

2020 A 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Jan. 26

Most leaders of any organization would get down on their knees and thank God if they could get a few loyal, enthusiastic volunteers to work alongside them. That's especially true of the church. The **real church is** not the building you know, but **the people**.

After John the Baptist's arrest, Jesus set out to organize a few good team members, disciples, who would catch his vision and commit themselves in spreading the good news of the kingdom of God. So, he headed to the synagogue to find the most learned scholars in Capernaum ... right? No. That's not the passage says. Instead, Jesus takes a walk around the Sea of Galilee and sees two sets of brothers, fishermen one after another, Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John and says, "'Come after me and I will make you fishers of men,' and at once they left their nets and followed him."

If the call came to us, we would probably want to have a discussion, or go for counseling or do some research and weigh options before reaching a decision -making. But the fact is: **Our life is shaped not by discussions anyway, but decisions.** Jesus said, "'Come after me,' at once, they left their nets and followed." A key detail is found in the nets.

The message of Jesus is: Kingdom of God is at hand. And **He calls us to reform our lives** to enter the kingdom of God. The trouble is that we want the kingdom but not the reforming. It's like those who want the elected office, but not the campaign, who wants the grades but not the study, who want the health, but not the exercise.

We want to know the rule of God. We want forgiveness, growth in grace, the sense of belonging to a spiritual community, peace. But, we don't want to give up our nets, entanglements. Entanglements are not our responsibilities but the people and relationships that distance and separate us from Christ. Also, we don't want to give up gossip, cutting corners, immoral behavior, habits of arrogance, rash judgments or addictions. Those nets weigh us down and hold us tight. To know the kingdom of God, we ought to be willing to leave behind the nets, the distorting entanglements of soul, mind and heart.

The gospel shows us the ones who left their nets behind and followed Jesus. And He gave them a new mission, new seas to sail, deeper purpose of life. For you, to follow Jesus is not a matter of leaving family, jobs, or house. It is first of all, a matter of leaving behind all that stands between Jesus and you and following Jesus as way of living. And this is far more difficult: **Jesus' call is to serve others and to draw them into the kingdom.**

A 28-year-old, Scott Harrison looked like he had it all. He was a successful nightclub promoter who got paid big money to organize parties that attracted wealthy young people and celebrities to New York City nightclubs. He spent his nights partying, drinking and gambling, and his days sleeping. He was raised as Christian but, walked away from his faith. While partying on vacationing in Uruguay, Scott suddenly realized that money, parties and social status weren't making him any happy. He began to read Bible and study spiritual books.

When he got back from vacation, Scott quit his job and began to apply to work with humanitarian organizations like Oxfam and the Peace Corps. But they all turned him down because they couldn't figure out how his skills as promoter and party organizer could be used to help people.

Finally, Scott got accepted to work with Mercy Ships, a not-profit organization that sets up hospitals on old cruise ships and sends them to the poorest parts of the World. Scott was put on a ship to Liberia and was given the job of photographing the work of the Mercy ships doctors. He took before-and-after pictures of patients with tumors, leprosy, cleft palates. Scott was so inspired by the work of these doctors and wanted to share it with others. He e-mailed to the list of his former clients from his nightclubs the pictures of the Mercy Ships' mission. Soon afterwards, Mercy Ships began to receiving donations from some of the unlikely people on earth—the wealthy nightclub best clients. And suddenly, Scott knew exactly how God could use a former nightclub promoter to do His work. Afterwards, he founded a non-profit organization: *Mission to Bring Clean Water to the people in developing countries*. God gave Scott an ever-larger-vision for building God's kingdom.

“Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.” That's what Jesus promised his disciples, and they left everything and followed him. “Come and follow me and I will make you fishers of people.” That's what Jesus promises us as well.

What's standing between you and saying, “Yes!” to God? What's standing between where you are right now and where God wants you to be? Is there something you could do for God at your church or community? It doesn't have to be as spectacular as Scott Harrison's ministry. God uses the small just as surely as He does large ones. The best way to see God clearly is to ask Him to give you a new vision of a way you can be at His service.