The Lord Calls Apostles, Pastors, and You

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In our society,

without farmers and ranchers,

we don’t have beef, poultry, or crops to eat.

With no one tending the fields, or raising the herds,

with no one processing and harvesting the food,

there would be no food.

Likewise, without ministers of the Gospel,

there is no Gospel to hear and comfort the distressed,

there is no forgiveness given,

there is no Christ to give.

The spectacle of the Gospel lessons’ miraculous catch of fish is insignificant

when compared to what happens afterwards –

**“they left everything and followed [Jesus].”**

That includes James and John, the Sons of Zebedee, and Simon Peter.

These three are considered the “inner circle” of Jesus’ 12 disciples –

They were the only three at the Transfiguration mountain to see Jesus miraculous transformation,

They were there when Jesus raised Jairus’ daughter,

And they were there to witness Jesus’ sheer misery in the Garden of Gethsemane before Good Friday.

Without Jesus calling these three through this miraculous day of fishing,

Christian history wouldn’t look quite the same.

Peter was the first leader of the Church in Jerusalem,

preaching a Sermon on Pentecost Day that converted 3,000 people,

John is credited to write the Gospel of John, the epistles 1,2,3 John, and Revelation,

Often regarded as the most developed theologian of the Apostles.

James was the first of the 12 disciples to be martyred for the proclamation of the faith.

Without their writings and witness to Christ, Christianity wouldn’t look the same.

But that’s not to say these ministers of the faith didn’t have faults –

Jesus once called James and John “sons of thunder”

because they wanted to call down a righteous, fiery wrath

on a village who didn’t allow Jesus to lodge for the night.

But Jesus quickly squashed that request.

Another time after Jesus made a prediction concerning His death to His disciples,

Quick-to-speak Peter vowed to protect Jesus’ life from any harm.

But Jesus called Peter “Satan” and told him to get behind Him.

So, you see, even though these three are a part of the “inner-circle”

They’re sinners like you and me.

We even see Peter confess that in the Gospel.

After Jesus tells them to cast their nets into the deep,

and they catch so much fish they began to sink,

Peter bows down to Jesus and says,

**“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.”**

It seems irrational and maybe a bit silly for Peter to react in such a way.

Telling this man who told him and his crew to cast the nets in the deep,

After they had just fished all night and hadn’t caught a thing,

To get away from him.

Why get away from such a man?

Because what happened was nothing short of miraculous.

Peter, James, John, and crew caught the motherload –

The kind of catch you could retire on.

Realizing the impossibility of this happening after getting skunked out on the water,

Peter realized He was in the presence of the Divine,

The Almighty God who held heaven and earth in His hands,

Who could work any miracle in the world at a simple word!

The same kind of word that created the world –

“Let there be light” “Let there be birds of the air and fish of the sea”

Peter knew who this man was.

He was holy.

And when holiness is in the presence of sinful man,

One of two things can happen,

First, Peter, with his sin, can be destroyed by the pure presence of holiness.

Or second, Peter, could confess His sin

and his sin would be destroyed by the holy forgiving God,

but Peter’s life would be spared.

Jesus responded to Peter’s confession, **“Don’t be afraid.”**

Essentially, “I’m not here to hurt you.”

But Jesus goes on to say, **“From now on, you will be catching men.”**

That’s the call of Peter to ministry,

and James and John follow too.

They left everything they had –

their families, friends, homes, and jobs.

It’s often assumed that since these three were fishermen,

that they didn’t make a great living.

But that’s not true.

They weren’t wealthy, but it was a comfortable living.

And they left that to follow Jesus,

Where their “living” depended on other people’s generosity,

so that their lives could be dedicated to fishing for men and women.

Just as the Lord called Peter, James, and John to preach,

He also calls ordained men to preach and be pastors.

Their job is to preach Law and Gospel.

The Law exposes our sins and makes us afraid of the holy God because our sin deserves punishment.

That’s what happened to Peter - he was afraid of God because he was a sinner and he knew it.

But Jesus doesn’t have a pastor preach law to leave sinners in despair of God’s judgement.

Hearing the law, sinners realize their need for salvation,

which is given through the person of Jesus who absorbed all sin into himself,

and bore the punishment of sin on the cross.

Christ died for you, me, and all people.

Faith receives the gifts of forgiveness won on the cross,

And that’s why Jesus calls men to be pastors, to be fishers of men,

To deliver Law and Gospel to sinners,

To exercise the Office of the Keys –

forgiving and retaining sins of those entrusted in his care,

that through hearing God’s Word preached, and given in the Sacrament,

the Lord will continue to create and sustain faith.

For **“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”**

But faith needs to fed.

And what does faith feed on?

The continual hearing, learning, and inwardly digesting of the Word of God.

And when faith isn’t fed, faith grumbles of emptiness not filled by the tangible Gospel Christ gives,

Making the food of faith, that is the Word of God,

A distant memory,

A “phase” in your life,

Or something that fills your mind,

but not your heart.

We all know of people in our lives,

Who are starved of Christ’s gifts,

Who are starved of the Word of God,

Who are starved of life and salvation.

That’s why he calls you.

Certainly, the Lord calls men to exercise the Office of the Keys

publically on behalf of His church,

But the Lord has also called each one of you to share the Gospel too.

It looks different than preaching from a pulpit and consecrating the Lord’s Supper.

Sharing the good news about how Jesus has died for the sins of the world,

Is as simple as proclaiming that good news

to a co-worker, family member, next-door neighbor,

or whoever you feel is starved of the Gospel.

Or, if someone is having a rough go of life,

invite them to church to hear the saving Gospel,

The place where Christ encounters sinners

and tells them what He told Peter: “**Do not be afraid.**”

**“Because Christ has reconciled the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them,**

**And entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19)**

**“For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21)**

That is, we do not need to fear God’s wrath,

Because through Christ crucified,

Even though we may be scared to go out and boldly proclaim His love to the world,

Our faith is enlivened and given boldness and confidence to proclaim the forgiving word of the cross.

Through the cross, God has made you worthy to share the Gospel –

Because you can now give the Jesus which you have received.

Go forth in confidence in the Lord

that He may embolden you to share His grace and mercy to a world starving for faith.

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