

What would it take for you to make a major change to your life course? A job opportunity with a big pay raise? A job loss? A marriage proposal? An unexpected medical diagnosis? A natural disaster to your home?

We like to live pretty predictable and calm lives. We like to have comforts and security. We want to make plans for the future. We're taught to save for retirement from the moment we receive our first paycheck. Perhaps we don't live in our country's industrial era any longer but we may still have the dream of the stable life-long job with one company. Kodak's recent filing for bankruptcy protection should make it clear that that is no longer true, but it may still be a dream.

We need to ask ourselves what it would take because we certainly don't want to become inflexible to the calling of God in our changing world. I've preached the last two weeks about things changing ever so rapidly all over the place. I even hear business people talk about their strategies from just ten years ago already being obsolete. Why would we think that proclaiming the good news of God's salvation wouldn't change? A look over history shows that evangelism styles have changed many times. St. Paul writes in several places that it is necessary to be

flexible and not hold onto old ways that hinder proclamation of God's love in a new situation. We'll be reading about that next week in our second Bible lesson.

And of course the idea of being willing to make a change in your life to respond to God's call fits well into today's gospel reading. Typical of the way Mark's account of Jesus goes we are blazing through things at a breakneck pace. We are a mere 16 verses into the gospel and Jesus is already calling his first four disciples. In comparison to the other gospels: 16 verses into Matthew and we're still in Jesus' genealogy, 16 verse into Luke and we're in the prediction of the birth of John the Baptist. Jesus hasn't even come into the storyline yet. 16 verses into the gospel of John and we have met John the Baptist but we're in a theological discussion and Jesus isn't on the scene. But in Mark Jesus' public ministry is off and running.

Jesus calls two sets of brothers - Simon and Andrew, James and John. All four of them were fishermen. All four of them respond *immediately*. Something spoke to them in a big way that made them make a life-altering change.

This immediate response may send fear into our hearts. Here these four guys are working at their livelihoods, and we can imagine ourselves at working going about our daily business.

And then this guy comes along and says to them, "Come follow me and I will make you fish for people." And we imagine some stranger walking up to us and saying, "Come follow me and I'll turn you into an evangelist." Then we imagine Simon, Andrew, James and John all just dropping what they were doing and walking away behind Jesus, without so much as a look back. Perhaps we imagine James and John's father Zebedee watching them go; maybe angry with them, maybe confused, maybe worried. We are certainly frightened to imagine ourselves just up and following some stranger who met us at work.

No way would we possibly consider such a dramatic life change with absolutely nothing to go on. People who do that stuff with think are psychotic. Even if we weren't out of our minds, all our family and friends would certainly think we were. And you can imagine the ridicule for the rest of your life that you would face for your rash decision - dropping everything and every security to follow some crack pot old fool into something that is sure to fail.

Before we get too carried away however, let's remember a few things; and you may remember me preaching these same things before. Immediately after this scene and our gospel reading the next verse says they went to Capernaum. Where is Capernaum? Capernaum was a town on the northwest shore of the Sea of

Galilee. We discover next that when the sabbath came Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum and casts out a demon. We'll read about that in next week's gospel. And what happens immediately after that? They leave worship at the synagogue and go to the house of Simon and Andrew. There he heals Simon's mother-in-law.

You see, these guys were all from Capernaum. Yes, they responded to Jesus' call that day but they did not leave their lives. Peter probably went home that night to his wife and his mother-in-law who lived with them. Some ancient church traditions speak of Peter having children as well. During his years of public ministry Jesus used Capernaum as his home base. He lived there. And most of his travels were back and forth across the Sea of Galilee. It would be like traveling from Naples to Canandaigua; Gorham to Woodville; Crystal Beach to Cheshire. These were not big trips. Most every night the disciples of Jesus returned to their homes. And it is pretty safe to say that they also continued their lives as fishermen, providing for their families.

As proof, look at the scene from the end of the gospel of John. It is after the resurrection. The disciples are together by the Sea of Galilee and they don't know what to do. Peter says, "I'm going fishing," and so off they go. Now did Peter go

to the local fish, bait and boat rental store and get a boat?  
No, of course not. He got back into his boat which he had been using all along and was ready to resume his old life. Only when Jesus meets him and the other disciples does Peter really change.

In the big picture of Jesus ministry the disciples only really left their homes for one, maybe two, missionary trips that weren't very long. And they, along with thousands of other people, traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Most of the on the road time that we read about in the gospels is referring to this pilgrimage. But they certainly were not out with Jesus all day every day. On the whole their lives didn't change much that day when Jesus met them by the sea. It is really only after the resurrection, after they had been with Jesus for a couple years did they really begin to make major life changes in response to his call. And even then, they did not drop everything. Peter is said to have gone on his missionary travels with his wife, and so did some of the other disciples.

So what does this mean? I think we have to go back to where we began. What would it take for you to make a major change to your life course? Have you set it so securely that nothing will change it? ...or perhaps it would require a terrible

trauma for you to make a change? If you're there I'd suggest you should reopen yourself to God's calling. Things change and you need to always be adaptable in order to be effective with the changes.

If you are still open to hearing something new from God, that's good. Don't let it frighten you. God can do anything, yes. But God's track record isn't one where he regularly calls people to make changes that drastically destroy otherwise stable and constructive lives. The lives of Simon, Andrew, James, and John did change drastically, but it wasn't instantaneously. They grew into their new life role. And I expect God will do the same today. Remember, God does care for you. God does not want to bring you to ridicule. God isn't interested in causing you harm. God wants to lovingly bring you to wholeness.

I want to end with this thought. I've heard it said that most people try to make sense of their lives. I suppose that's a good thing to do. Many people see their lives like a book. They are living somewhere in the story line, and they want to be able to write a nice future for themselves. Once they think they have that figured out they are reluctant to change it. And if they are forced to change it they want the change to make sense. But I have found that life does not always make sense.

Many things are a mystery, but go on loving anyway. Love does not follow logic, and love is the only sure thing. Amen