

Drop Everything

Together for Better Series Week 1: 1/21/18
Mark 1:16-20: The Calling of the First Disciples

Welcome/intro/vision

Great week to join us, we're starting a brand new series this week called Together for Better
Over the course of the next several weeks we're going to look at different stories where Jesus is going to forge together as a community in order to make a difference in this world, to serve a greater good and a greater purpose together

See, all of us at some level want to have a rich, meaningful life.

And one of the revolutionary things that Jesus taught was that life was found as we give ourselves away to something bigger than ourselves, not as we hoard and accumulate

We believe as a church that we're called together to make things around us better. We're called together to serve together

One of the things that was in place here for us as a church long before I got here was an "all y'all" mentality—that we pull together to help make this thing called church happen

Between set-up, tear-down, kids ministry, welcome and hospitality and small group leaders and people making meals for people who are sick and people who pray and worship team and everything else we do here

We have over 200 adults and teens who volunteer and serve somewhere in the church—over 200!!

We're an all-y'all kind of a place where we invite everyone EVENTUALLY to find a place to serve somewhere

And so each week of this series we're going to interview someone who is serving in some different corner of the church to have them share something of how serving has shaped them in positive and constructive ways

And then in a couple weeks, Feb. 4th, just like Dan talked about earlier, we're going to have our Connection Celebration where we're going to invite anyone who hasn't found a place and who's been here longer than a few months to serve to explore where you might put the gifts God's given you to work

Because Jesus taught was that life is found as we give ourselves away to something bigger than ourselves, not as we hoard and accumulate

And so each week we're going to have different people share how they've experienced that for themselves

This week going to call up Ernie Lane, Ernie has been the Sunday Crew director for almost 2 years now, helping to make sure that chairs and pipe and drape and all the kids stuff gets set up week in and week out

- 1. How did you first get involved in Sunday crew?**
- 2. Is there a story or a couple of snapshots that for you really speaks to the heart of what's been great about working with this team of people?**
- 3. How would you say that you've personally grown as you've served on Sunday crew?**

PRAY a blessing over Ernie as he rotates off as Sunday crew director...

Two weeks ago we talked about how everything's better when we're connected in with a healthy community

Today, we're going to talk about how Jesus seems to always builds those relationships and those communities with an eye towards making a difference in the world around him

If you've got a Bible, turn with me to Mark 1/no Bible:

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

[BACK TO FIRST CALLING SLIDE]

In our small group Bible study this past week we asked the question 'what would you drop everything for?' What would you re-arrange your life for, uproot things for, or move your family for?

And the responses were great—a few of us would uproot our lives if we knew we could make a significant difference in the world in some area that mattered to us like education or helping a particular country that we love

we've got 3 people in our small group from two different countries in Africa in our small group and they bring so much richness to our discussions

the love they have for their home land and the ways that they've learned and practiced a wonderful faith there and the longing they have to see good things happen there, all that comes up regularly in our small group and blesses us

I shared how I would have left mom and dad and home to play professional basketball for the Lakers in middle school if a pro scout had discovered the wonderful talents of a 95-pound 8th

grader. Someone's husband shared for her that she would have dropped everything to be a dolphin trainer as a kid

For all of us, it was pretty dramatic stuff required to get us to drop everything and make a major change.

And one person pointed that almost all of us wanted some guarantee of success, that it would be worth it, a sense that making that kind of a change was going to have some positive outcome or impact that we desired or were excited about

Jesus here in this story is calling his very first disciples, and even WITHOUT any guarantees of success or that it would be worth it, not much clarity at all, they drop everything and they go for it.

It starts with these two guys Simon and Andrew. Now, to start with, the invitation that Jesus extends to Simon and Andrew is a bit controversial and uncomfortable for just about all of us: **"I will send you out to fish for people."**

This of course is playing off of their current activity of fishing

But what it means is that Jesus is eventually going to send them out on a mission to tell others about himself

If you're not a Jesus person, not a church person, perhaps this is one of those verses in the Bible that you wish WASN'T in there—you've been the victim of someone's fishing expedition!

Maybe one of your obstacles to considering Jesus seriously is how people in your life have acted on this whole fishing thing!

Let me let you in on a little secret: most of the people in church-world wish this wasn't in there, either!

Many of us feel awkward about it, don't know what to do with it, feel resistance in our own hearts to it

One place where some of the most committed Christians and most committed atheists both agree: They both wish the Bible and specifically Jesus didn't tell Christians to go and do this!

BUT at the very beginning in the first calling of his first followers, he builds into the very DNA a vision for this work that they will eventually go and do of telling others about him—this thing that most of us Christians and lots of people who aren't Christians wish he didn't say!

Let's take a quick pass at this--I heard this explanation and it really helped me many years ago

Throughout history there are all kinds of religious people and philosophers who glean all kinds good information, right information

about how the world works and how we might best live in it simply through good observation

You can learn a lot good morals or healthy relationships and ethics simply by watching how people live!

what goes right, what goes wrong, what kinds of consequences or outcomes are preferable, and you can build a whole moral or philosophical structure simply by watching how people live

You can even build a religion through good observation.

Look at the stars, the world around us, if you're willing to accept that this isn't all just a random accident, you can see that the One who designed this place is freakishly smart, that it all fits together

And you can then look at human beings and see the capacities we all have for love and good as well as destruction and evil

and you can start to piece some things together about the nature and character of the God who designed this place

All of that can you do simply by good observation

But here's what you can't put together from merely observing the world around us: you can't know that Jesus was born 2,000 years ago

That Jesus was sent by God to reconcile and heal and forgive and cleanse a world that was in the beginning nothing but good, good, good, and very good

You can't know just by walking through the woods that Jesus died on a cross to forgive our sins

You can't know just by doing some people-watching at Wal-Mart that Jesus rose again on the 3rd day and conquered death forever

so that we might no longer have to ever be afraid of anything ever, ever, ever again.

You can't just learn that level of freedom, joy, hope, forgiveness, and infinite possibility from astute observation of the world around you, you can only be told that. That's history. That's news.

That's an event that happened in history that requires it to be transmitted, taught to us by someone else who has known about it from someone before them

I'm here because someone told me about what happened.

In my darkest moments of my life, it has been the presence and the comfort and the promises of Jesus that have saved me—and the same thing is true for many of us here today, right friends?

I am literally FOREVER in debt to the many people who followed the call of Jesus to go fish for me over the course of my life, to teach it to me, to explain it to me, to unpack all the implications and applications in my life

And it's not just true for me. Following Jesus has changed more lives than just about anything over the past 2,000 years.

There are literally billions of people like me whose lives have been changed for the better because someone told us about Jesus

Are there better and worse ways to do this? Absolutely. There are better and worse ways to do just about anything in the world, from teaching math to a hernia operation to sharing faith

But to the fundamental question “do we really have to talk about this with people who don’t yet know about it?”

The answer is, “there’s no other way TO know about it other than to do so.”

And so Jesus bakes this right into the opening job description and call of his first followers: come follow me and I will send you out to fish for people.

Now one very striking thing about this passage is the dramatic response: these first disciples hear that invitation, they LEAVE BEHIND what they were formerly doing, they DROP THEIR NETS and follow Jesus

These two sets of brothers each have an experience of a necessary ending. The first sets of brothers leave their nets

the next two brothers leave behind their father and the hired hands, which in the ancient near east was kind of a big deal because families typically grew up together, worked together, stayed together, and took care of each other in their old age

PLUS the hired hands suggests that theirs was a bigger, more successful, more lucrative business than what Simon and Andrew had

All four of these first disciples had something that they were fully occupied and doing when Jesus called them to leave those somethings behind that they knew and were familiar with and that were working for them

And the reality is FOR ALL OF US there will come a time if we’re going to at all take following Jesus seriously

when Jesus will call us to drop something in order to follow him.

And of course, our most natural reaction to this is WHY?!? Why do I have to leave anything behind in order to follow Jesus?

Because we get so attached to the props and stuff and circumstances in our lives, and the American way is to simply ADD more stuff without getting rid of anything—right?

That’s why the remote storage industry which barely existed 25 years ago is a booming multi-billion dollar industry now!

Several years ago I read a really great book called “**Necessary Endings**” that talked about how important it is to be able to bring some things to an end

The book asks a fantastic question that I've wrestled with in the past that I want to pitch right to you this morning:

What's a part of your today that needs to be left behind in order for you to enter God's picture for your tomorrow?

There's three categories of things that Jesus will call us to leave behind:

1. Good things.

The disciples are earning a good and honest living doing good work. Nothing wrong with fishing, nothing wrong with fishing with dad or having a successful and thriving business!

But in order to follow Jesus into the future he has for them, the disciples have GOT to drop their nets, GOOD things, because sometimes the enemy to the BEST thing for us is the GOOD thing that we settle for.

Learned this recently: a rose bush will produce too many buds.

Most of them are good and healthy but there's too many of them for the rose bush to produce good and healthy flowers.

So if the rose bush isn't pruned, the resources will be stretched too thin and it will produce many weak flowers

rather than giving its best energies to the best 20 or 30% of the buds and really flourishing.

This is true in business and organizations—at your workplace, at your kids schools,

That's true in our personal lives as well—try to do too many things, most of us will do none of them well.

For some of us this morning, the thing that Jesus would call you to leave behind right here before we leave is something that's good in theory, might be good in a vacuum

It might be a relationship or a job or a hobby or a way of doing your work or a family pattern

it might have been something that was good for a season of your life, but that season is over.

2. Second category of things that needs to be left behind: sick things.

Some things in our lives are sick and have been for a long time. And they're just not going to get any better.

But we keep thinking that if we water it, if pour more time or energy into it, if I put more into this sick thing, maybe it'll get better.

This could be a bad financial decision that you've made that you just need to admit is sick, isn't going to get any better and you need to cut your losses and end it.

Or it could be an unhealthy relationship or an unhealthy job situation

Some of us have unhealthy patterns of relating with our parents or with a spouse or with a kid and those patterns are what need to change

In college I developed some obnoxiously flirty behaviors. My goal at a party was to find the cutest girls in the room and have them laughing at me, with me or in my general vicinity by the time the party was done.

When I got married, that sick an unhealthy behavior needed to end. And it took longer than it should have and in fact that behavior was a significant detriment to our marriage early on.

Maybe you've got friendships that are sick and unhealthy—maybe they were good for a season but it's time to move on.

Some of us have sick things we're carrying along with us that are consuming our emotional resources, maybe our financial resources, our spiritual resources, our time, our hearts.

And maybe this morning it's time to leave the sick thing behind.

3. Lastly, there are **dead things** that Jesus will call us to leave behind.

In the Scripture, sin and death are always intertwined.

The biblical understanding of sin is broken relationship with God and the NATURAL result of that, is death.

My friends, some of you this morning have dead things that you're totally enmeshed in that you need to leave behind, here this morning, today.

You're stuck in a sin pattern, maybe an addiction, an affair, maybe a relationship of some sort, maybe un-ethical business practices, maybe a way of treating your spouse or kids

Maybe it's something like a plan or an ambition or a dream that started healthy but now it's toxic, driving you to make destructive decisions,

Maybe there's this toxic emotional stuff like guilt and bitterness and shame, jealousy and gossip and pride and envy

maybe you're nursing a grudge or unforgiveness, cultivating more and more bitterness in your heart and more self-righteousness

It feels weirdly and sickly good for a while, but the reality is that's stuff just death for you

And in your better moments, your clearer moments, you know it.

And he looks at what you've got inside your heart and your soul and and Jesus says to you—this has got to go, and I'm here to free you from it.

Three categories of things that Jesus might call us to leave behind:

1. Good things, healthy things, that would just get in the way of what's next
2. Sick things that we're pouring our time and energies into that just aren't going to get any better,
3. and Dead things that are sins or internal-world death that we need to leave behind, we need to repent of.

The why is illustrated right here in this story: Do you know what would have happened if the disciples had tried to follow Jesus and carry their nets with them?

They would have spent the next 3 years tripping over their nets. Over and over and over again. can you picture a middle-eastern 28-year-old carrying a big, huge fish net around with him in the desert? No water anywhere in sight?

The disciples DROP those nets in order to follow Jesus without TRIPPING OVER those nets. Because ***to play go fish with Jesus, they had to leave their nets behind***

So here's the question: ***What's a part of your today that needs to be left behind in order for you to enter God's picture for your tomorrow?***

We had a great conversation about this in my small group this past week, and the net that came up for many of us was the need for clarity and control

Several folks in the small group are at places in our lives where they're trying to figure out what's next, where to go next, what's the next step

And they were talking about how much that desire for CLARITY around the FUTURE was at points keeping them from embracing what it meant to just follow Jesus today, in this moment and to see what he was up to all around them

The disciples had zero clarity about what the future held for them in this moment when they dropped everything to follow Jesus

AND, in fact, this was a grace to them. If they HAD known all that was ahead, they might very well have freaked out!

I want you to pause, right here, right now, just us, and ask you to take inventory for just a minute of the various things that you're carrying in with you this morning—some good, some sick, some dead

And I want to ask you: is there something that you need to drop here this morning in order to step into the future God has for you?

Is there something good that needs to go, like fishing was for the disciples—not a bad thing, just time for that good thing to end to make room for something better?

Is there something kind of sick that needs to be dropped, like a need for clarity and control which is an illusion

Is there something dead that needs to go like greed, racism, pride, resentment, an addiction, an affair, a grasping for power and prestige?

This morning we're going to give you a chance to hear Jesus' call on your life and respond just like the disciples did.

Underneath your seat: note card. This morning, we're going to do an extra celebration of communion, the body and blood of Christ, celebrating his death and resurrection for our sins.

This morning, Jesus is coming to you and he's coming to me with the exact same call into mission that he extended to Simon and Andrew, James and John: follow me and I'll make you fishers of people.

Follow me as a part of a larger community that I send out to bring life and light and grace and peace to a weary and broken world

And in order to follow Jesus into that future, there might be a net or two that you need to drop. A necessary ending that needs to happen. And today's your day

Notecards, pens: write down net you need to drop. Totally anonymous, just you and the Lord.

Then bring it up here and drop that notecard up here at one of these tables and exchange it for the body and blood of Jesus

The body and blood that Jesus said was broken and poured out for the forgiveness of sins, the restoration of our relationship with God and with each other.

This morning is your chance to take a step towards a necessary ending. Releasing old things, embracing the love and relationship with Christ

Letting go of things that have been tripping you up over and over again and bringing you into community with Jesus

Going to move to a time of worship. This is Jesus's table, if you belong to Jesus this table belongs to you.

Invite you to take a moment to honestly write down any nets you need to drop and then come and exchange your nets for Jesus's life

And what I'll do for you this week is I'll take these note cards and pray over them with you all this week, praying that you'll have the strength and ability to drop your net and leave it here

This is totally anonymous. BUT if you'd like for an elder or pastor to follow-up with you, you can put your name and email on the card and we'll connect with you to meet and talk and pray

If you're not yet a Jesus follower, then we invite you to consider the story we just looked at: Jesus comes by you this morning and invites you to follow him and be a part of his family and a part of his joy to the world restoration project here on earth

And you've got nets, just like we all do, and just like all of us, you have to decide if you want to hang onto those nets or if you want to follow Jesus—sometimes we can't have both

This morning, the invitation goes out to you and me and anyone who has ears to hear: Drop your nets and follow him!

He will bring you into his new family, a new community, that he turns outward together to go and live out and bring his great news to a weary and broken world.

PRAY