It took a few grains of sand with it every time it left. As he continued walking he was thinking about the help he needed to accomplish his Father's plan.

John the Baptist had just been arrested, and as Jesus thought and prayed, he realized the enormity of the task that lay before him. He knew it would require brave men and women to walk with him. He knew the relationship he'd have with these men and women would be a very relational one, and they would draw strength from each other as God provided the ability to accomplish what was needed. Up ahead, he heard the quacking of sea birds gathered together. He looked up. The birds were jumping, skipping, and chasing each other away. They were competing for the fish that would soon be dragged into the boat.

Jesus saw some men working. Who knows, maybe he had developed a relationship with them since he'd moved to Capernaum. He called out to the two brothers Peter and Andrew who were fishing, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their boat and walked alongside Jesus. It wasn't too long before they came upon another family who was fishing. They were in their boat. There were two brothers, James and John, and Zebedee their father—they were mending their nets. Jesus called out to them; he may have already started a relationship with them too. At Jesus' request, the two brothers left their boat immediately with their father still in it . . . .

Last week we talked about the word relationship, and how God yearns for us to be in an intimate relationship with him. Jesus is the same. He's relational and personal. He calls out to come and follow him. I had mentioned a few paragraphs earlier that Jesus may have already known Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Maybe he'd been talking to them about the task that lay before him and that he needed

help. He knew he couldn't do it alone. Maybe Jesus was planting a seed in their minds. Maybe it had been something they'd all been chewing on for the last couple days, but when they saw Jesus early that morning—that's when they followed him.

They may have already turned Jesus down if he'd asked for help earlier. Maybe they didn't feel qualified or able to do this thing called "fish for people." After all, they said, "We're just fishermen." When Jesus asked them along the sea to join him and fish for people they were busy mending their nets. This is something fishermen do. They rejoin the corners that have pulled away from the others, they tie up the loose ends where some fish escaped the day before, and they strengthen each corner to another. In doing so, they prepare, repair, or equip themselves for the day ahead; this is what the word **mend** means.

In this passage the word mend from the Greek (kat-ar---teed'-zo) *katartizo* means to equip. They were mending their nets, and they were doing what they already knew to do. And no doubt, they were taking suggestions from their father Zebedee. When Jesus called them they followed him. I can hear them saying under their breath, "We're just fishermen." The brothers didn't know, it's God who prepares and equips us to fish for people. We're equipped as we follow. We may think to ourselves, "I'm just a homemaker, or I'm just a policeperson, or I'm just a firefighter, or I'm just a sales clerk, or attorney, or professor, or construction worker."

And on and on, maybe we're thinking that God chooses extraordinary people. Yet we see all through the gospels that God chooses people in all vocations to fish for people. God chooses ordinary people to fish and accomplish extraordinary things for the kingdom. God calls people from all vocations because in these vocations we're doing what Jesus does, we're fostering and cultivating relationships. We're establishing a bond and an intimacy that grows into a strong

relationship; this is what advances the kingdom, and this is how we make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The woman or man that stays home with the kids nurtures the children to love God. The firefighter who saves a little girl in a fire checks back with the family to see how they're doing and prays with them. The financial advisor who suggests a plan for our future speaks of God, and the importance God has in his life in regard to giving part of his income. It's the relationship we develop with others in all of our diverse vocations that Jesus calls "fishing for people." We yield ourselves to the character God calls us to have through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we go about ordinary tasks throughout the day as we interact with others. The outcome is that these ordinary tasks we do with people will over time accomplish extraordinary things in the lives of others.

By caring for people, feeding the hungry, changing diapers, giving money to mission work, mowing the yard and being in prayer, or helping on a VIM trip—all these things fish for people as we share the love of Jesus Christ. At the end of our lives before we go home to be with the Lord, when we look up into the faces of those we love and those who love us; this is when we realize more than ever that what mattered all through our lives were the relationships we formed and those we touched with the love of God. And maybe it won't be our family around our bed as we take our last breath, maybe it'll be the Christian friendships we've cultivated and nurtured. Maybe it'll be the young people we've spent time with to guide and support along their way.

One thing is certain. It's the relationships we develop that matter most in life. This is where we find our greatest sense of fulfillment, meaning, and purpose. And it's in these relationships that God changes us as we give ourselves to others. Young people, know that it's God that leads you to the choosing of a vocation.

God leads us to interact and pray for others as we go about ordinary tasks that result in extraordinary outcomes. Jesus calls out to you, “Come and follow me. I will make you fish for people.” Hear the Lord this day.

Let’s pray. Holy God, you gather the whole universe together to stand in the presence of your radiant Son Jesus the Christ. Reveal your Son as Savior to all those we interact with on our job and in the home. Make us a healing presence to all who grieve and need that precious listening presence. Help us be like Jesus to others as we pray and realize our mutually dependent nature with all people. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.