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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany/Year B  
January 21, 2018  
Text: Mark 1:14-20

During the season of Epiphany we often read stories of God calling out to people he would use for his purposes. Last week, it was a young boy named Samuel who was called from slumber by God to prophecy. And in the gospel, we heard John's version of Jesus' encounter with Philip and Nathaniel. In our lessons for today, the Third Sunday after the Epiphany, we heard how the very reluctant Jonah went to Nineveh and convinced the people there to turn their lives back to God. And in the gospel, Jesus pulls his first disciples from their lives and work as if he were drawing them with nets from the sea.

And isn't this what God has done throughout all of our salvation history? We read story after story in Scripture of people who were living their own lives, that is, until God showed up and called them to go in a different direction as leaders, advocates, prophets, as disciples and missionaries.

Today Mark tells us that: "*As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea-for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people. And immediately they left their nets and followed him."* A little later he comes across James and John and they too, *immediately*, leave behind their father and their boat and hired help and followed Jesus.

The gospel from Mark and the call of Jesus' first disciples may cause us to wonder many things: How was it that they were able to leave their livelihoods and family behind? Had these men heard of him before hand? Did it really happen so quickly? So *immediately*? Was there more to the conversation before Jesus' invitation to follow him or were they having a bad fishing day and just said, 'To heck with this?'

Or is the story of Jonah more like our journey? God calls and we say, "Are you talking to me?" 'You want me to do what?' And like Jonah, we try to outrun God. We try to hide or go in the opposite direction. We give excuse after excuse. But like Jonah, we cannot escape God or God's call on our lives. Take it from one who knows firsthand.

Do any of these questions resonate with our own experiences of discipleship and call? Because if we are truthful, we sometimes run, we often drag our feet, we question, we resist change, and we take our sheets of paper and write down the pros and cons. We analyze and scrutinize. We discern as we should.

When Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James and John, he expected them to follow him, not just stand by the wayside but to accept his invitation and pick up the net and do as he did- announce God's kingdom that had come near.

What does that mean for us? As followers of Christ and by our baptisms we are also called to a different way of living. Jesus says to us as he did to his first disciples, *"Follow me."* *"Follow me and I will make you fish for people."* We may not leave everything as they did but it does mean stepping out of our boats, stepping out of our comfortabilities and security. It means more than standing by the sidelines. For we too are given a task to do. There is more to our living than we already know it, more to the paths we walk as individuals, more to our existence as a small church on a hill.

As we go about our week, I invite you to re-read the scriptures, re-read and hear the stories and testimonies of anyone who by the grace of God has made a difference for the good of humankind and of the world. You will often find that they are people like you and me. And let it sink in that by FAITH and with courage we too are to respond when God shows up and calls us to something that will perhaps set us on a completely different path. A path that we can walk without fear because we walk in the light of Christ. A path that will help us be better witnesses of the Gospel and of God's blessings in our lives and in the world. A path that calls us as God's beloved children to not be afraid of casting out the net so that we too might fish for people.

*In our collect today we prayed, "Give us grace, O Lord, to answer the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works..."*

O God, may it be so. Amen.