

*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.*

I'll bet she cried the first night he was gone. Had they been married a year, or five or ten?. Were there any children?

She had had no warning - one day he was fishing to support them, the next wandering throughout Galilee and beyond with Jesus. I'll bet Peter's wife cried that first night he was gone.

I imagine Zebedee might have been closer to cursing than crying. Two sons, sons of thunder, they would be nicknamed, James and John - one moment working on their father's boat, mending nets - the next walking away with Jesus. Whatever plans Zebedee had were destroyed that day - passing the business on to his sons - watching them marry, have children, stay close by, so the family could be a family. Then this stranger Jesus came - said follow me, and they followed as if Jesus was more important to them than their own father.

Can you hear the words that Paul would write so much later being lived already then: "the appointed time has grown short; from now on let even those who have wives live as though they had none, and 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 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away."

Jesus called and they walked away from possessions, and family, wives, and work, to live under the rule of God.

"The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the good news."

And we think we can have Jesus without even a ripple going through the calm sea of our lives. That's the lie we would all love to live: I can have Jesus and he won't change me or my life even a little.

I can live for my home, devote my whole life to my children and grandchildren, I can sacrifice to make a lot of money to spend on my pleasure, I can live for me, for all that gives me happiness and makes me feel secure, and love those who love me most and I can have Jesus too.

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

“They immediately left everything and followed.”

Jesus' invitation that day was even shorter than the cry of Jonah.

“Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

The king of Nineveh heard of this one word spoken by Jonah and proclaimed: “No human being or animal, no herd or flock shall taste anything. They shall not feed nor shall they drink water. Humans and animals shall be covered with sackcloth and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in thier hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind.”

Jonah speaks a word from God and every person and animal is repenting. Jesus speaks and Peter and Andrew and James and John are leaving everything and following.

And what about you? Have you heard a word from God? Has there been a repenting, a believing?

Well, I am going to speak a word from God right now: The kingdom of God has come near to you, right now as I speak. Repent and believe the good news.

God can rule over you, will rule over you. Turn your life to God's rule. Believe.

Believe that in Jesus there is a family more lasting than the family of your flesh and blood. "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother," Jesus declares.

Believe that there is treasure in Jesus far greater than all earthly wealth. Remember how Jesus told the rich man, “You lack one thing, go, sell what you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, then come, follow me.”

Believe in Jesus whom death could not hold. For that young man at the tomb declared: “He has been raised, he is not here.” Death could not hold Jesus. He promises: “Those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the good news will save it.”

“Follow me,” says Jesus.

When Jesus spoke those words to Peter and Andrew, James and John he did not tell them what following would mean. I'd like to know.

Jesus did not offer a convincing argument why following would be better.

He just said follow.

Maybe that is the point of the whole Jonah story: Either you hear God's word and believe it or you don't.

The king of Nineveh heard God's word and believed.

God's own prophet, Jonah, heard the word of God and went in the opposite direction.

Peter and Andrew and James and John left everything and followed.

But I the one who is appointed to speak the word to you, hang onto money and family and job.

Before long they will be in a boat in a storm and be crying out in fear, all their faith in Jesus gone.

Before long Jesus will ask Peter and James and John to stay awake one hour and pray, and they will sleep. And all their sacrifices will mean nothing.

Before long Peter will be saying he never knew Jesus.

Can God use a Jonah who runs away from God's work? Can God use people who say they will follow even to death but who fall asleep moments later? Can God use a church full of people who have their arms full of the cares and burdens of this world? Can God use you?

"Follow me," says Jesus. I will make you fish for people."

"You. Follow me."