

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Both Matthew and Mark tell this story of the calling of Simon and Andrew, James and John. Jesus returns from his time of prayer in the desert, he begins to preach, saying "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand," and he calls these four away from their nets. And they come at once. What is there about him that so attracts them?

Perhaps Matthew and Mark fail to mention a preliminary period of ministry in which Jesus works entirely alone and establishes an impressive reputation as a preacher and miracle worker. But John's Gospel speaks of Jesus already having disciples when he was invited to the wedding in Cana—the occasion of his "first miracle." Only in Luke does Jesus seem to begin with a time of solitary work, ending up one morning by sitting in Simon's boat to preach. Simon then fishes at Jesus' command, and drags in a huge haul of fish; in a tremendously moving and human moment, we see Simon drop to his knees in the boat amid all the flapping fish, and cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Like someone in a dream, he walks away from it all and follows Jesus; so do his partners Andrew, James and John. In none of these accounts, then, do the disciples come to Jesus out of the sense that here is someone who is going places—who has the potential for a really effective campaign for the social and spiritual betterment of God's people—who has a golden tongue and a magic touch. They come to Jesus not because of what he *does* but because of what he *is*.

We who believe in Jesus love him for what he has done for us, and what he promises; but if we are truly his disciples, we love him most of all because in him we see, entirely aside from any help he may ever give us, the shining, bone-shaking "beauty of holiness" that brings us, like Simon, to our knees. It is too much for us, we can't take it; we cry out, "Leave me alone—go away—let me just go back to normal!" ... but we get up, and we drop everything, and we follow him; and we want to fish for new disciples to know this same wonder. Do not forget this element of awe, of other-worldliness, of beauty, even of terror, as you talk of Jesus to your child and pray together to God in his name.

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Year A
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Jesus said to Simon and Andrew,
"Come with me, and you will
catch people instead of fish!"

MATTHEW 4:19



