

In today's Gospel we have Luke's version of Jesus calling His 1st disciples, all of them fishermen... You know the old saying:.. "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime... Well, for the fishermen I know, it should really be teach a man to fish, and you give him a lifetime excuse to sit in a boat all day and drink beer." ... That might be true for some fishermen, but it wasn't for Simon, James and John... Fishing was their livelihood. It was how they fed their families... That's what they had been doing when Jesus saw them cleaning their nets on the shore near where He was preaching.... And what took place after that – Jesus ordering them to go out into the deep water and lower their nets, even though they had fished all night and caught nothing,... and then having those nets haul in such a great catch of fish, that their boats began to sink... That gave those men the greatest fishing day of their lives... And because of what Jesus did,... they left their jobs and their families - everything - to follow Him... Now, why would these reasonably sane men be crazy enough to walk away from the life they knew.. to follow this Jesus?

Luke doesn't tell us why... Maybe they had heard Jesus preach,.. maybe even seen some of His miracles... We don't know, but what Jesus did that day had a powerful impact on them. .. There was something about Jesus they couldn't resist... They saw in Jesus, the presence of God,... so much so that they dropped everything to follow Him on an unknown path, on an unknown mission,... neither of which they would understand for a long time. .. Jesus, with the help of those fishermen and the other men He called to follow Him,... would go on to change the world forever.

Ok, here's a question... Does Jesus expect all Christians to be like those 1st disc and leave their family and everything else to follow Him?... I don't think so... God DOES call a few people to do that, but for the rest of us, whenever Jesus says, "follow Me," .. He wants us to follow Him in how we live our day-to-day lives. . Here's another question.... Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Raise your hand... Most of us didn't have to think a second before raising our hand.. But I bet many of us would think longer and harder if I had asked,... "Are you a follower of Jesus Christ?" That's because it's a lot easier to believe in Him than it is to FOLLOW Him.

Mahatma Ghandi, one of the greatest civil rights leaders in history,.. admired Jesus and often quoted His teachings, but he never became a Christian... Ghandi once said, "I don't reject Christianity. I love Christ... It's just that so many Christians are so unlike Him." ... Ooh, that hurts.... But, sadly, Ghandi was right.... To follow Christ means to try to be LIKE Christ... It's not enough to call ourselves Christian. ... It's not enough to have a bracelet or t-shirt or bumper sticker that says WWJD. Everyone should see what Jesus would do, by watching what WE do... Being a Christian isn't just believing in Jesus Christ. Even Satan believes in Jesus Christ..... Being Christian means doing our best to live as He lived; forgive as He

forgave;.. put the needs of others first, as He did;...treat everyone –even our enemies- with dignity and respect;...make people more important than things; protect the weak against the powerful as He did;...hate the sin but not the sinner, ..as He did;...and love as He loved. ..That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

The major life question we should ask is, "WHO will I follow?" ...Do I follow the call of Jesus, the Good Shep,..or do I follow the call of one of Satan's False Shepherds?...Pope Francis in a homily once said that a Christian life is a continuous struggle because Satan doesn't want us to follow Christ; He doesn't want us to follow a path to holiness... Deciding who or what we will follow is not a one time decision... It's a choice we make anew each day... Every morning, as we put our feet over the side of the bed, we must decide whether those feet will follow Jesus today, or will they walk in another direction? ...

Now, some people say following Jesus is too hard...We are slaves to all these rules - *Thou shall not do that...thou shalt do this.* .. We're not free to do what we wantWell, they are SO wrong. ... It's exactly the opposite....In John 8, Jesus says, "If you abide in my word, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."...Following Jesus doesn't make me a slave; it sets me free. ...Not free to do anything I want to do.. That's not being free;.. that's being a slave to all those things Satan can make look soooo.. good.

When we follow Jesus, we are free... We don't have to conform to the ways of the world. ...We're free to be the good, holy creatures God created us to be.... We don't have to be what we were never meant to be...It's like this....Suppose I was a fish (here we are back to fish again), and I spent day after day at the bottom of the ocean, and I'm getting sick of it...I want to get free of the water and be on dry land where I can roam with the lions and the tigers and all the other animals ...So one day, I start swimming close to the shore, and I let the tide wash me up onto the beach.

Finally, I'm free from the water and I'm on land right where I want to be. "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last!"...But then it dawns on me: I can't breathe! I can't survive on land..."Fool at last! Fool at last!"...I'm not free if I'm a fish on dry land... God created me to swim in water, not walk on land. When I try to be something other than what God made me to be, I'm not free. I'm dead!

My friends, God created us to be holy...by following His Son...When we try to be something other than what God created us to be,...we are dead,...dead in our sinfulness... Only by following Jesus Christ can we be truly free.

When Jesus called those common, ordinary fishermen,... they dropped everything and followed Him...They had no idea what they were getting into,...They had no

clue to where they were going....They didn't know how Jesus would change them,... how He would make something of them,...how He would use them to bring others to believe in Him...Yet, they trusted Him with their futures... They let Him become the Lord and master of their lives,...and Jesus used them to help Him change the world...When we choose to follow Jesus...when we make Him Lord and master of our lives,... when we let Him take the wheel, ..we won't know where He is taking us,.. or how He will use us,...but He will...He will use us to change our little part of the world, and - who knows -- maybe more than that...And we can be sure of this:...He'll give us much more than what we give up to follow Him...Like He did for Simon, James and John,...He'll fill our nets to overflowing with blessings,...more than we could ever deserve...AMEN