

When the prophet Elijah called Elisha to come and be a prophet of God, at the time, Elisha was a farmer, and he was ploughing with 12 yoke of oxen (a very big tractor for the day) – massive tractor – this bloke was a big-time farmer.

And Elijah walks past Elisha and throws his coat onto him. That is the sign that “I’m going to pass onto you, the job of being a prophet. That’s where the saying “passing on the mantle” comes from (mantle=cloak).

So they’re just passing each other in the paddock and Elijah throws his mantle/cloak onto Elisha and keeps walking. And Elisha knows what this means, so as soon as he could, he stopped his tractor, because the GPS guidance probably wouldn’t turn it at the end of the row, and he runs after Elijah and catches up to him, and says, “Just give me a moment to go and kiss Mum & Dad goodbye, and I’ll follow you.

But that wasn’t good enough for Elijah. The call was immediate and lasting. Essentially, Elijah says, “Don’t worry about it then...”

But Elisha wasn’t trying to get out of it – Elisha was serious about answering this call. And Elisha does something significant – he makes a permanent break with his old life. What he did, was he disassembled and burned his machinery.

He killed all of his oxen (as a sacrifice) (there goes his tractor), and he took his plough (made of wood) and set it on fire, to cook the oxen. And he fed his farming gear to his neighbours...

There’s no doubt about it – when Elisha was called, he was willing to make a permanent break with his old life. He

wasn't just parking his tractor up so he could come back to it later on, and he wasn't going to unhook his plough under a shady tree, so that it would be there in years to come. He didn't even sell it and invest the money so he could buy back into it later.

And after he had done that, he caught up to Elijah and followed him.

When I think of what Elisha did, and his response to God, I find that something of a challenge in my life – when God calls **us** to ministry/action/sacrifice something (something that we love/hold onto/defines who we are) for the sake of His kingdom, are we as willing/obedient as Elisha???

We see a similar call of God in today's bible reading.

We've been working our way through the Gospel of Luke. And Jesus has begun His ministry, and we've just reached the point where Jesus is beginning to call His disciples.

And we generally see this passage as “The call of Peter”, but it's more than that.

The **focus** is on Peter, but it's more than that. BTW at this stage, Peter's still known as his given-name (Simon). But the call includes others here too. We know from Mark's Gospel, that Simon's brother (Andrew) was called at the same time. Simon and Andrew used to work together as fishermen, and so while Andrew is not named, he was most likely one of the fishermen helping Simon to struggle with net full of fish.

And it was also the call of Simon's fishing partners who worked from another boat **James and John, sons of Zebedee.**

And so when V11 says, ¹¹ **And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.** it wasn't only Peter. It was all four of them.

So, let's set the scene:

We know that Simon and Andrew have already had a bit to do with Jesus – He healed their mother.

Simon, Andrew, James and John are now on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. It's sometimes called the "Sea of Galilee", but it's not really a sea – it's a lake. And here it's called the lake of Gennesaret, because it is the lake that fronted the town of Gennesaret.

Anyway, the fishermen (who crewed the two boats) they've had a long, hard night. They'd laboured **all** night, and caught nothing. Sometimes it's like that when you go fishing. And now (the following day), they're parked up (on the shore), maintaining their gear.

And Jesus chooses that spot to teach. And the crowds start gathering around so tight, they're pushing against Him. So, He hops into Peter's boat, and He asks him to put it out from shore (just a little bit) to basically use as a floating stage.

And we're not told what Jesus taught on that day, but after He finishes, He says to Simon, **"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."**

And when I read that, I'm sorta like, *"You know what: That'd be like a computer expert saying to a farmer, "This year, have a go at planting your wheat crop in the middle of summer..." Ah, thanks for that – that was very helpful..."*

And Simon's response has two sides to it. The first side is the professional fisherman side: **Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!**

It's like:

- We do know what we're doing.
- We're not new at this.
- Why would I (a professional fisherman), listen to a carpenter who's telling me to fish at the wrong time of day. If we didn't have any luck fishing at the right time for fishing (during the night), what hope would we have of doing it now."

Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!

But then Simon spoke as a man of faith.

But at your word I will let down the nets."

And the nets closed around so many fish, they were breaking. They called out for James and John, and they came to the rescue with their boat. But even with the two boats, there were too many fish for them. They filled those boats with so

many fish, they were low in the water (in danger of sinking), and there was still more...

That wasn't luck – it was a miracle. And I reckon we can be pretty certain that as embellished as fishing stories are (that big), I'm pretty sure the fishermen had never heard of anything like this ever happening...

It was obviously a miracle of God, and it demonstrated the power and authority of Jesus.

when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

That, BTW, is the appropriate response for when one encounters the power and Spiritual authority of God – We become so aware of our own **un**worthiness, and how it's not a 'good-fit', for us to be at all involved in work of Jesus...

And so, there's a real picture of humility here... "Get away from me. I'm a sinful man"...

And throughout the Scriptures, whenever anyone encounters the holy God, or one of His holy Angels, they become acutely aware of their own sinfulness before Him, and fall on their face before God. The humble say, "I'm not worthy". The proud will probably continue to stand, because they believe they are worthy. And because they refuse to humble themselves before Almighty God, they never will be worthy.

And this is the first time in the Gospel of Luke, that anyone calls Jesus “Lord”. Prior to this, Simon’s been calling Him “Master”. But now He calls Him “Lord”... To be “Lord”, encompasses Jesus also being “Master”, but it’s **more** than “Master”. You don’t willingly fall at the feet of a master, but we do willingly fall at the feet of our Lord.

Righto:

We’re told that **all** of the fishermen *were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken*

And the word “astonished” there, it doesn’t just mean “surprised”. They were “seized with wonder combined with fear”...

You know, these days we preachers too often present Jesus as “your mate”, or some kind of anaemic, watered-down effeminate nice-guy... But when these tough fishermen encountered the power and spiritual authority of Jesus, they were seized with wonder combined with fear.

And if you and I, are not filled with the Wonder of God, **and** the Fear of God, then I’m pretty confident to say, “We haven’t met Jesus.”... Are you seized with the wonder and the fear of God?

But here’s the amazing thing: When we are seized by the wonder and fear of God, He lifts us up... Do not be afraid...

The proud and self-confident were never afraid in the first-place, and so they **should** be afraid... But the humble are lifted up. Stop being afraid.

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

Simon realised that he wasn't worthy to be about the business of Jesus, but that's the thing: Jesus takes those who are **not** worthy, and sets them about His business of the Kingdom of God.

Simon Peter, **from now on you will be catching men...**
That was the call of Jesus, to serve Him...

¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Everything!!! Jesus had just given them the greatest bonanza of their fishing careers. ... "And now You want us to leave it?"

I suspect that the majority of Christians, when they're seeking the will of God, they use the open-door / closed-door principle. Do you know what I mean? It puts a spiritual take on "Choosing the path of least resistance". "If the path seems clear in this direction, that's obviously the direction God wants me to go".

Really? My bible tells me we are to walk down the narrow road, not the wide road. My bible tells me, that we will suffer for following Jesus. And I rarely see the open-door / closed-door principle in the Bible. And right here, is a classic example. **Jesus had just given them the greatest bonanza of their fishing careers.** And the open-door / closed-door principle would say, “God’s obviously wanting us to continue as a fisherman. God has supernaturally blessed our business, therefore He wants us in this business.”....

They didn’t look for open doors or closed doors. They followed the **word** of Jesus. And they **left** the fish, right there, on the side of the lake... Presumably, other people helped themselves to the discarded catch...

But:

- Simon Peter;
- Presumably Andrew;
- James; and
- John

Left:

- the catch;
- their boats;
- their nets;
- their business;
- their occupation – in doing that, they probably left what defined them as men

They left **everything** and followed Jesus.

Righto:

What do we do with this?

You see, if the wretched preacher gets up this morning and says, “You all have to follow the example of Elisha – Kiss your mum & Dad goodbye, burn your gear, and head off for your new life of serving God...” If that’s the message I’m going to preach, most of you are going to go, “I don’t think so” ...

And if I say, “You have to follow the example of the disciples – leave everything to follow Jesus and then you’ll be a good Christian” ... If that’s the message I give, not only would it be wrong, it would be destructive to the Kingdom of God and the Christian church.

You see, you know as well as I do, that we’re not **all** called to serve God in the same way. And so the call of God upon Simon Peter, is different to the call of God on Michael, and it’s different to the call of God on you...

But the thing is, way too often, that knowledge, causes us to just write this passage off – “That doesn’t really apply to me” ... But the thing is, it does.

This week, I found myself asking this question: “Does it cost some more to follow Jesus than what it costs others?” **Of course it does.** In some countries, to become a follower of Jesus, is a death-sentence. And even today, God calls some to give up everything, so that they are then able to serve God in ways that they never could, if they remained tied to their career/business/home/comfort/safety.

God doesn't only call those who have nothing to leave everything.

I'm going to say that again:

God does **not** only call those who have nothing to leave everything.

Remember the rich young ruler, Jesus said to him, "Sell up everything you have, give it to the poor, and then come and follow me". Did he do it? No, because he loved his stuff, more than he loved Jesus.

So, how does this apply to us?

Here at Bush Disciples, we talk a lot about "discipleship".

When those fishermen left everything to follow Jesus, they were answering a specific call upon their life – to become catchers of men. And for them, they had to leave everything.

It's a strange phrase isn't it (when you think about it) – to be "a catcher of men". But when you think about it, we're all captured by something. What are you captured by?

Back in Chapter 4, Jesus told us that He came to proclaim liberty/freedom/release for the captives. But you know what? The liberty He's talking about, is to be captured by Christ. To be set free, is to be captured by Christ.

There once was a time we were captured by sin and death. And some are captured by:

- greed;

- hatred;
- anger & bitterness;
- desires;
- ambitions and targets;
- their worship of family;
- their selfishness...

And we can never be truly free of these things, until we are captured by Christ.

And **that**, is what happened on the shores of the lake that day. Four fishermen were captured by Christ, and given the task of catching for Christ.

Let me put it like this:

They moved from being onlookers, to being disciples of Jesus, in the true meaning of the word.

They moved from being tyre-kickers, to being true disciples – men who would:

- follow Jesus;
- learn from Him;
- imitate Him;
- give sacrificially of themselves to serve Him;
- and to become men who would proclaim Him, even if their lives were at risk...

And this, is the call to be a disciple of Jesus. This, we **do** have in common. We may well be called to serve Jesus in different ways, but **do not doubt this**: to be a true disciple of Jesus, means to:

- follow Jesus;

- learn from Him;
- imitate Him;
- give sacrificially of ourselves to serve Him;
- and to become men and women who would proclaim Him, even if our lives are at risk...

When it comes to Jesus, are you an onlooker? Or are you indeed a disciple?

It seems to me, that the Christian church of today, is becoming more and more a service we consume, rather than a calling that every one of us sacrifice to follow and serve our Lord.

In this day and age of megachurches and professional:

- speakers;
- worship leaders;
- youth leaders;
- councillors

we lose sight of the personal call of sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

The Band “Casting Crowns” sums it up in their song “Start Right Here”:

*We want our coffee in the lobby
We watch our worship on a screen
We got a Rockstar preacher
Who won't wake us from our dreams
We want our blessings in our pocket
We keep our missions overseas
But for the hurting in our cities
Would we even cross the street?*

You see, he's describing onlookers – not disciples.

What are we?

What are you?

When it comes to Jesus, are you an onlooker? Or are you indeed a disciple, in the true sense of the word?

We're going to pray now, and I only want you to pray this prayer, if you are willing to say "Yes" to Jesus, "I will follow You, and leave everything if that is what you ask."

You know, if Jesus does ask us to leave everything, that shouldn't be difficult, because when we are born again, we've already done that. It's no longer my will, but Your will be done.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

We thank You that You were willing to leave everything. You left Your throne above, to humble Yourself to death on a cross.

And we praise You that You rose again.

Lord, open our ears to hear Your call.

We say to You, right here; right now, "Yes, Lord".

Whatever You command, we will do,
Wherever You send, we will go.

We know that we are not worthy,
And so by Your Holy Spirit,

- cleanse us;
- renew us;
- equip us;
- fill us;
- empower us,

to serve You, for the sake of Your Kingdom.

Lord, for too long, we've been onlookers.
but now we want to get real with You,
and to be Your disciples,
in the true sense of the word,

for Your Glory,
Amen.