

**Matthew**  
**Disciples of Jesus**  
**Matthew 4:18-22**  
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We're studying the end of Matthew 4 where Matthew records the beginning of Jesus' great Galilean ministry. I want us to read one of the paragraphs here in this section, beginning in chapter 4, verse 18, and we'll study down through verse 22. You follow along in your copy of God's Word as I read.

Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

This is God's Word as Isaiah the prophet says, "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever." This paragraph that we've just read together teaches a powerful lesson to all of us. It teaches us that every Christian is a disciple, a student of Jesus Christ. And as His disciple, He calls each of us to serve Him as He chooses, and that always includes, in part, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, in this passage, you saw it unfold; Matthew provides us with two examples of what a call to serve Jesus looks like, and he shows us the response of four of Jesus' disciples. Now, you know these names; these four eventually become the core of the Twelve Apostles that Jesus

appoints to represent Him. So, in that sense, their stories are unique; none of us are called to be Apostles. However, there is so much that you and I can learn from this passage. It shows us what Jesus expects of us as His disciples, and their responses to Jesus provides a blueprint for our own response to Him. Now, in these two examples, Matthew follows the same structure. He begins by describing “The Circumstances,” then “Jesus' Call,” and that's followed then by “Their Commitment” to obey and follow Him. So, we're going to follow that structure as we study these two events that occurred in the same place on the same day, actually, within a very short time of each other. So, let's look at them together.

First of all, we come to “A Call to Serve: The Illustration of Peter and Andrew.” We see this in verses 18 to 20. Let's look at it together. As I said, first of all, Matthew explains “The Circumstances” of this call. Verse 18, “Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee.” This is the first occasion we've had in our study of this Gospel for me to introduce you, a little bit, to this body of water. You're familiar with it, of course, but the Sea of Galilee is a large fresh-water lake in northern Israel. It's fed by the north end of the Jordan River. It's called the Sea of Galilee because, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for ‘sea’ can also refer to lakes, and that's how this lake came to be called the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is also called the Sea of Tiberias, named after a large city that the Romans built there. It's called the Lake of Gennesaret, and it's also called the Sea of Kinneret, literally ‘the Harp Sea,’ because if you look at a satellite image, as you see there, its shape resembles the side view of an ancient harp. The lake is 13 ½ miles long by 7 ½ miles wide. But what makes this lake unique from all others is that it is 695 feet below sea level on the surface. It is the second lowest body of water on earth, second only to the Dead Sea, which, of course, is nearby. It is the lowest freshwater lake on the planet.

It's also unique because surrounding the Sea of Galilee are hills on both sides of it, and in the winter, strong winds can come quickly off the surrounding hills, especially the Golan Heights to the east, and the wind that comes off the desert and off the Golan Heights sweeps onto that body, that little bowl of water, and can create violent wind storms on the lake, much like, if you've ever lived in Southern California, the Santa Ana winds that can strike there—very, very similar. Most of Jesus' earthly ministry occurred on or around this lake, and especially on the North Shore and the Northwestern Shore, where His ministry headquarters was located, the city of Capernaum. In fact, this area is the setting for Matthew, chapter 4, verse 18, in our text, all the way through the end of chapter 10. This is where it'll unfold.

The main industries in this area surrounding the lake, on the land, of course, it was farming, but the lake was central in that area, and the industry that it was known for, of course, was fishing. Fish was not just a staple among the Jews in that area, but also the entire Greco-Roman world. Fish were exported, in the first century, from the Sea of Galilee as far as Alexandria, Egypt, in the south, and as far as Syrian Antioch, in the north. So, understand this, the men that we're going to meet in this text were not poor day-laborers. They were successful businessmen. In Jesus' day, there were some sixteen harbors or ports on the lake, and there were so many boats that in 68 A.D., Josephus tells us, that he commandeered 230 boats to get his troops across the lake. That's where this unfolds.

Look again at verse 18, “Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother.” For the first time, Matthew introduces us to these two men. Now, John 1, verse 44 tells us that this family was originally on the north side

of the lake and from another town on the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee called Bethsaida. The name literally means 'fish-town.' This is where these fishermen were originally from, but at some point, their family had relocated to Capernaum, a larger city, and had built a nice home there near the large synagogue. In fact, if you visit there today, you can find and you can visit what archaeologists believe was Peter's home there in Capernaum. It was, by first century standards, a nice home and very near the synagogue in Capernaum. These events that we're studying occur near the city of Capernaum, on the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee.

Now Matthew refers to the first disciple as Simon; that's his Jewish birth name. And then he gives us the name Jesus gave him, Peter. That happened in John, chapter 1, verse 42. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. "Jesus looked at him," so this is when they first meet. "Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called 'Cephas' (which is translated Peter).'" So, Peter, then, is the name we use to call this man. It's actually the Greek translation of the Aramaic name 'Cephas' that Jesus gave Simon. Cephas, in Aramaic, and Peter, in Greek, mean the same thing. They mean 'a stone' and, of course, that will factor later in a pronouncement Jesus makes. We'll see it when we get there.

We know that Peter was married, as well, because we meet his mother-in-law in chapter 8, verse 14, and we discover that she actually lived with Peter and his wife there in Capernaum. Verse 18 adds that, "they were fishermen." These brothers were fishermen by trade and had built a successful fishing business. In fact, Luke 5 tells us that Peter and Andrew owned their own boat, and that they had business partners in this enterprise whom we'll meet shortly. So, it's not a surprise then that as Jesus is walking there near the city of Capernaum, His home headquarters now, His ministry headquarters, He sees these brothers fishing. Verse 18, "He saw two brothers,

Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.”

The word ‘casting a net’ occurs only here in the New Testament and the noun form of this occurs in the parallel passage only once, in Mark, chapter 1, because it refers to a specific kind of net and a specific kind of fishing. They were using a cast net. Now, I grew up in Mobile, by the coast there, and I actually owned a cast net when I was growing up. It can be thrown from a boat, from a pier, it can be thrown while wading in the water; and after it's thrown, while it's still in the air, it spreads out into a circle somewhere between 10 and 20 feet in diameter. Along the outside edge are weights, either lead or rocks, that cause the circular net then to sink straight down to the bottom of the place where you're fishing. And tied in the middle of that net, that middle of that circle, is a long rope that you hold on to even after you've thrown the net, and then after it sinks to the bottom you pull in the net using the rope and the weights at the bottom cause it to close in around the fish, not allowing them to escape. Peter and Andrew had likely gone out in their boat the night before which was typical for fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. They had now cleaned out their boat and their nets and were continuing to earn a living by fishing with this cast net. Now that's “The Circumstance” in which this all unfolds.

That brings us then to “Jesus' Call,” verse 19, “And He said to them, ‘Follow Me.’” Now to fully understand what Jesus means here, you have to consider His previous contact with these men; this wasn't the first time. He first met these men shortly after His baptism, more than a year before this encounter on the beach. John describes it to us in John, chapter 1, verses 35 to 40. There he tells us that two disciples of John the Baptist met Jesus. One of them was Andrew, verse 40 of John 1 says, the other is unnamed, but likely was John, the brother of James. In that same chapter, in verses 41 and 42, Andrew introduces his brother Peter to Jesus. In verses 43

and 44, we meet Philip, and then in the rest of the chapter, Nathanael. It's likely he eventually became one of the disciples as well, one of the twelve, probably the man called Bartholomew. Now that's chapter 1 of John, but in chapter 2, verse 2 of John's Gospel, these six men, these six disciples, including John, traveled with Jesus up to Galilee briefly for a family wedding at the little town of Cana. When the wedding was over, they went with Jesus back down into the area surrounding Jerusalem called Judea. And they apparently were with Jesus during His first year of ministry down in that southern Judea area, according to John 3 and John 4. Then, when Jesus was done with that ministry in Judea, they traveled back with Him up to Galilee to start His ministry there. Now, there's no mention of these disciples again until after He was rejected at Nazareth and moved His headquarters to Capernaum, as we learned earlier in this Gospel.

Here's what I want you to see. For a time then, these men, they traveled with Jesus, and then for a time after they traveled with Jesus, they returned to their own homes and their own jobs. In our text, nearly a year after Jesus first met them and had begun to disciple them, and sometime after they had been with Him, we don't know how long elapsed, but He intentionally now seeks them out. He seeks out Peter and Andrew, James and John, in order to accompany Him for part of His ministry in the Galilee area. Jesus begins a preaching tour of Galilee with these four, and after that Galilean tour, again at some point, these four men all return to their homes, their families, their businesses. Later, there's a second call; it's recorded in Luke, chapter 5, verses 1 to 11. Clearly, it's not the same event here because of the order in Luke's Gospel, as well as the obvious difference in details between these two accounts. In Luke, Peter and Andrew are fishing from a boat; Jesus enters the boat; there's a great catch of fish, and they permanently leave their business to be with Jesus. So, Luke 5, then, is a second call of these men, and shortly after that call, they are appointed as part of The Twelve to be with Jesus constantly, twenty-four hours a

day, seven days a week, until His ascension. Now, the point I want you to see is this. Jesus knew these men long before this encounter on the beach in Matthew 4, and after they had interacted with Jesus for more than a year, off and on, Jesus comes to find them as they were working at their careers. In other words, they were living life like most of us live life. And notice what Jesus says to them, verse 19, “He said to them, ‘Follow Me.’” Literally, the Greek text says, “Come after me.” That's a common New Testament command in the Gospels, “Come after Me, Follow Me.”

Now, that is common, but it's important you understand that every time you come to that expression, it doesn't mean the same thing. It's not a static expression. In fact, in various contexts, the New Testament uses this call ‘to come after Jesus,’ ‘to follow Jesus,’ of four distinct calls, and you have to be discerning when you encounter these in your reading of the Gospels, “Four Distinct Calls.” First of all, it's used of “A Call to Salvation.” Matthew, chapter 16, verse 24, Jesus says to the crowds, “If anyone wishes to come after Me (this is a Gospel invitation), “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself.” That is, he has to renounce who he's become. He has to repent, “and (he) must take up his cross and follow Me.” Mark, chapter 8, verse 34, “And He (Jesus) summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them (same thing), ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.’” Jesus said the same thing to the rich young ruler in Mark, chapter 10, verse 21, “Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow Me.’” What Jesus was saying to the rich young ruler is, “Listen, you think you love God, and you think you love people, but the reality is you have a huge idol in your life, and that idol is the stuff you own, the property that's yours.” And Jesus said, “If you're going to truly repent, in

your case, I want you to sell it all and come follow Me; that will express your true repentance.”

And of course he refused. But what I want you to see in these texts, “to come after Jesus” is to be saved. It's to start to follow Him as Savior and Lord. It's to become His disciple. It's to become a Christian. So sometimes when you encounter this expression, that's what it means.

A second call is “A Call to Specific Service.” We'll consider this one in just a moment. It's in our text.

A third call is “A Call to Full-time Ministry,” in their case as Apostles. Luke, chapter 5, verse 11, “When they had brought their boats to land (this is that other call I was telling you about.), they left everything and followed Him.” And we know from context they left it permanently; they never went back to it until after the resurrection.

The fourth kind of call, this idea of ‘come after Me’ or ‘follow Me,’ talks about is “A Call to Continued Faithfulness.” In other words, it's a call expressed to people who already believe in Jesus, who already serve Jesus, but it's a call to continue to follow Him. In John 21, verse 19, Jesus said to Peter after He told him how long he was going to live and how he was going to die, “He said to him (Peter), ‘Follow Me’” (keep on following Me, whatever comes). In John 21, verse 22, Jesus said, “If I want him (John) to remain until I come, what is *that* to you? You (keep on) following Me!” So, when you encounter this expression in the Gospels, it can mean any one of those four.

The question is which of those four calls is happening in our text in Matthew, chapter 4? It's the second, “The Call to Service,” because Jesus had already called these men to salvation. He'd already called them to believe in Him as Messiah, and as God's Son, a year earlier. John records it for us in John, chapter 1. Now, I think these men were already true Old Testament believers,



and they were waiting for the Messiah, and when He was announced and John pointed Him out, then they followed Him. But regardless, in this passage then, they're already believers; they're already believers in Jesus, and here He calls them to serve Him. Notice how Jesus explains this second call in verse 19, "He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers (or fishermen) of men.'" So primarily here, Jesus was calling these who already have committed followers to service.

And in their case specifically to three duties, three kinds of service He was calling them to. First of all, to accompany Him in His ministry in Capernaum. You remember Capernaum, that city was His headquarters, His ministry headquarters, and we're going to see in the chapters that follow, that they're just with Him. When He's teaching in the synagogues, when He's doing things there in the city of Capernaum, they're with Him. He also called them to accompany His ministry tour of Galilee. That's what happens next, look at verse 23, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people." That's what He's calling them to do, to join Him for that sort of short-term missionary outreach.

And thirdly, he was asking them to proclaim, really demanding, that they proclaim the Gospel. That's the meaning of verse 19. "I will make you fishers (fishermen) of men." This was the disciples' main task. In fact, this is how the Gospel ends; go over to Matthew 28. Look again at verse 19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." How do you make disciples? Acts says you make disciples by preaching the Gospel. So, you "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus repeats this call in Acts, chapter 1, verse 8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit

has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” So, in Matthew 4, Jesus is calling these four men, who already believe in Him, to serve Him. And yet, not yet in the permanent full-time ministry, that would happen later; it's recorded in Luke, chapter 5. In this case, however, Jesus is calling these four to leave their homes, and to leave their businesses, and essentially to go on a short-term mission's trip with Him around Galilee. That's why William Hendrickson, Presbyterian commentator, writes this, “The Lord, by saying, ‘Come follow Me,’ exercises His sovereignty over Simon and Andrew. (Listen to this.). He shows that He has the right to claim them for service in His kingdom. They must be ready to follow immediately when He calls them.” So, we've seen “The circumstances;” we've seen “Jesus' call.”

Thirdly, in verse 20, notice “Their Commitment” to this call. Notice Simon and Andrew's response, “Immediately.” Here you see the compelling force of the character and authority of Jesus. Here are these successful, no-nonsense fishermen and businessmen, who are quick to respond to His command. Verse 20 says, “Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.” They joined Jesus for a ministry trip in Galilee that would last several months.

Now that brings us to the second example. We've seen that of Simon and Andrew. The second example, let's call, “A Call to Serve: the Illustration of James and John” in verses 21 and 22. Again, Matthew begins by describing “The Circumstances.” Verse 21, “Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.” Nearby are two other fishermen, brothers, whose names are James and John. By the way, James is always mentioned first in the New Testament with two exceptions, which most agree means that he was likely the older of the two brothers. The name ‘James,’ by the way, is an English invention. ‘James’ is the old English name that, from Wycliffe on, is used for the Old Testament name

‘Jacob’ in the New Testament. So, James is actually just an English name and it's the substitute in English for the name ‘Jacob’ when it appears in the New Testament. What's interesting about James is he was the first of the twelve apostles to die. It's recorded in Acts, chapter 12, keep that in mind. It just teaches us about God's sovereignty. So, he was the first of The Twelve to die.

His brother John is more familiar to us, of course. He's known as “The disciple whom Jesus loved.” And with James, he became part of Jesus' “inner circle.” He, John, not only wrote the Gospel that bears his name, but also the three inspired letters that are in our New Testament. And here's something interesting, James was the first Apostle to die, first of The Twelve. John, his brother, was the last of the Twelve to die. He died in the 90s A.D. after all the other Apostles were off the scene. It just reminds us, folks, that Christ has a right to make those decisions. And it looks different even in the same families. Verse 21 says these two boys were “in the boat with Zebedee, their father.” Zebedee, by the way, means ‘gift of Yahweh.’ They were in the boat mending their nets. Now, this family was very successful and very influential. They were even known far south in the city of Jerusalem, the capital. John 18:15 tells us that John “was known to the high priest” of Israel. John 1 tells us that these brothers were followers of John the Baptist, and they became followers of Jesus shortly after Jesus' baptism.

But James and John likely didn't meet Jesus in John 1. They likely had met Him long before that because they were probably related. In chapter 27 of Matthew, verse 56, Matthew tells us that among the women at the crucifixion was, “the mother of the sons of Zebedee.” So, James and John's mother was at the crucifixion. John 19:25 appears to refer to the very same woman this way as Jesus' “mother's sister.” So, their mother then, James and John's mother, was likely Salome and the sister of Jesus' mother, Mary. In other words, their mother was Jesus' aunt and James and John were likely Jesus' cousins. They likely knew each other before they came to

learn that He was the Messiah. By the way, their mother, Salome, was also one of the women who contributed to Jesus' support. Although their father, Zebedee, doesn't seem antagonistic to Jesus, there's no evidence in the New Testament that he became a follower of Jesus. I would say this to you this morning, "If you're here, ladies, and you're unequally yoked, your husband is not a believer, the story of the mother of James and John may be very much like your own."

These two brothers were also commercial fishermen. When Jesus found them, notice verse 21 says, they were "mending their nets." The word means to restore to its former condition. They were repairing, cleaning, folding the nets from the night before so that they would be ready for the next expedition. We also learned that the family of Zebedee had formed a partnership with Andrew and Peter. Luke 5:10 says, "James and John...were partners with Simon," and it was a very successful business. In our text, we see just how successful this family was. First of all, verse 21 tells us they, like Peter and Andrew, had their own fishing boat. A typical fishing boat in the first century, Sea of Galilee, was about twenty-five feet long, could hold ten to twelve people, and could be used with either oars or sails. In 1986, they discovered a wooden boat dating to the first century buried in the mud on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. And from that original, they were able to reconstruct a replica, and this photo shows you what the boat that they used in the first century, and the boat that involved frequently in Jesus' ministry, probably looked like.

Verse 21 also tells us this family had fishing nets. This is a generic Greek word, but there was only one kind of net that was used, in the Sea of Galilee in the first century, that was pulled from a boat, and that was a trammel net. A trammel net was a long straight net with floats on the top of the net, weights on the bottom, and it was let out gradually from the boat, and the boat formed a circle. And then once the net was entirely out, then they would pull it in with the fish

trapped in it. Matthew tells us Jesus found these men mending those nets. Mark tells us in chapter 1, verse 20, that this family was successful enough that they had “hired servants” who assisted in their fishing business. So that's the circumstance here.

And that brings us just very briefly to “Jesus' Call,” verse 21, “and He called them.” Matthew doesn't repeat everything. Instead, he clearly means that Jesus called them in the same way that He had called Peter and Andrew just minutes before just down the shoreline.

Note thirdly, verse 22, “Their Commitment” to that call. Like Andrew and Peter, “Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.” Immediately, these men left to serve Jesus for several months. And notice what they left: they left their career; they left a successful business, they left their mother, they left their father, and they left their home. By the way, Zebedee is never mentioned again in the New Testament except as their father. So, either he died shortly after this or more likely most commentators think that he never became a believer in Jesus, perhaps never agreeing with the decision that his sons made that day.

Finally, I want us to consider what all this means for us. We've seen these two examples, but thirdly, I want you to consider with me, “A Call to Serve: The Implications for Every Believer.” What does this passage have to say to us? What are the implications of this in your life and in my life? Let's look at it together.

First of all, let's consider the implications regarding Christ. What does this passage teach us about Christ? Number one, that “He delights in using ordinary people”—I love that! Most of us are ordinary people and Jesus delights to use ordinary people. The Twelve were nothing special, nothing to write home about. They were ordinary people just like us and He delights to do that. Why? Turn with me to 1 Corinthians; 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, Paul explains exactly why.

Verse 26, 1 Corinthians 1:26, “For consider your calling, brethren (That is, consider the ones that God has effectually called to Himself in salvation; consider who those people are.), that there were not many wise according to the flesh.” Now, he'll say “not many;” it's not that there aren't any, but he's saying largely this is what God does; He calls those who are not the wise. That is, not many Christians are the elite intelligentsia of our world. That's what God does, and He does it on purpose. “Not many mighty,” not many of the world's powerful people have been called to believe and follow Jesus Christ. “Not many noble,” not many of the blue bloods, the world's aristocrats, those who pass down their pedigree from generation to generation, not many of them are Christians. Why?

Verse 27. Well:

God has (actually) chosen (and I hate to tell you this, this is us.) the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not.

You know what he's saying? For the most part, “God chooses nothings and nobodies like us.” Why? Verse 28, “So that (In order) that He may nullify the things that are (Here it is.), so that no man may boast before God.” God wants the glory and so Christ delights to choose ordinary people like us. I'm the tenth child of an insignificant family from the outskirts of Mobile, Alabama, and God called me to believe and know and follow His Son—a nothing and a nobody. Why? So that He gets the glory. And that's why God called most of us. Oh, there are exceptions, but this is God's plan. He goes on to say, verse 30, “By His doing you (we) are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so

that (Here it is.), just as it is written, ‘LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.’” Or as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:7, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels (clay pots).” We’re just clay pots—that’s all we are; have the treasure of new life; have the treasure of the gospel. Why? “So that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not of ourselves.”

Secondly, this passage tells us that “Jesus demands absolute submission to His will.” Think about it, Jesus just shows up as these men are doing their work and he says, “Okay, you’re going to leave everything and you’re following Me,” and he expects them to do it. And friend, let me just say, if you’re a follower of Jesus Christ, He expects the same thing of you; He expects you to submit to Him; He’s your Lord!

Number three, He, and I love this one, “He always equips His disciples for the tasks He assigns.” You know, if Jesus calls you to do something, if He wants you to do that, He’s not going to leave you on your own; He’s going to equip you. That’s implied, by the way, in that statement, “I will make you fishers (fishermen) of men.” It’s not that they were great material. It’s not that Jesus said, “Oh great! I found some really great people!” No, “I will make you fishers of men.” And the same thing is true for us. Whatever He assigns us to do, He’s going to equip us to do.

Number four, “He requires a willingness to leave everything to follow Him.” That’s what He eventually required of these four men. Listen to what Peter says in Matthew 19, verse 27, he says to Jesus, “We have left everything and followed You.” That’s eventually what it costs. That’s what God demanded of them. And He may not ask that of us, but He requires a willingness that if He does, to leave everything to follow Him.

Number five, “He demands our primary love and loyalty.” Matthew, chapter 10, verse 37, Jesus says, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Now, don't misunderstand, we're commanded to love the people in our lives, starting with our families, our spouses, and our children, our parents—we're commanded to love them. So, He's not saying, “Don't love them.” He's saying, “Your love for Me should be so great in comparison that it doesn't even measure on the scale compared to your love for everyone else.” That's what He demands of us. That's what this passage teaches us about Christ.

But let's move on, “What does this passage teach us about us?” Let me give you some things to think about. Number one, “We must make Jesus and His kingdom our highest priority.” In the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 6, verse 33, Jesus says, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.” If you're here this morning and you claim to be a Christian, you claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you claim that you're His follower, then you need to get this in your mind and head, “You don't get to decide what to do with your life.” Let me say that again, “You don't get to decide to do what you want with your life.” He bought you with His own blood. He bought you. You belong to Him, body and soul. And it doesn't matter what you want. It only matters what He wants. You're here to live for Him. That's why Paul said, “He died for us so that we who live should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.” Christian, let me just ask you, “If you claim to be a follower of Christ, are you living for yourself?” You have no right to live for yourself; you belong to Him. Jesus asked some of us to abandon secular careers to serve Him. In some cases, for missionaries and others to abandon their families to serve Him. In other cases, He allows us to continue our family ties, even to continue secular careers. Many of you are in that situation. But listen, He still demands



that you keep Him and His kingdom first in your life. And if he chooses, we must be willing to leave everything and go. And even harder, we must be willing to let our children go. His kingdom must be our highest priority along with Himself.

Number two, “We must actively serve Jesus.” It's really the whole point of this, isn't it? The whole point of the paragraph we just looked at; Jesus shows up and says, “Serve Me,” and they do. And friends, you and I are all called to actively serve Jesus. How? 1 Peter, chapter 4, verses 10 and 11, “As each one (of you) has received a *special* gift (a spiritual gift), employ (use) it in serving one another.” Again, let me ask You, “Are you here this morning and you say, ‘Yes, I'm a Christian, I'm a follower of Jesus Christ.’” Then you are called to serve Jesus. How? Using the spiritual gift you've been given to serve these people around you in this church. That's what you've been called to do. Let me put it as gently, but as directly as I can, “If you claim to be a member of this church, a part of this church, and all you do is come in on Sunday and get what you want and what you think you need, and you leave here without any sense of obligation to the rest of these people, you're not using your gifts to serve them. You are disobeying Jesus Christ!” Every Christian is called to serve Him, and that includes you.

Number three, “We must consistently obey Jesus.” Part of following Him in that phrase is to obey Him, to follow His Word, to follow His teaching. John 10:27, “My sheep hear My voice...and they follow Me.” He means, not something whispered in your ear, He means His voice in this Book you hold in your hand. He means you walk in obedience to Him. You know what a disciple is? It's a student. If you're a Christian, you're a student of Jesus Christ, and it means you want to learn from Him, and when you grow up, you want to be like Him. That's what you're called to do, to obey Him, to follow Him. Those who know Him follow him as His disciples.

Number four, “We must actively try to bring others to Jesus.” Jesus' primary mission, what did He say? “I have come to seek and to save that which was lost,” and He now assigns these four men the same task. He says, “I'm going to make you fishers (fishermen) of men,” and guess what, Christian? He's assigned you this task as well. Listen to 1 Peter 2, verse 9. “You are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION.” Why do you enjoy such a privileged position as that? “So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” You are called to be a witness for Jesus Christ. If you don't know exactly how to do that, go to the evangelism class; it's here at Countryside. But you know what? It starts with being like the demoniac of Gadara. You remember after God saved him, after Christ brought him out of that? What did he do? He just went home telling everybody what Jesus had done for him. We're all called to do that.

Number five, “If you're not a Christian, Jesus is calling you today to salvation.” He's calling you “to abandon your sin in repentance, and to believe in Him as Savior and Lord.” It's as if, friend, if you're not a Christian this morning, it's as if Jesus Himself were here, and through the words of Matthew's Gospel, He's saying to you, “Follow Me.” He's offering you Himself and everything that comes with Him—forgiveness, you can be right with God; you can have a relationship with your Creator; you can have an eternal inheritance, eternal life. All of those things come with Jesus, and He's offering them to you. You know, some people hear me say that, and maybe you're tempted to say, “Tom, the cost is just too high. It's just too high! That means I've got to give up my sin. I've got to give up my own ambitions and my own life, and I'm just not ready to do that.” Well, let me just tell you that, “Yes, the cost will be everything, but what you gain is so much greater.” Turn to Matthew 19; Matthew 19, verse 27. Peter said to

Jesus, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You. What then will there be for us?” And Jesus' answer comes down in verse 29, “Everyone who has left houses, or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children, or farms, for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much” in this life. It doesn't mean you're going to be wealthy; it means you're going to be spiritually rich. You're going to get more than you gave. And here's the clincher, “will inherit eternal life.” Yes, following Jesus costs you everything, but you get everything in return. Jesus said, “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” Jesus says to you, friend, today, “Follow Me, and I'll give you eternal life.”

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for this amazing passage. Seal it to our hearts. Lord, I pray for those of us who are already followers of Jesus, that You would help us to recommit ourselves. Remind us that our lives are not ours, they're His. And, Lord, for those who are here who don't know Him, may they hear His invitation to them today in these words, “Follow Me.” We pray that You would work in their hearts to that end, in Jesus’ name. Amen.