

Prelude

Call to Worship

From God comes my salvation.

For God alone my soul waits in silence.

God alone is my rock and my salvation.

God is my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

Prayer of the Day

The present form of this world is passing away. Therefore, help us to keep our focus on you, Lord, for the true power and steadfast love belong to you. Amen.

Hymn

“Jesus Calls Us”

#398 UM Hymnal

The Call to Confession

Trusting in the promise of grace, let us pour out our hearts before God.

The Prayer of Confession

Forgiving God, we repent of all the ways we turn from you. You call, but we do not listen; you show us your path, but we prefer our own way. Forgive us, heal us, and lead us back to you, that we might show mercy to others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

the silence

The Words of Assurance

Whenever a people humble themselves, turn from their evil ways, and put their hope and trust in divine mercy, God sees and forgives their sin, and enfolds them in the strength and love of Christ our Lord. Sisters and Brothers, your sins are forgiven; be at peace.

The Hymn

“Lord, you have come to the Lakeshore”

344 UM Hymnal

Prayer of Illumination

Speak to us your word, O God, that we may hear Jesus’ call to be his disciples. Amen.

The Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

²⁹I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

The Gospel Reading

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” ¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him

Sermon

What would cause you to abruptly walk away from the life you know, and start on an entirely new path? A new job offer? The promise of something much better than what you’re doing now?

What would it feel like to walk away from all you know; To leave behind everything you have worked for; your employment, and all the education and training and experience you have put into it; to leave behind your family, your friends and neighbors,

all that is familiar to you, everyone who knows you and protects you and cares for you, and to do so *immediately, all* to follow an itinerant preacher, to someplace and something completely unknown to you.

That’s what Mark describes, in Jesus’ call of his disciples.

It’s difficult to imagine what that would be like. It’s easier to understand what would *prevent us*

from walking away; we have responsibilities, people are counting on us, what we are doing now, matters. We like where we are, and what we're doing, and those who surround us.

We really don't know what motivated those disciples to follow Jesus; only that they did so immediately. Did they know each other? Were they weary of fishing, and waiting for something new to come along? What did they see in Jesus? What did they hear in Jesus?

Was Jesus' voice, or presence, or words of invitation, so compelling that they could boldly say "yes", and follow?

And if we don't do the same as those first disciples: Andrew and Peter, James and John, are we being less than faithful?

Does God really expect us to drop everything and go somewhere else, in order to follow a path of discipleship?

Does that mean we fail as Christians?

We know that they followed Jesus without hesitation;

But there were other days, all along the way, where they stumbled; where they misunderstood, where they betrayed Jesus, denied knowing him, and ran from him.

So, it's clear that we are not expected to imitate and duplicate everything that the disciples did.

They were not necessarily models of faith themselves, in every moment of their lives.

What is it about Mark's account of Jesus' calling of his disciples that is meant for us?

Listen again to what Mark tells us Jesus is about:

... *"He came, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent! And believe the good news."*

There is an urgency and an immediacy to those words; it is a call, to anyone, and everyone, who will listen.

No matter who you are, no matter what you are doing, or not doing, no matter what your circumstances, something important is happening,

something earth shaking, is breaking in:

Good News. News that we need, and want to hear! The time is now. God's reign is moving, and is here. Repent, and believe.

There is an intensity and a truth that is not to be overlooked. God is acting; God is on the move; It is time.

Jesus' call to those first disciples is because the time is at hand;

He doesn't just ask them to add one more thing to their work day.

He invites them to a whole new way of life. And for them to say "yes" to one thing,

they have to let go of what they have been about. They have to let go of the security of their identity and embrace a new identity.

They thought they were all about the task of fishing, but Jesus' call to them, is to learn from him what it means to fish for people.

If Mark's account is not merely to duplicate their actions of leaving everything behind, then what are we to do? What if this is about Jesus' call on our lives, and how we follow, right now?

Without delay, without excuses, without overthinking how much we are entrenched in already and that we cannot add one more thing to our schedule,

How do we follow Jesus, now?

We can think of all kinds of reasons why we are waiting before entering into a relationship with God;

Perhaps we are waiting for God to speak to us clearly; to call us, as Jesus' called Andrew and Peter; to hear our names, the way he spoke to James and John;

But God does speak to us, even now. It may not be in a voice we expect, but God moves with in us, and around us; God draws us near, and seeks us out,

God calls us and invites us to be the person that God created us to be; with a sense of God's love through others, with a sense of purpose in serving others, with a joy and a peace of knowing God's love.

In order to fully embrace that relationship with God, we may have to leave something behind;

to leave behind grudges that we are carrying. To leave behind hurts that we have been nurturing,

to leave behind certain biases, suspicions, and attitudes, to leave behind our fears and hesitations and self-doubt, that says we're not good enough for God to love.

Jesus continues to call us, no matter how old we are, or how young we are.

No matter what mistakes we have made, or what failures we have experienced.

He calls us to a life of discipleship; a life of following him, so that we ourselves may be evidence of the Good News of God.

The ways that we follow may or may not be like those first disciples.

We follow Jesus, by being a parent, or grandparent. We follow by volunteering at the food pantry, or the senior center, or the school,

We follow by being a friend to those on the playground or in the school cafeteria who seem to always be left out.

We follow by caring for our families, and our neighbors, and for those who live near, and those who are far from us.

We follow by working in our occupation,

We follow by being a caregiver for a friend or family member,

We follow by being generous with our resources,

we follow by speaking up when someone is being put down.

There are many ways we can follow Jesus, give our lives to him, fully, and enter into a relationship with him that grows and deepens;

What is important for us to remember is that we follow him here and now;

In the time and circumstances where God has placed us;

in the world where we live, with all its turmoil and beauty;

by the actions of forgiveness, welcome, love, hope, and healing that Jesus continues to work within us, even now.

The doctor and theologian Albert Schweitzer, wrote that, we come to know Christ fully, only by following him and serving him:

He writes, *“He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word:*

“Follow thou me!” and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time.

He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple,

He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts,

the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery,

they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.”

This week, I want to ask you to consider this question in your own life:

“where is God giving you the opportunity to follow Jesus?”

Rather than waiting for the right time, and the right place, and being with the right people, and the right church;

look and listen and know, that God calls you now; even at inconvenient moments, even in unlikely places;

Where is God inviting you, to enter into a new relationship with Jesus, to let go of making it entirely on your own, and to embrace Jesus’ way. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Invitation to our Offering

God is our rock and our fortress. Let us celebrate our salvation

by fearlessly giving a portion of what has already been given to us.

Offertory Music

The Doxology

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Merciful God, you have saved us for a purpose. We dedicate these gifts

as we dedicate our lives to you, that you will make us fishers of people.

Hymn

“Lord of the Dance”

#261 UM Hymnal

Benediction

Repent and believe the good news that God is with us and calls us for a purpose!

May the God of second chances renew your sense of call

and inspire you to go out and share the good news of forgiveness and hope!

My Peace

Postlude

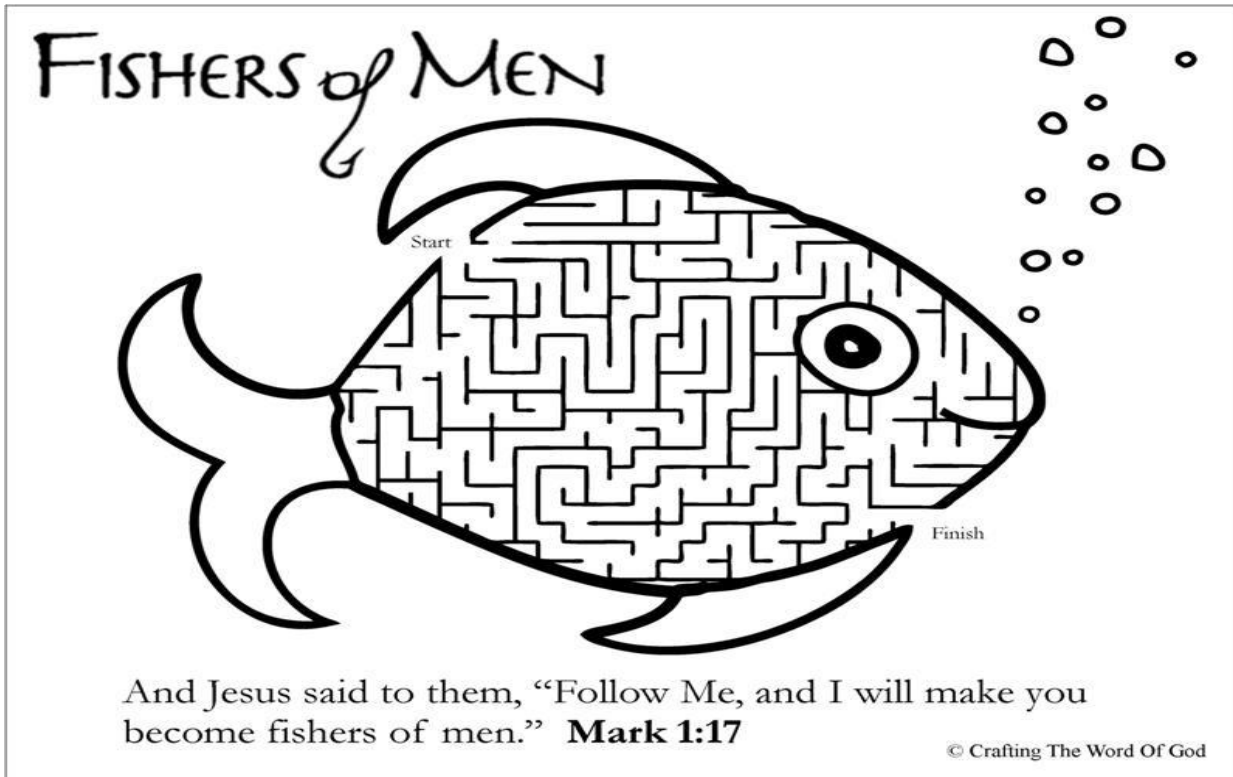
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*The mission of the United Methodist Church
is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”*

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PEOPLE TO KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

Judi DeWaters, Ardith Inman, Richard Mezera, Ed and Georreen Slee,
Prayer Shawl and Prayer Bear Recipients; Past and Present Servicepersons



Name: _____

Date: _____

Fishers of Men

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| NET | PARTNERS | SHIP | SIMON PETER |

Name: _____ Date: _____

Winter Word Search

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WINTER

SNOW

SLED

ICICLE

BLIZZARD

HOT CHOCOLATE

COLD

FROSTY

FROZEN

SLED

JANUARY

ICE

HIBERNATE

COAT

HAT

GLOVES



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