

# Distractions

Wayne Waibel – 02/09/2025

So a man you have never seen before jumps into your boat and asks you to put out a little way from the land. Then after he talks to a large group of people expects you to go out further into the deep water and let down your nets. These are not motorized boats; you're either rowing or at the mercy of the wind.

Jesus came to find these men at the end of a long working day, after backbreaking labor, and tells them to keep on working, and they oblige Him. And after making probably the largest catch of their lives, by His word alone inviting them to follow Him, they leave everything – their livelihood – their possessions – what would have been a sizable sum of money for the fish they had just hauled in – all of it – and again – oblige Him.

Who does that, and even more astounding – who would dare ask that of anyone – ever?

.....

To be called by God is just that astounding. Throughout the Bible – there are profound details surrounding a call. The ones we are informed of today are Isaiah, Simon Peter, James, and John.

Isaiah has the typical reluctance, "My lips are unclean." But you notice, and this is true of all callings, God has an answer for each of the barriers that we put up to accept His call. In Isaiah's case, the angel touches his lips with a glowing ember, and he is cleansed, and his sins are purged. The next time God asks, "Whom shall I send?" His response is an immediate, "Here am I! Send me."

Likewise with Simon, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Jesus' answer to that, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men." And forsaking everything else – he follows Him.

One might think that folks from that era were either gullible beyond belief or stark raving mad. What could possibly influence someone to behave that way just by a spoken word? It's probably safe to say that it was a way different world back then, and God appeared to them much differently than He appears to us. Not in the literal sense – in the beholding sense. A calling in this day and age takes a much different form than it did back then. For one thing – there were far fewer distractions.

.....

We have a much more difficult time taking the initiative today. We are a more timid people than our predecessors. That's probably because we think we have so much more to lose. Growing up in this country practically guarantees that if we experience poverty at all it will be in the form of witnessing somebody else's.

We tend to forget that true happiness is measured in what you can do without. Along with that – we forget that our worth is not attached to things we own, but how we treat those who can do nothing whatever for us.

From the beginning of time – God has favored the poor and the marginalized. Jesus was born into and grew in stature among the poor and marginalized.

I haven't read it anywhere specifically, but the older I get and the more research I do and the more enlightened I become – the conclusion I draw closer to is that if we are not ourselves impoverished, we must at the very least be among and serve the poor.

Let the politicians run their mouths and their campaigns. Let the captains of industry fret over trends and margin calls and labor laws. Let the charlatans preach their prosperity gospel and fill their coffers. You and I can spend our time on much loftier pursuits – namely to be of service.

We live in a tension between conventional wisdom and the wisdom of God. This is neither new nor troublesome – it's just the way it's always been.

That's our world. You have seen violence; now walk in the way of peace. You have heard vindictive speech; now practice forgiveness.

.....

Simon Peter and his partners James and John were profoundly affected by Jesus. All people were affected profoundly by Jesus. The apostle Paul was no exception as evidenced in his letter to the Corinthians who were trying to do the right thing, but still required very direct guidance from Paul.

One of the more subtle passages in today's epistle is in the affirmation part of his letter when he refers to Christ as having been resurrected. The verse reads, "He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." "He rose again," is used as opposed to "was raised" as in some versions of the passage.

Rose again most closely resembles the original Greek tense, which would indicate that Jesus is still alive. Still alive and living among us. God incarnate.

When it comes right down to it, the best knowledge of God that most of us will ever have is dumbfounded puzzlement. And that's okay; the good news is that taking the initiative to engage in faithful discipleship makes ordinary work itself the vehicle of Jesus' real presence in the life of the world. And that presence is manifest in the ordinary.

.....

When the beliefs are clear, the actions follow naturally and appropriately. It takes courage and it takes faith. The kind of faith that comes from trusting God and understanding what He expects of us.

The opportunities to serve are more present now than they were in days of old. The world is far more complicated. Not necessarily more difficult to decipher and navigate, but there are so many more alternatives now. So many sources competing for our attention. We really have our hands full fighting through the fog of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Discipleship is best understood as the act of teaching, AND learning - leading, AND following. What we need to remember is that the antidote for life in a culture of vanity, and egocentrism is a heart and mind that are thankful to God.

In that we are exactly like our predecessors. Isaiah, Simon, James, John, and Paul heeded their calling after initial objections and followed their Lord.

We, in turn, are likewise called on some level and choose to serve with a grateful heart. And we need only to wade through the minutia of distractions and be vigilant to our calling, as the vast majority of opportunities - manifest in the ordinary. Amen.