

Net Gain

Dropping What's Dragging Us Down

September 5, 2021

Good morning fellow followers! How we all doin'? If you're visiting, welcome home. I'm Bruce the pastor. And we're lettin' go of what's holdin' us back and droppin' what's draggin' us down.

But first if I may ask: **What'd you drag into church today?** That's a "what" not a "who", *although it could be a "who" ... depends on you.* Let's weave and read (MARK is blue, MATTHEW is purple).



As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther, He saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Without delay He called them, and immediately they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him. – Mk 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-22 NIV



I give TV Jesus a hard time. Is He a *pirate*? He's gotten better lately, but He's *usually* cheesy and mystical, a bit namby-pamby, and just a cog off. And because of budget Constraints, He can't seem to attract the crowds described in Scripture. And, He passes by fishermen – whom He's *never* met – and says, "Follow me," and they drop what they're doing and follow along under TV Jesus' hypnotic spell. That's the result of lazy tradition over a trustworthy timeline of Jesus' testimony, woven from *all* the pieces taken from all the Gospels. So let's back up about a *year* ... and we can see what all led to *this* moment. 42 days after Jesus' baptism, which was *attended*, if not *assisted*, by Peter, Andrew, James and John, (Acts 1:21-22) John the Baptist pointed out his *cousin Jesus*, to his *disciple Andrew*, as the One and only "Lamb of God". And so ...

Andrew, Simon Peter's *brother* ... followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the *Messiah*" (that is, the *Christ*). And he brought *him* to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called *Cephas*" (which, when translated, is *Peter*). – John 1:35-42 NIV

Then they *all* went to that wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water to wine, (Jn 2:1) and to Jerusalem for Passover, where He upset the tables *and* the Pharisees, (Jn 2:13) performed *many* miracles, (Jn 3:2) and directed His *disciples* to baptize. (Jn 3:22, 4:2) They *all* met the woman at the well, (Jn 4:3-7) heard that John the Baptist was arrested, (Mt 4:12) and followed along as Jesus taught in the towns. (Lk 4:15) They returned to Cana where Jesus mad a long-distance healing. (Jn 4:46) Jesus went home, till they tried to throw Him off a cliff. (Lk 4:28) Then He moved to Capernaum (Mt 4:13) and declared that it was time to preach the Good News. (Mk 1:15) And so ...



As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two [very familiar] brothers, Simon [whom Jesus] called Peter [when they first met a year earlier] and his brother Andrew [one of the first two to follow] casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen [by trade, and disciples by choice]. “Come, follow Me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you [fulltime] fishers of men.” At once they left their nets [and their fish] and followed Him. [Shouldn’t someone tend to the nets and the fish before they stink? That’d be a bad witness. Don’t worry.] When He had gone a little farther, He saw [as expected, Peter and Andrew’s fishing partners, (Lk 5:5-10) who’d also been disciples since His baptism (Acts 1:21-22)] James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat with their father, preparing their nets. Without delay He called them, and immediately they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Him. – Mk 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-22 NIV

How many hired men? Enough to replace these four fishing partners turned fishers-of-men. Because somebody had to tend to the fishnets they left behind.



James and John were not only preparing their nets, they were preparing their father, and their family business. No Hypnotism. Just faithful men responsibly, immediately, responding to their Savior’s call. We often soften how radical Jesus really was. But when it comes to our following His calling, He makes it radically clear!



“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.” – Matthew 10:37-38 NIV



Because, placing anyone above Christ isn’t loving them more, it’s loving them less. Because, we love others best when we love God most. That’s why the position of supreme passion must be reserved for following Jesus, learning Jesus, loving Jesus, and serving Jesus.

Why didn’t their father, Zebedee, or the hired men, leave to follow Jesus? It wasn’t their call. Everyone’s call is specific to their skillset, mindset, personality, and created purpose. For instance:

After this, Jesus went out beside the lake and as He walked along, He saw a tax collector by the name of Levi [a.k.a. Matthew (Mt 9:9)] sitting at his tax booth. “Follow Me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed Him. – Mk 2:13-14; Lk 5:27-28 NIV

After what? Well, after the fishermen left their nets to follow ...



Jesus began healing *whole towns!* (Mk 1:29-39) And the Pharisees began plotting His *death!* (Mt 12:9-14) So He returned to the lake, (Mk 3:7) gave Peter a miraculous catch, (Lk 5:3) (*someone* took care of his *nets*), chose His *Twelve* (which obviously included *Levi/Matthew*), (Mk 3:13-18) gave the Sermon on the Mount, (Mt 5:1) healed a head-to-toe leper, (Mt 8:1) and a Centurion's servant, (Mt 8:5) and raised a widow's son from the dead. (Lk 7:11) He traveled with the twelve, (Lk 8:1) riled the religious rulers, (Mk 3:22) calmed the wind and waves, (Mk 4:36) drove out a demonic legion, (Mt 8:28) and healed a paralytic lowered through the roof. (Mt 9:1-2)

After THIS, Jesus went out beside the lake and as He walked along, He saw [one of His chosen Twelve] a tax collector by the name of Levi [who called himself Matthew (Mt 9:9)] sitting at his tax booth. [Not waiting to be recruited, but deployed!] "Follow Me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed Him. – Luke 5:27-28 NIV



No hypnotism. No spell. Just **a man who knew what business he was really in** – first and foremost – and had not only prepared his governmental obligations accordingly, but had used the opportunity to further the kingdom. He was *stationed* at his station, not *only* to collect *taxes* to render unto *Caesar*, but tax *collectors* and other "*sinners*" to render unto *God!* And when Jesus gave the call, **Levi left his deadlines to follow his lifeline.** To where? A big ol' banquet! He was called to host a monumental dinner party with his friends and his Savior. Are you chained to your desk – stuck in whatever your taxing station, unwilling to trade your temporary obligations for the eternal party Jesus calls you to, as He passes by?

Oh, what a toll *that'll* take! **You gotta know what business you're in** – first and foremost, because in the end, worldly net gains are not only a net loss, they're just gross. Matthew left the taxing table for the banqueting table – the Caesar for the King of Kings – because he knew that **we can only have but one supreme obligation**, and that above everything else, *he* was in the business of following the Lord. So **what business are you in** – *first and foremost?*



Because **Jesus won't allow us to drag our net and follow.** Some, who think of themselves as followers of *Christ*, have never actually *left* their nets; they've only asked Him to jump *in*, along with everything else they're trying to control. Maybe that's why we like that Jesus fish symbol! But if you've asked Him into your net, rather than your *whole heart*, sorry to say, but **you've asked Jesus to follow you!**



And He *demands* that we release *any* influence or authority, family, business, or otherwise, that requires us to deny, in *any* way, *total* devotion to the *only* Way. Because, **you can't take up the cross till you put down the net.** Because, our nets are filled with the things we *cling* to – or rather, cling to *us* – that distract us from fully following Jesus, and just *waiting* to be deployed.

We like to think *we* choose God; only true with 'little *g*' *false* gods. The 'Big *G*' chooses *us*, and *calls* us, through *Jesus*, to leave whatever business has no business outranking our Savior, so we can act quickly and decisively when He comes a callin'. Which He does in some small way, each and every day. And when He does, **it's a yes or no.**

If you say, "I'll follow wholeheartedly, *when* my career thrives, *when* my health improves, *when* I have more time," then He's gotta knock the "when" out of you, and get your *full* attention, because **God calls you when it's time ... you don't call Him when it's convenient.** That's that "god of *convenience*" Noah was talking about last Sunday.



So, are you prepared to let go of whatever is holding you back and dragging you down? **Are you holding the net, or is that net holding you?** Because, the only nets we really need to leave are the ones *we're* caught up in, at the expense of our own created purpose and particular God-given mission. So what are you currently caught up in at the cost of closely following Christ?

Picture yourself trying to follow Jesus with an entangled net dragging behind you, filled with the people you gossip about or slander, all the things you're trying vainly to control, *anything* unforgiven, bad habits, secret sins, and whatever or *whoever* dethrones God's authority in your life, and causes you to compromise His Word. Do you know what it costs to really follow Christ? I've got great news! **Exactly everything** that's dragging you down, down here!

For *much* of my life it wasn't "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God Almighty," it was "Drag ye first the kingdom of *Bruce* almighty". One by one though, I'm learning to leave my nets and taxing station behind. But one thing I still struggle with is that human approval and praise that competes with God's approval and praise, that we've been talking about that last couple of Sundays. So when it comes to *serving* you as I believe God has *called*, or *pleasing* you as I know you'd *prefer*, I sometimes still seek to please. **So, what'd you drag into church today?**

[Well] Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, – Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV

TV Jesus won't cut it. And the trap and tragedy of basing our beliefs on that fairly un-relatable version, is how easy he makes it to justify ignoring what *True Jesus commands*. So if you're waiting to be hypnotized, go to the county fair. **True Jesus comes daily, with a real call, for real responsible people, who know what business they're really in.**

So count the cost and cast off whatever's hindering a net gain in your faith.