

“CASTING AND MENDING.....”

**A SERMON BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK
(1:14-20) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON
JANUARY 24, 2021----**

**SIMON AND ANDREW WERE CASTING A NET INTO
THE SEA FOR THEY WERE FISHERMEN..... DAY
AFTER DAY IT WAS THE SAME THING; THE SAME
SEA, THE SAME NET, THE SAME BOAT..... DAY
AFTER DAY IT WAS WIND, WATER, FISH, SORE
MUSCLES, TIRED BODIES..... THEY PROBABLY
GREW UP WATCHING THEIR DAD AND
GRANDDAD FISHING, WATCHING THEIR FUTURE
LIFE..... WATCHING HOW THEY TOO WOULD
SPEND THEIR TIME.**

CAST THE NET, PULL IT IN. CAST THE NET, PULL IT IN. IF YOU ARE NOT CASTING THE NET, THEN YOU SIT IN THE BOAT MENDING THE NET..... THAT'S WHAT JAMES AND JOHN WERE DOING. CASTING AND MENDING. CASTING AND MENDING..... YOU KNOW ABOUT THOSE DAYS, RIGHT?

WE MAY NOT FISH FOR A LIVING BUT WE KNOW ABOUT CASTING AND MENDING NETS..... DAYS THAT ALL SEEM THE SAME.....ESPECIALLY DURING A PENDEMIC..... ONE LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER. LIFE IS ROUTINE, LIVED ON AUTOPILOT.....

**NOTHING CHANGES. WE DON'T EXPECT MUCH
TO HAPPEN. THIS IS OUR LIFE. WE CAST THE
NETS. WE MEND THE NETS.**

**CASTING AND MENDING TO MAKE A LIVING, TO
FEED OUR FAMILY, TO PAY THE BILLS. CASTING
AND MENDING TO GAIN SECURITY AND GET TO
RETIREMENT. CASTING AND MENDING TO HOLD
OUR FAMILY TOGETHER, TO MAKE OUR
MARRIAGE WORK, TO GROW UP OUR CHILDREN.
CASTING AND MENDING TO GAIN THE THINGS WE
WANT; A HOUSE, A CAR, BOOKS, CLOTHES, A
VACATION. CASTING AND MENDING TO EARN A
REPUTATION, GAIN APPROVAL, ESTABLISH
STATUS.**

**CASTING AND MENDING OUR WAY THROUGH
ANOTHER DAY OF LONELINESS, SADNESS, OR
ILLNESS.**

**CASTING AND MENDING ARE REALITIES OF LIFE.
THEY ARE ALSO THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH
JESUS COMES TO US, THE CONTEXT IN WHICH
WE HEAR THE CALL TO NEW LIFE, AND THE
PLACE WHERE WE ARE CHANGED AND THE
ORDINARY BECOMES THE EXTRAORDINARY.**

**THESE WOULD BE DISCIPLES, SIMON AND
ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN, ARE NOT LOOKING
FOR JESUS. THEY ARE TOO BUSY WITH THE
NETS. IT IS ANOTHER DAY OF CASTING AND
MENDING.**

THEY MAY NOT HAVE EVEN NOTICED JESUS BUT HE NOT ONLY SEES THEM HE SPEAKS TO THEM. JESUS HAS A WAY OF SHOWING UP IN THE ORDINARY PLACES OF LIFE AND INTERRUPTING THE DAILY ROUTINES OF CASTING AND MENDING NETS. THAT'S WHAT HE DID TO THE LIVES OF SIMON AND ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN. THAT'S WHAT HE DOES TO YOUR LIFE AND MY LIFE.

“FOLLOW ME” IS JESUS’ INVITATION TO A NEW LIFE. IF THESE FOUR FISHERMEN ACCEPT THE INVITATION, THEIR LIVES WILL FOREVER BE DIFFERENT. THEY WILL BE DIFFERENT. THEY WILL NO LONGER CATCH JUST FISH. THEY WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE.

WHEN JESUS SAYS, “I WILL MAKE YOU FISH FOR PEOPLE,” HE IS DESCRIBING THE TRANSFORMATION OF THEIR LIVES, NOT SIMPLY A JOB CATCHING NEW MEMBERS OR FOLLOWERS..... HE COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE SAID TO THE CARPENTERS, “FOLLOW ME, AND YOU WILL BUILD THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.” TO THE FARMERS, “FOLLOW ME, AND YOU WILL GROW GOD’S PEOPLE. TO THE DOCTORS, “FOLLOW ME, AND YOU WILL HEAL THE BROKENNESS OF THE WORLD.” TO THE TEACHERS, “FOLLOW ME, AND YOU WILL OPEN MINDS AND HEARTS TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD.” TO THE PARENTS, “FOLLOW ME, AND YOU WILL NURTURE NEW LIFE.”

WHATEVER YOUR LIFE IS, HOWEVER YOU SPEND YOUR TIME, THERE IS IN THAT LIFE JESUS' CALL TO "FOLLOW ME." "FOLLOW ME" IS THE CALL TO PARTICIPATE WITH GOD IN GOD'S OWN SAVING WORK. IT'S THE WORK OF CHANGE AND GROWTH. THAT WORK IS ALWAYS ABOUT MOVING TO A LARGER VISION, ORIENTING OUR LIFE IN A NEW DIRECTION, AND EXPERIENCING THAT OUR LITTLE STORY OF LIFE IS CONNECTED TO AND A PART OF A MUCH LARGER STORY OF LIFE, GOD'S LIFE.

AS JESUS WALKED BY THE SEA OF GALILEE HE SAW SIMON, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN. JESUS CALLED THEM.

**MARK RECORDS NO DISCUSSIONS, NO
QUESTIONS, NO GOOD BYES. THEY SIMPLY
“LEFT... AND FOLLOWED HIM.”**

**I’M AFRAID THAT IF MARK WERE WRITING ABOUT
ME – WHEN HE GETS TO THE PART WHEN JESUS
SAYS, “FOLLOW ME” – MARK WOULD WRITE,
“AND IMMEDIATELY THE QUESTIONS
FOLLOWED.” “WHERE ARE WE GOING?WHAT
WILL WE DO?HOW LONG WILL WE BE GONE?
WHAT DO I NEED TO TAKE? WHERE WILL WE
STAY?”WHAT ABOUT MY FAMILY?.....WHAT
ABOUT MY JOB?.....**

BUT THIS CONVERSATION DOESN'T TAKE PLACE IN TODAY'S GOSPEL. JESUS DOES NOT OFFER A MAP, AN ITINERARY, OR A DESTINATION, ONLY AN INVITATION. THIS IS NOT THE TYPE OF JOURNEY YOU CAN PREPARE FOR. THIS IS THE INNER JOURNEY, A JOURNEY INTO THE DEEPEST PART OF OUR BEING, THE PLACE WHERE GOD RESIDES. IT'S NOT ABOUT PLANNING AND ORGANIZING, MAKING LISTS, OR PACKING SUPPLIES..... IT'S NOT THAT EASY..... IF ANYTHING THIS JOURNEY IS ABOUT LEAVING THINGS BEHIND. LISTEN TO WHAT MARK SAYS:

- **“IMMEDIATELY THEY LEFT THEIR NETS AND FOLLOWED HIM.”**
- **“THEY LEFT THEIR FATHER ZEBEDEE IN THE BOAT..., AND FOLLOWED HIM.”**

THE INVITATION, “FOLLOW ME,” IS ALSO THE INVITATION TO LEAVE BEHIND; TO LEAVE BEHIND OUR NETS, OUR BOATS, AND EVEN OUR FATHERS.

THAT’S THE HARD PART FOR MOST OF US.

WE’RE PRETTY GOOD AT ACCUMULATING AND CLINGING BUT NOT SO GOOD AT LETTING GO.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH INVOLVES SOME KIND OF LETTING GO.

WE NEVER GET ANYWHERE NEW AS LONG AS WE'RE UNWILLING TO LEAVE WHERE WE ARE. WE ACCEPT JESUS' INVITATION TO FOLLOW, NOT BY PACKING UP, BUT BY LETTING GO.

“FOLLOW ME” IS BOTH THE INVITATION TO AND THE PROMISE OF NEW LIFE. SO WHAT ARE THE NETS THAT ENTANGLE US? WHAT ARE THE LITTLE BOATS THAT CONTAIN OUR LIFE? WHO ARE THE FATHERS FROM WHOM WE SEEK IDENTITY, VALUE, OR APPROVAL? WHAT DO WE NEED TO LET GO OF AND LEAVE BEHIND SO THAT WE MIGHT FOLLOW HIM?

PLEASE DON'T THINK THIS IS SIMPLY ABOUT CHANGING CAREERS, DISOWNING OUR FAMILY, OR MOVING TO A NEW TOWN. IT IS ABOUT THE FREEDOM TO BE FULLY HUMAN AND IN SO BEING DISCOVER GOD'S DIVINITY WITHIN US. WE LET GO SO THAT OUR LIFE MAY BE REORIENTED, SO THAT WE CAN NOW TRAVEL IN NEW DIRECTION, SO THAT WE MAY BE OPEN TO RECEIVE THE LIFE OF GOD ANEW. WHEN WE LET GO, EVERYTHING IS TRANSFORMED – INCLUDING OUR NETS, BOATS, AND FATHERS. THAT'S WHY JESUS COULD TELL THEM THEY WOULD STILL BE FISHERMEN. BUT NOW THEY WOULD FISH FOR PEOPLE.

THEY WOULDN'T BECOME SOMETHING THEY WEREN'T ALREADY, BUT THEY WOULD BE CHANGED. THEY WOULD BECOME TRANSFORMED FISHERMEN. THEY WOULD MORE AUTHENTICALLY BE WHO THEY ALREADY WERE.

ULTIMATELY, IT'S ABOUT LETTING GO OF OUR OWN LITTLE LIFE SO THAT WE CAN RECEIVE GOD'S LIFE. THIS LETTING GO HAPPENS IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES; WORK, SCHOOL, FAMILIES, PAYING THE BILLS, RUNNING ERRANDS, FIXING DINNER, RELATIONSHIPS, AND TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING.

**IT HAPPENS IN THE CASTING AND MENDING OF
OUR NETS. THESE ARE THE TIMES AND PLACES
JESUS SHOWS UP AND CALLS INTO A NEW WAY
OF BEING AND OUR WORLD CHANGES.**

**IT HAPPENED FOR SIMON, ANDREW, JAMES,
AND JOHN. IT CAN HAPPEN FOR YOU AND ME.**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND
FOR ME.....**