

Matthew 4: 12-23

**As he walked by the sea of Galilee,  
he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter,  
and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—  
for they were fishermen.**

**And he said to them,  
Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’**

**Immediately they left their nets and followed him.**

**As he went from there, he saw two other brothers,  
James son of Zebedee and his brother John,  
in the boat with their father Zebedee,  
mending their nets, and he called them.**

**Immediately they left the boat and their father,  
and followed him.**

**Jesus went throughout Galilee,  
teaching in their synagogues and  
proclaiming the good news of the kingdom  
and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.**

## Meditation

**Immediately? Really?**

**Immediately they leave their business,  
their livelihood, their family to follow a man who simply invites them to  
'fish for people'?**

**Really?**

**Why? How?**

**What did he say?**

**What did he do that would make these men leave everything  
they valued to follow him...  
and to follow him where? For what purpose?**

**I sometimes try to imagine what James and John's father was thinking  
as his boys left him in the boat..**

**Wait! guys! where are you going? You can't do this...it doesn't make any sense!  
This is crazy! You've got a job and an income...  
you've got a home...  
what are you doin'?**

**And we know that Peter was married...**

**and if he was married, he more than likely had children...**

**What would we say if someone we knew left their spouse and their kids  
to follow an itinerant preacher?**

**Exactly why they left everything right then and there to *immediately* follow him  
we will never know...**

**But we can pretty much be certain that they left a lot behind  
for the hope of something better....**

**Do you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus?**

**I don't think most of us are accustomed to thinking of ourselves as disciples.**

**Perhaps we think that's old school ...**

**or perhaps, if there is such a thing as a modern day disciple**

**it would be someone who left everything,**

**home, family, friends, livelihood just like those in reading today**

**We might even know someone who has done this...**

**perhaps that person has become a missionary**

**or perhaps they have gone off to a monastery somewhere for a life of solitude and prayer...**

**But whatever they have done, we have not: for we still live in our neighborhoods,**

**still have our jobs,**

**still gather with our families**

**we still watch Netflix documentaries and YouTube cat videos...**

**But let me to suggest to you, that you if you take spiritual life seriously**

**and if Jesus is a teacher and a way maker for you ....**

**you are called to be a disciple.**

**While not all of us are called to leave our families and jobs**

**I do believe all of us are called to leave something behind**

**in order to move towards the Reign of Heaven on Earth,**

**right here, right now.**

**And so, of course, we might wonder...**

**what are some the things we are called to leave behind?**

**Well...to answer that question....**

**let's first ponder what we are called to move towards...**

**what does it mean to move towards the Reign of Heaven on Earth...**

**Are those just great philosophical ideals?**

**or they palpable, livable realities in this life....**

**First: As I see it, to live in the Reign of heaven on Earth**

**with these limited bodies on this finite planet**

**is to accept that life will never be perfect in the sense that**

**everything will be exactly the way I want it to be or think it should be.**

**We have all been taught in one way or another that in Heaven...**

**which is always after this life, there will be no pain or tears or sorrow...**

**So, when we think about heaven on Earth, we transfer those feelings to this life...**

**but that will never be true since we live in these human bodies that are fragile  
and breakable and have an expiration date..**

**So what if, living in the Reign of Heaven... on Earth...**

**really means living within a web of relationships where we are known and loved  
even with all of our failures and foibles.**

**What if the Reign of Heaven on Earth isn't so much about never  
feeling hungry, but knowing that when we are hungry we know that  
someone will offer us food...**

**What if the Reign of Heaven on Earth isn't so much about never  
feeling lonely but knowing that when we do feel that way,  
that there is someone who cares about us and for us?**

**What if the Reign of Heaven on Earth isn't so much about never  
feeling angry, but knowing that when we do feel anger, we have a**

people who can help us work through the anger in ways which lead to a resolution of our anger in productive ways....

What if the Reign of Heaven on Earth isn't so much about never experiencing injustice, but belonging to a community of people who will stand up for us and with us and will help us rise above and change the unjust system...

What if the Reign of Heaven isn't about perfection, not about an end point, a destination, but about a continually becoming more loving, more caring, more forgiving, more hopeful, more peaceful and more grateful?

Well...if those are the characteristics or attributes of the Reign of Heaven on Earth that we are moving towards... what do we have to leave behind ?

As I see it, we have to leave behind our narrow, self centered circle of care... we have to leave behind the attitude and belief that I can only care about me and mine... we have to leave behind the attitudes of prejudice and arrogance.... we have to leave behind feelings of unlovable and unworthy... we have to leave behind the belief that I can or have to do it all by myself and the belief that I can do nothing....

We have to leave behind the belief that those with the biggest toys or guns or houses win.... We have to leave behind the belief that beauty is found in Revlon and that strength is found in the gym...

We have to leave behind that we are the greatest and that we don't matter....

We have to leave behind that Earth is just a resource for our consumption and that other creatures and other species don't matter as much as humanity...

**We have to leave behind images and ideas about God that leave us feeling guilty and fearful and sinful....**

**Just this past Friday, our nation inaugurated the 45 President of our young democracy. President Trump's election has made visible a wide range of feelings ranging the full gamete of hope to fear...**

**As disciples we are called to leave fear behind and to work for justice, for compassion, for mercy and generosity.**

**We are called to live in hope and in joy trusting in the truth of the power of Love...**

**We are not called to live in a perfect world for perfect is only one person's idea... for that has as many different understandings as there are people in the world...**

**But we, as disciples, are called to leave behind small minded, selfish, egotistical thinking and to live towards a community of life for all peoples, for all of creation... without bitterness, without resentment... and without fear.**

**We can do that with the Power and grace of the Holy One, that very Spirit of God who empowered Jesus and the men and women of his time who became his disciples...**

**So the question remains, what are we willing to leave behind to be a his disciple in this place, in our country, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century... so that we might live in the Reign of Heaven on Earth?**

