

Whenever I hear this account of Peter and Andrew, James and John these four fishermen immediately leaving behind their nets, their boats, and, for two of them, their father, I wonder, “What did their mothers think?” Did Peter and Andrew’s Mom ask, “How can you two be so irresponsible?” Did James and John’s mother say to them, “Are you really going to leave your father to take care of the family business by himself?” Did Peter’s mother-in-law cry out, “Why did my daughter have to marry such a hothead?” Matthew doesn’t say. We only hear that they left and they followed. So that must be all that really matters.

But if you think about it, it sounds crazy! It looks like these four disciples are making a very impulsive and reckless move. Peter and Andrew, James and John had built a solid and respectable living through their work. They were living a settled life. They had homes and families and responsibilities. Why would they so suddenly decide to leave it all behind and follow this Man, Jesus? Why would they ever leave the known to follow such an *unknown*?

You and I have *our* ways of seeing the world, too. We have our comfort zone, our own settled life. Whenever Jesus calls us, in His Word, He calls us to change, to repent, to be something that you weren’t before. Why would *you* ever leave behind what you know in order to be changed by Him?

Jesus left His hometown of Nazareth to begin His ministry out of Capernaum (vv 12-13). He wouldn’t return there except to visit, and even that didn’t go well. What’s much more, Jesus left His incredibly comfortable, eternally divine home, where He had the perfect fellowship of His Father and the Spirit, when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary’s womb. It’s amazing! To some it may even sound ... crazy that Jesus would leave behind heaven to live as one of us on earth!

But is it *really* so crazy? Let’s go back to the four fisherman for a moment. What where they *really* leaving behind? The prophet Isaiah called their land, their Galilee, “the people dwelling in darkness”; they were among “those dwelling in the region and shadow of death.” Maybe everything wasn’t really as comfortable for them as it seemed!

And look at the people around the disciples. According to our text, many of them were not doing well. The crowds suffered from a whole list of woes (v.24). Who *wouldn’t* want to leave these things behind?

And now let’s go to us today: What kind of darkness are *we* in? What kinds of sicknesses prevail among us? No matter how settled or comfortable our lives may appear, we too are living in the region of sin. We chase after other

gods and cause a lot of harm to ourselves and to one another. Some seek leisure and pleasure above responsibilities to home, family, and yes, even God. Some people's greedy, relentless pursuit of money damages relationships with their loved ones. Because of **our** sin, and we all have it in some form or another, we also live daily in the shadow of death.

"Change and decay in all around I see" as the hymn writer of *Abide with Me* rightly puts it for all of us. We see terrible change and decay in the illnesses and sufferings of loved ones. We see change and decay in our own lives filled with anxieties, sadness and disappointments. All of these things serve to remind us that just like the disciples were, we too are "dwelling in the region and shadow of death." Who **wouldn't** want to leave all of that behind?

So you see, it **isn't** crazy to follow Jesus (v 20). Our four fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James, and John will see it all. They're going to have a front row seat for Jesus' miracles and healings. Their ears will be the first to hear the gracious words of life that will come from Jesus' lips. But they haven't seen it all, or heard it all, **yet**. At the start, they don't know where the finish will be. They don't know where Jesus is taking them, and many times they'll think He's going the wrong way. They won't know the true joy of following until His resurrection.

We see and hear so much from Jesus. We have the whole story, given by the Gospel-writers, of Jesus' life and healing and teaching. We have the cross before our eyes each week, each day. We have forgiveness, starting already in our Baptism and continuing each day as we remember our Baptism. We have the Word of mercy to call us anew every morning. We have the Lord's Supper given to assure us that we are His forgiven ones. We haven't seen the end; we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet, it **isn't** crazy to follow Jesus, because already as we begin to follow Him we see the light at the end.

Yes, as we follow Jesus, we are following the Light of the World! This Jesus, the Rabbi calling fishermen to leave their nets behind and follow Him, is the Light of the World. His blessed light is already shining as He heals many kinds of sicknesses.

These sicknesses He'll carry to the darkness of the cross. All that is darkness will be taken by Him to the cross. And the Light of the World shines the brightest in the darkness of Good Friday. His compassion is for the whole world. No one who is sinful or sick is left out of His embrace at the cross. No one is left out of His declaration, "It is finished!"

Because Jesus, the Light of the World, is God of God and Light of Light, He did not stay dead after He died. Jesus rose from the dead in order that the light of His grace may shine through the whole world.

The fishermen turned fishers-of-men were each witnesses of the resurrection light. This is the end to which Jesus called them to follow. They proclaim to the world that Jesus is the Light of the World.

We live by their witness. We have the light of Christ through their word to us, the word we hear today. We follow Him immediately today, laying down the sins we confess and being healed in His absolution. We follow Jesus immediately today, acting on His invitation to be fed and nourished at His Table. We follow Jesus immediately tomorrow, when we rise in His name to be His people in this world.

And following has to begin somewhere (v 23). Galilee was as good a starting point as any. It was a place of sin and sorrow and sickness of daily life. Yet it's the place Jesus comes, with His call to leave the old and enter into newness of life in Him. He already has changed these fishermen by His Word. Their lives will never be the same. They're already in the Kingdom, the reign of the King. The beginning is now shaped by the end. Jesus knows how He will love these disciples and His whole world with His holy life and innocent death and victorious resurrection. He has called them to follow Him there.

Where you are now is the place to begin. No matter where you are in life, Jesus is here in His Word to call you to follow Him, to be forgiven by Him, to live in His grace that makes you His. To know without any doubt that all of your sinful pursuits of pleasure or leisure or money at all costs; indeed, all of your sins have been taken away from you by the Light of the World, the Light no darkness of sin can ever overcome!

No matter how you feel, Jesus is here in His Word to tell you how He feels about you. He wants you to come with Him, to see what He has done for you, and to see what He will do for you. No matter how sick or healthy you may be, Jesus is here in His Word to heal you in heart and spirit, by His mercy, and as a sign of the healing that is to come in Him forever.

His love is stronger than any of the illnesses and sufferings of our loved ones. His love is greater than any of our own anxieties, sadness, or disappointments. None of those things; indeed nothing in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39).

And on this first day of National Lutheran Schools Week, we are reminded again why it is such a blessing for us here at First Lutheran to be a part of a

congregation of Christians with a Lutheran Day School. The dedicated staff of First Lutheran School is committed to “Nurturing Spiritual and Academic Growth” in each of the students entrusted to their care. In other words, our students here at FLS are getting a most excellent training in what it means to reflect the light of Jesus’ love to all around them; to be witnesses of Him. It is just as the students sang in their anthem today, “By grace through faith, Christ the Potter, *shapes* each grace-filled son and daughter.”

So they especially, along with each of us here this morning, as well as, the disciples Peter, Andrew, James, and John, have most certainly learned that it is *not* crazy to follow Jesus. It is our *life* to be with Him, to hear Him, to be loved by Him, and at last, one day to see Him as our risen Light forever! Amen