

Father, may these spoken words be faithful to your written word and lead us to the living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

There is so much rich material in today's scripture. From the image of light in the darkness to the fulfilment of prophecy to the mention of healing and miracles.

Today's Gospel deals with the subject of calling; three distinct calls that all of us must follow if we would be faithful to Christ. There is the call to faith, the call to discipleship, and the call to ministry. Let's look at each of these briefly, so that we can be sure not to miss our calling.

For Matthew, this is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He's been baptized by John and led into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days by Satan. He gets the news that John the Baptist has been arrested, so he heads back to civilization to begin his ministry. It's there we find the first call on people's lives—the call to faith.

The call to faith is the call to change our mind, and it is the call that all of us, at some point, must answer. Jesus' first word in ministry in verse 17 is "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Repent means "to change your mind," and Jesus begins ministry with the call for everyone who hears his voice to change their mind. It is a call to turn from sin. It is a call to turn from unbelief to belief. It is a call to turn from death to life.

Repentance opens us to grace that God longs to pour into our lives. Repentance is our acceptance that something is wrong, that something needs to change. With the brokenness we see in our world today, who can argue that something needs to change? The call that everyone must answer is the call of Jesus to turn from our selfish, sinful ways, to consider the claims that Christ makes, and decide whether we will believe, or continue to go down a path that is ultimately destructive to us and those around us. It's a call everyone must answer. Even refusing to answer is an answer.

There is another call that goes beyond the call to faith, and that's the call that Jesus gave to Simon, Andrew, James and John in verse 19. There, Jesus tells them, "Follow me,..." This is the call to discipleship. There are many people who answer the call to faith. They ponder the claims of Jesus and find them valid, but then just leave the information there and never go deeper in their faith-life. Jesus' call to these fishermen was a call to a deeper life, a changed life. We might say that if the call to faith is the call to change our minds, then the call to

discipleship is the call to change our lives. This was Jesus' call for these men to change their lives.

They were probably familiar with Jesus and his teaching. If we read John's Gospel, which doesn't record this particular event, we get the impression that Jesus has already met Andrew and Simon, and perhaps even John. It's likely they knew Jesus, and more importantly, Jesus knew them, and he called them to a deeper life—to be disciples.

The call to be a disciple is a more challenging call than the call of faith. Jesus said, "Follow me." It was Jesus way of saying, "Do what I do. Walk the way I walk. Imitate me." Jesus was walking the way of selflessness and sacrifice. Discipleship is costly. Discipleship is about making the kingdom of God the priority in our lives. It is leaving the old life and beginning a new life of faith, hope and love. There are many people who hear, and even answer, the call to faith, but fewer people who hear and answer the call to discipleship, though the call goes out to everyone who answers the call to faith.

Jesus called ordinary, common, hard-working fishermen. These men made their living on the Sea of Galilee as commercial fishermen. It was hard, dangerous work, and the men who did it were simple, hard-working men who only sought to make a living for their families. Jesus isn't necessarily looking for well-educated, well-qualified people to be disciples. Jesus is looking for people who are willing to hear the call to faith, and then be willing to join him in transforming the world. That's the call to discipleship, and he's calling all of us to be his disciples.

But, there is a call that flows out of answering the call to discipleship, and that is the call to ministry. I'm not talking about vocational ministry, but of service in the kingdom of God. Every person who answers the call to be a disciple is called to ministry in this way. Jesus, after inviting these men to "follow" him, adds that he will "show them how to fish for people." He gave them a job to do—to work with him in transforming the world. If the call to faith is a call to change our minds, and the call to discipleship is the call to change our lives, then the call to ministry is the call to change the world. Jesus is calling us to work with him in transforming the world. Don't you think if Jesus could call a few common fishermen to change the world, he might call you and me, ordinary and unprepared as we are? We know from experiences such as Moses' that God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called. Jesus called these hard working

fishermen to reach their community. He's calling us to reach our community. Will we answer that call?

Maybe we resist Jesus' call because we're afraid that it means we'll have to leave our job and family. It may mean that for some, but it's more likely that he'll use us right where we are. If we look at the later life of these fishermen, we see that after the crucifixion and resurrection they are back mending their nets and fishing. Most of them never moved far from home, nor gave up their trades. They did, however, make a difference in the Kingdom because the Kingdom became their priority. Telling others, serving others, sharing the Good News became their priority.

(Say something about discipleship leaflet)

Jesus is calling us to faith, to discipleship and to ministry. He's calling us to change our minds, to change our lives, and to change the world. Let's make sure that we don't miss our calling! In Jesus' name. Amen.