

From the PASTOR'S DESK



Discipleship

After the forty days testing in the wilderness, Jesus was ready to start His preaching ministry. Everything seemed to go wrong. John, the Baptist, was arrested, and it became dangerous for Jesus to remain in Judea, the heart of the Holy Land. He even avoided His home territory of Nazareth and went to Capernaum, the Galilee of the Gentiles, as it was called.

This apparent setback was a new beginning. It foreshadowed the community of Jews and Gentiles which would come into being. In Galilee, far from Jerusalem, Jesus met His first disciples. (Sometimes, when we are forced out of our comfort zones, God's grace brings new things into existence.)

Today, in Matthew's Gospel, a small group of fishermen are called to leave behind the familiar life they inherited from their ancestors, to be taken out of their depths, and caught up in the life of a stranger. Eventually, they will be dispatched beyond the boundaries of the world they know.

The missionary history of the Church is filled with examples of individuals coming to the unsettling conclusion that God wants them to leave their homes, families, and understanding of where they fit in, to go to another place and to preach the gospel. ... so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is disturbing because we give ourselves over into the hands of another. We don't know what we will be asked, or how we will cope. It may be especially hard for us in our culture that has been trained to be timid. We fear risk and have become obsessed with health and safety since the pandemic. (We have learned to be anxious.)

God calls all of us to leave our nets – the things that get tangled and tie us down – and follow Him. His love may propel us into deep waters, where we either sink or trust in Him. We are called to allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing our desire to plan and control everything to the last detail.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit sent the Galilean fishermen on a mission to the whole world. We are also called to be Christ's followers. He is looking for a ready response. It isn't easy. Where might the Lord be sending us today?

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