



Follow Me

January 25 • 2009

Focus Scripture Mark 1:14–20

Additional Scriptures

Jonah 3:1–5, 10

Psalms 62:5–12

1 Corinthians 7:29–31

God, as you called from their daily work the four who were fishing, so you call us in the midst of everyday life. Help us to hear your voice and to discern your call. Strengthen us as we learn to share the message of your reign of justice and peace. Amen.

God calls many different people in many different ways. Jesus sees four fishers, and they immediately leave their nets in response to the call to “Follow me.” Jonah, a reluctant prophet, finally heeds God’s call and Nineveh is saved. How can we discern God’s call in our lives? With the psalmist we affirm that God, who calls, is steadfast in love.

Focus Scripture: Mark 1:14–20

Mark’s gospel begins abruptly. In the first thirteen verses, we learn that John the Baptizer proclaimed the coming of the Messiah in the wilderness, and that Jesus was baptized and spent time being tested in the wilderness. Now we read that John has been arrested. (John criticized Herod’s marriage to his niece Herodias, former wife of his half-brother Philip.)

John’s ministry has come to an end, and the time has come for Jesus to act. Jesus returns to Galilee, the province where he grew up. Galilee was a rural area, thought to be a bit of a “backwater.” It is in this unlikely place that Jesus begins to proclaim the good news of God – that God’s reign of justice and compassion has come near. A new age is about to begin.

Jesus calls the people, both as individuals and as a community, to repent, to turn around and reorient their lives towards God. Repentance means both a turning away from sin – those things that separate us from relationship with God – and also a turning towards the good. It demands movement and change. Jesus’ message is clear and challenging.

As Jesus walks by the Sea of Galilee, he sees people going about their everyday work, bringing in the daily catch of fish. In the midst of the ordinary, Jesus calls four fishers, two sets of brothers, with the words “Follow me.” And *immediately* – a word that Mark uses often to express the urgent need to proclaim the gospel in troubled times, such as those faced by the first readers – Simon and Andrew, James and John leave their boats and their nets and follow. There is no indication in the text about who these four individuals were, if they knew Jesus, or what Jesus saw in them that prompted him to choose them. There is no insight into what they thought as they dropped everything and left their work and their families.

Without question, they went with Jesus. What compelled them to go?

Jesus told them that their new work would be to “fish for people.” Their work would be to tend to relationships, to care for others, and to invite them to hear the good news that Jesus was proclaiming. From this time on, everything would be different for these four. There is a sense of urgency about the whole passage. Responding to the call to follow Jesus means leaving behind a past way of life and trusting in the one who calls into an unknown future.

Jonah 3:1–5, 10 is also a story of call. The prophet Jonah has already failed once to respond to God’s call. Now God calls Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh to preach a message of repentance. Because of this reluctant prophet, the people repent and acknowledge God. God’s mind is changed and Nineveh is saved.

Paul gives five examples of how to live in order to be ready to respond to God’s call. **1 Corinthians 7:29–31** picks up Mark’s sense of urgency. The present situation is coming to an end. Christians are to live detached from the world, yet mindful of it.

We can follow God’s call because the one who calls is trustworthy. **Psalms 62:5–12** proclaims, with vivid metaphors of God as rock and refuge, that we are called to trust in God’s power and steadfast love. God is our fortress and salvation.



Following Jesus means leaving behind past ways of life and embarking on a new adventure. We respond to God’s call, trusting that God supports us with steadfast love. When God calls, what is being asked of us? In what ways do we respond? How can we recognize the one we are to follow?

If you have Internet access, visit www.spiritseasons.com to access *Spirit Sightings* for connections between current events and the focus passage.

