

## Called to follow Jesus

Garibaldi, the great Italian military hero from the 19th century, raised an incredibly committed volunteer army. His appeal for recruits was rather unique as he offered only these terms: "I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor provisions; I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles and death. Let him who loves his country with his heart and not with his lips only, follow me!"

Jesus offered similar terms for following him, except not for love of country but a love for Him.

Matthew 4: 12 – 25

### 1) Jesus, the hope of the world

- The darkness of Israel was still prevailing at the onset of Jesus' ministry.
- John, the first prophet in Israel after four hundred years, was thrown into prison by Herod.
  - Matthew 14:3-4 Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her."
  - Times haven't changed as governments still don't tolerate righteousness and being confronted of their wickedness.
- Jesus then moved from Nazareth to Capernaum fulfilling the prophecy by Isaiah.
  - Capernaum is in the vicinity of the original land that was given to the tribes of Israel Zebulun and Naphtali
  - Although John had been preaching and baptizing fairly nearby the darkness of unbelief and sin still prevailed in the land.
- Jesus didn't come to live an ordinary life within the darkness to blend in to it and complain about it.
  - Jesus came to be the light in the darkness.
  - He came to give life to those living in the shadow of death.
  - He came to call us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.
- Jesus' message was the same as John's
  - Matthew 4:17 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."
  - This was the beginning of the great migration from the dominion of Satan to the rule of God for all who would repent and believe.
  - This was the message of hope
  - A freedom from bondage to sin and death to become subjects to the rule of righteousness and life.
- In this world there will always be sin and darkness, but our hope isn't in this world.
  - Jesus calls us to himself to have life and hope in the midst of a wicked world.

### 2) Passing the baton

- As Jesus went around preaching, he called disciples to himself to whom he would pass the baton of ministry to the dark world.
  - A baton is a short stick that is used in relay races. One person doesn't run the whole race. Each person only runs a section of the race and then passes the baton on to the next person and so on until the last person crosses the finish line.
  - Jesus demonstrated that the Gospel would be passed on from one generation to the next as in a relay race so that the whole world throughout all generations would hear the gospel, believe and be saved.

- Jesus didn't just randomly approach Peter, Andrew, James and John and instruct them to follow him. He first taught the people from one of their boats and then did a miracle by giving them a huge catch of fish after they hadn't caught anything the whole night.
  - Luke 5:4-10 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."
 

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.
  - They recognized his authority and their own sinfulness in his presence.
- It is after this that Jesus said to them "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people."
  - Jesus calls the humble who recognize their own sinfulness to follow him.
- It isn't us who decide to follow Jesus. It is Jesus who calls us to follow him.
  - Romans 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
- Our calling to follow Jesus is for our salvation and for our service
  - He justifies and ultimately glorifies those he calls. This is our salvation.
  - He calls us to make us fishers of men. This is our service.
- Jesus saves us and passes the baton of leading others to salvation on to us.
  - We are not only saved to go to heaven. We are saved for service while in this world.
- The called disciples didn't hesitate to follow Jesus. They left their nets and John and James also left their father to follow Jesus.
  - When Jesus calls us to follow him he expects complete obedience that could cost us everything we have.
  - He wants our undivided attention for us to love him first and foremost above all else, and for him to make us into the people who he wants us to be to be effective in this world.
  - He doesn't expect us to be able to do all that he expects of us as soon as we start to follow him. He wants us to walk closely with him so that he can empower us to be all that he wants us to be.

### 3) Touching lives holistically

- Following Jesus doesn't mean literally just walking behind him wherever he goes. It means learning from him, becoming like him in character and action.
  - When he interacted with people, we need to observe how he responded to them, to their needs, to their questions.
- We see Jesus ministering in three ways: teaching, proclaiming, and healing
  - He taught in the synagogues
  - Teaching is to those who already have a basis of truth
  - He proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God
  - Proclamation is to believers and unbelievers alike. It's pointing to Jesus as the King
  - Healing the sick
  - We can pray for the sick and trust God for healing. We can care for the sick, the hungry, the emotionally disturbed with the love of Christ.
- Following Jesus means that we will touch lives spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and materially.