

Matthew 4:18-25
Epiphany 3, January 25, 2026
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“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”

Jesus addresses working fishermen, Andrew, Peter, James, and John while they’re doing their jobs. He’s not giving them a metaphor out of the blue. He’s saying, in effect: “You already know how to do this kind of work. Let me deepen and shape it.”

We hear this call both as an echo of the first time we heard it, and we hear it today, in the midst of our unfolding lives.

“Follow me”

In the first-century Jewish world, follow me meant:

- Leave primary allegiance to family and livelihood
- Find a Rabbi who will take you on as a student
- Learn by walking with, not just listening to.

But in this case, Jesus is calling the disciples. Flipped the script. Those who didn’t make the first string cut are being invited into apprenticeship.

- Grace before qualification
- Call before readiness
- Relationship not role/results

Cannot disqualify or qualify yourself. Jesus calls to you, to me, to us. Follow me.

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”

“I will make you”

Shame and burnout culture says,

- “Why aren’t you catching more?”
- “Maybe you’re not following hard enough.”
- “You’re supposed to already be effective, fruitful, inspiring.”

But Jesus says *he* will do the forming. And that will take time. Transformation is Jesus’ work.

- Transformed by faithful steps, attitudes and actions
- Nourished by the means of grace in worship and sacraments
- Letting God shape us day by day. Always had daily practices of faith: meals, morning/bedtime, scripture, song. Let God in.

I will make you “fishers of people.”

Fishing in Galilee was usually:

- Done in teams through shared labor
- Dependent on trust and timing because it often involved conditions you can’t control. Disciples often faced long nights or stormy weather with nothing to show for it

This isn’t a call to lone-wolf spirituality, but into shared mission.

- Gathering people into God’s reign
- Drawing people out of chaos into life
- Participating in God’s restoration work

Not about manipulation or topping the church growth charts. But finding the relationship we've been called into expanding our family to include those God also calls.

“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of people”

“Receive your life direction from me, and I will reshape who you are and what you do so that others are drawn into the life God is giving.”

Jesus provides:

- Identity
- Purpose
- Participation in God's work

Why this matters for our “call”

We are all called. Identity as God's beloved. Purpose as followers of Jesus. Participation that takes so many forms. Presbyterians strongly affirm that all work and roles can be callings, not just church ministry.

- Parenting, teaching, farming, medicine, public service—these are genuine vocations
 - Assistant admin, public servant in social services, dayhome, volunteer coordinator, college professor, wife, mother, daughter, aunt. All are arenas to live discipleship.
 - Called to follow in sickness and health, richer or poorer...
- God calls people to serve neighbors through ordinary work
 - Minnesotans who are putting life on the line for their neighbours
 - Caring for those who are struggling by care & share
- Calvin's emphasis on vocation as service rather than self-fulfillment or ambition

Breath prayer: “Beloved. I belong. I'm willing. I let go”

Our nets may not be literal boats and ropes, but they are just as real. Our nets are the habits that define us, the securities we cling to, the identities we have built. Our nets are careers that give us meaning, routines that keep us comfortable, assumptions about how the world works and what is possible. Even good things can become nets if they keep us from responding to God's call.

Word and deed together. Truth spoken and suffering addressed. The kingdom of God is not an idea; it is an embodied reality. Sick bodies are healed. Troubled minds are restored. Those on the margins are brought near. Crowds gather. Hope spreads.

May it be so in our lives and in our life together.