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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
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**The Call of Jesus Leads Us to Drop What We're Doing and Follow Him**

Mark 1:14-20

INI

Grace to you from God our Father who has called us out of darkness, and into His marvelous light and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who has redeemed us with His own blood. Amen.

***Mark 1:14–20***

*<sup>14</sup> Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

*<sup>16</sup> And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." <sup>18</sup> They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*

*<sup>19</sup> When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. <sup>20</sup> And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Let us pray: Speak, O Lord, Your servant is listening. Amen.

"The bus will be here in 15 minutes! Get your backpack ready!" ... no response.

"10 minutes! Are your teeth brushed?" ... again no response.

"5 minutes! Get your coat and boots on now!" ... nothing.

"The bus will be here any minute! Now drop what you're doing, and come immediately!"

Why aren't they coming? How is it that mom and dad can be so frantic, but the kids seem like they could care less? They were warned; they were told repeatedly to be ready – but for all that the parents say – they just don't have that same sense of urgency. There is always something more important going on, something more compelling –

they are building a castle out of blocks; they need to finish the chapter of their book; they need to finish sleeping. Mom and dad need to teach them to realize the urgency of their call.

The kingdom of God means, “drop what you’re doing, and listen.” The kingdom of God is the event of God bringing His all-powerful rule into our lives. It should be understood as the reign of God visiting earth; a reign which makes right what has gone wrong. It is an event which is accompanied by the arrival of God’s own Son – the chosen heir, the king has visited this fallen world. And that reign of God is revealed in an urgent proclamation...

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

When the kingdom of God arrives, it means “drop what you’re doing. The bus will be here any minute.” The time is fulfilled. God is coming, with all His wrath against sin; God is coming, and in His own Son, He is making His power known on earth. He is casting out demons. He is healing the sick. He is calming storms. He is suffering. He is dying. He is overthrowing death itself. The time is fulfilled and that means, it is a time for repentance. It is time to drop what we’re doing, and listen. It is time for kid, parent, husband, wife, single man, single woman, pastor, member, young and old alike to realize the sense of urgency what Jesus is proclaiming. **The call of Jesus leads us to drop what we’re doing and follow Him.**

### **1. Hear the call.**

We begin with the call of Jesus. A call we need to hear. We hear parents calling for their kids all the time. “I’m warning you...” “If you don’t come here this instant, so help me I’ll...” But what does it amount to? Do they really hear what you are saying? Is there anything backing up your threats?

Kids need more than words; more than yelling if they are to respect and respond. If dad doesn’t back his words up with some sort of consequence, those kids might never go to school. “Oh, I’m sorry you used up all your play time before school. Looks like you’ll have to go right to bed after supper.” Then they begin to realize there is authority in that call. There is a reason to sense the urgency.

It took Jonah a while to realize this. There was no urgency at first. “Jonah, you will go to Nineveh and warn them of their great wickedness.” But Jonah had other plans. He

wasn't interested in seeing that wicked city repent. So he pretended like he couldn't hear. And he acted like there would be no consequences.

He hopped a boat and headed in the other direction. And by the time he realized the foolishness of running from the Lord, it was too late. He missed the bus. Now there would be a consequence. So he ended up in the belly of a great fish.

The kingdom of God comes in an urgent call. No time to wait. It comes with a warning of great consequences if things are not made right. "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." That is to say, "God is coming and He is going to make things right one way or the other."

But sometimes it takes us a while to realize this. We've got our own plans for what is right. We're building castles, thinking if we can just finish; if we can just get things to turn out the way we imagined it – then God will see, then God will know that we knew what we were doing.

We've got our own ideas about how our lives should be. It could be health related. It could be marriage related. It could be financially related. It could be about the stuff we own, the place we live, the people we try to fix, the pleasures we seek, the lies we tell, the responsibility we do not want to take.

It could be pastor related. It could be that there is a call in the midst of this congregation and God wants us to hear something. He is making an urgent call.

A call for your pastor to go to another congregation does not come about by mere chance. Neither is it according to our plans or choice. It is by God's choice. And even though we do not yet know where I'm going to end up – it is a call to us all. His Word has called us to Nineveh, to the place where a cry has risen up against the wickedness in the world and in our lives. It is not a time to turn our boats in the opposite direction. It is not a time to just keep on building our castles of self-interest and security. We need more than words and God has let us know there is something coming that fulfill all He has foretold.

When the kingdom of God draws near, it is an urgent call; a time to take a look within ourselves, take a look at what we are doing as a church, take a look at our families, take a look at the world around us – and hear the call: the bus is nearly here!

## **2. Drop what you're doing**

**The call of Jesus has been heard; we must drop what we're doing and follow Him.**  
The call of Jesus is something that leads us to drop what we're doing.

"The bus is almost here!" You've warned them. You've yelled. But still the kids haven't even brushed their teeth. But of course, what have you been doing? Well, you've been checking your Facebook account. You've been taking your good time in the bathroom. You've been reading the paper. And you wonder, why they aren't ready?

But you have so much to get done. You overslept. You have to shower, empty the dishwasher, get the garbage out to the curb, make the coffee, eat your breakfast. There is so much to be done. Those kids need to drop what they are doing and get ready!

There was much to be done for those fishermen too. They had invested so much into it. Time. Money. Energy. Hopes. Sure they were just a couple of fishermen. But that was who they were. They were brothers. And they were fishermen. They had a boat and they were out on a lake. And that was their realm of responsibility. They were comfortable there. Doing what they knew how to do. Until Jesus showed up.

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

How could they just drop what they were doing? How could they leave behind what they had put so much time and money and commitment into. It took years to establish themselves. To make this business work. And now they were supposed to just leave it all behind to follow Jesus?

What are the things we invested ourselves in? What are the castles we are busy building – the projects or pleasures or preoccupations that can't be interrupted?

Maybe the people busy building castles are not our kids – but me. Maybe the reason we are missing the bus is not because of the kids, it is because of me. Instead of giving my attention to the needs of those around me, the place where Jesus has called me, I am too busy giving my attention to myself. I'm glued to my smartphone. I'm clinging to my money. I'm busy with what I want to do so I can't listen to my mom or dad or God. I'm captive to sinful habits. I'm stuck building castles, thinking of what my life should be and what it is not – as if some day I'm gonna make the big catch; then God will see; then He will know that my plan was right.

God has called you to stop waiting for the big catch and look to the needs of the others in the boat around you. It means drop what you are doing; go look your kids in the eye

– or spouse, or co-worker, or fellow Christian – and show them you are there to serve them.

And that is what Simon and Andrew did. And not just in a few minutes. Not after they finished the day's work. Not after they could sell off their boat or cash in their days catch. Mark says, "They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

Mark's gospel is the urgent gospel. It is the shortest of the four gospel accounts and that is because Mark wants to get to the point. There is no birth narrative. He uses the word "immediately" more than any other book in the New Testament. The word "immediately" occurs 59 times in the NT, and 42 of those belong to Mark. Matthew uses it 6 times. Luke 3 times and John 3 times. But Mark wants to emphasize the urgency of it.

When Jesus shows up, it means there is no time to waste. It means God has dropped what He was doing, to give His attention to us. God saw how we are stuck in our ways. How we could never make such drastic changes so as to save ourselves. So He dropped what He was doing and He sent His only Son.

Jesus dropped what he was doing, to come for you. He dropped all that he deserved, all the riches and comforts of heaven, to come for you. He let go of everything, so that in His death, He clung to nothing but the promises of God and the hope of what this would do for you. He let go of His own Father in heaven, even as God let go of Him, so that He could become sin and suffer the curse of hell for us. He gave up life so that He could accept death.

And that is the kingdom of God. The reign of God has come to earth to conquer sin and death and rise and live for you. He rose from death and built a new castle, brought you new riches, opening the gates of forgiveness and life to you. He forgave Nineveh. He has forgiven you.

That is what gets us off our boat. That is what gives us urgency. That is what confronts us to take a straight line to Jesus – no detours – straight to His cross, His death, His resurrection where we find complete forgiveness for all of our sins. His proclamation was not just repentance, but also to believe. Believe the good news. That is what led four fishermen to hear the call, to drop what they were doing, and follow Jesus. This is what leads you to hear the call, to drop what you are doing, and to follow Jesus.

**The call of Jesus leads us to drop what we're doing and follow Him.**

### 3. Follow Him.

We've heard the call. We've dropped what we are doing. And it is time to follow Him.

But where to go? Where is Jesus leading me? Do I need to sell all that I have – quit my job, sell my home, leave my family, buy a pair of sandals and become a wandering evangelist? The question for us is: how do I know where I'm supposed to be; supposed to be going as I follow Jesus.

Well, let's use an image to better understand this. Picture the scene. Two brothers out fishing. They had a boat and they were out on a lake. And that was their realm of responsibility: fishing. Until Jesus showed up and said follow Me, that was where they were supposed to be.

You each have a realm of responsibility. We call it "vocation." A vocation is the realm of responsibility which the Lord has given you; it is the places and people in your life which you are called to love and serve those around you.

Not everyone is a fisherman. In fact, I don't know any. Not everyone is an apostle. In fact, there were only twelve. But we are all something. We all have different realms. Different lakes; different boats; different shores – different realms of responsibility.

We are floating about through life, and depending on where the Lord is calling us, it may change from time to time. There may be times when the Lord wants you fishing with your brother – working together with your spouse on your relationship, helping your parents with chores, serving your boss at work – we sharing responsibilities. There may be times when you need to jump out of that boat, and move to another realm of living. An urgency which calls you to reach out to someone who doesn't know about Jesus or doesn't understand how He has saved us by grace.

There may be times when your pastor gets a call to another congregation and suddenly it's time to follow Jesus. We don't know what the Lord has in store – whether my realm of responsibility is needed here serving you or whether the Lord would have me change boats. It all depends on where the Lord reveals the neighbor most in need.

Our job right now is to evaluate our realms of responsibility. What is our place in the kingdom? Are we on board with the mission of Christ's kingdom? Or are just floating around waiting for the catch to just jump into our boat?

Its time to follow Jesus. That means hearing the call: where is Jesus calling us; who is in need, how am I serving those people to whom I am responsible? Then drop what we are doing: be ready to give up our castles, knock them down, and start something new. Maybe we need to change our approach to outreach or other ministries. Maybe we need to change our approach to parenting or marriage. And finally, we follow Jesus – which means no matter how we might have messed things up, He still calls us in forgiveness; He still wants us to be with Him; and we follow: by faith, we follow – not knowing exactly what the future will hold in this congregation or in this life; but always knowing what the future holds in store for our eternal wellbeing. For Jesus will call us again and we can be sure of it – He will call us out of the grave and into the glory of a New Creation. Amen.