

## Sermon 26 January Call to be disciples

### Matthew 4:18-23

Jesus calls Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John to drop what they are doing and become his disciples. There are two points I want to draw our attention to in this short story.

Firstly, it is testament to the magnetism, the charisma of Jesus. These men had full-time jobs, they worked hard for a living, and yet such was the power, the mana of this man that they were prepared to walk away from this and follow Jesus into what was very much an unknown future. It is quite mind-boggling.

Sometimes I don't think we fully appreciate just what a presence Jesus had. His ability to draw people was nothing short of incredible and there are so many examples of people in their thousands flocking to hear him. The feeding of the five thousand is but one. And he was able to project himself on to these crowds in an extraordinary way. No microphones, projectors and big screens for this man, just the sheer power of his personality.

Then there is the occasion of Jesus in the Temple, overturning the trading tables, scattering money and animals everywhere. The thing about this story that always impresses me is that not one person lifted a hand to stop him. Why not? I think they were scared of him; they were in awe of him. This one man amongst a host of men, single-handedly laying waste to their business. Let me tell you, this man Jesus was no wimp. On the contrary, he was larger than life, he was a giant of a man, figuratively speaking.

But when you consider what he achieved in just three years of ministry, it is hardly surprising. To have made such an impact he could not be some shrinking violet. He was, in fact, a man of such immense character that he was able to dominate people and events in such a way that history was made.

The second point I want to make is that these men Jesus called were ordinary people going about their ordinary jobs. In other words, they were people like you and me. At their time of calling, they didn't have a track record of great leadership and achievement. They were down-to-earth, unpretentious, humble fishermen. Of course, by the time Jesus had finished with them and by the time the curtain was brought down on their lives, they had achieved heaps. So there are two messages here for us.

Firstly, we don't have to be budding Popes to receive God's call to serve him. The call is there for every single one of us to join his team, to offer ourselves up for his service.

Secondly, when we answer his call Jesus can actually achieve all sorts of things with our humble help. And let's be clear about this, it is Jesus achieving this, not us. All credit to him. The point is this, in Jesus's hands we can surprise ourselves with what we might achieve.

Having said that, I think it is so very important that understand that by doing our little bit, we can be worthy disciples. We might not possess extraordinary gifts or even assets but there is always something we can do. Let me share a story with you.

I read about a journalist, whose name is Dimitri and he lives in Russia. He was attending a conference for Christian reporters and he told this story.

He had befriended a man in a prison in Moscow. The man has lost everything – even his family had deserted him. The conditions in prison were appalling. The man had 44 cellmates, in one cell that had only 15 beds.

This man had come to a faith in Christ. He was so touched by Dimitri's friendship and care. He wanted to say thank you in a tangible way but he had no possessions in prison. Writing paper was not even permitted.

So Dimitri was flabbergasted when one day this man gave him an elaborate crucifix, that looked as though it had been crafted from the finest porcelain. How did he manage it?

The man had saved a portion of each day's bread ration for more than a month. He used the bread to mould a cross, complete with the body of Christ on it. Then he burned the rubber soles of his shoes to make charcoal for one colour, the dregs from his tea to colour the body of Christ, and precious drops from his stomach ulcer medicine produced vivid green. The result was a stunning work of art.

'For you, my friend,' the jailed man said, handing over the creation. When Dimitri held up the crucifix in the conference, the assembled journalists shook their heads in amazement. Dimitri then challenged everyone, 'What are you doing with the resources at your disposal?'

I have said it before and you will hear me say it again in the future, God's kingdom is created by simple people like you and me doing our little bit with what little we might have. Every single one of us is called to be a disciple of Christ. We don't have to be destined for great things ourselves but that doesn't mean we can't be part of something great. If we all offer a little something, then that something will be significant.

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