

### **Third Sunday – January 25, 2015**

Here's a problem with the Gospels. We've heard them so many times that it's easy to overlook their strangeness. The call of the first disciples is one such story. How could four men walk away from everything – their jobs, their families, their entire way of life – to follow a carpenter who says only a few words to them?

We've heard this story so many times, we may think: "Of course they follow Jesus. That's what disciples do." But their decision was neither easy nor obvious. After all, they had commitments and responsibilities. We know, for example, that Peter was married, because the Scriptures tell us about his mother-in-law. And for those who think they were dirt-poor fishermen with nowhere to go, we should remember that fishing in Galilee was often a profitable business; the lake's fish were exported considerable distances. James and John are leaving behind a boat with "hired men," which indicates that their father's business was at least successful. Like Peter and Andrew were working together – a family business.

So, there are ties to a job, obligations to family, ties of habit and security. These four fishermen were accustomed to their way of life together and they were called to follow a carpenter? How were they able literally to drop their "nets" – and all that entangled them – and follow Jesus?

It's not enough to suggest that they may have been waiting for the Messiah or that they may have heard of Jesus before he showed up or that his personality was probably so magnetic that it swept them away. None of these reasons entirely explains the wholehearted response of the fishermen.

And notice that Jesus does much more than call them; it is close to a command, brooking no dissent, no questions. Jesus doesn't say, "Would you like to follow me?" but "Follow me." And he offers them only a tantalizing and mysterious promise – to "fish for

people.”

So why did four fishermen say “yes.” Perhaps because they were ready. Maybe they knew somehow that it was the right and ripe time to begin a new chapter in their lives. Jesus’ call to follow was open-ended. It was unclear what the future would bring. All that was clear was the call; they were ready.

You and I need to listen carefully for such calls and not grow so entangled in our daily lives that we miss them. God continues to be a surprising God whom we must learn to recognize in events and people. Our mission is to follow, not evade.