

THE CALL OF JESUS' DISCIPLES

BIBLE TEXT: Matthew 4:12-25; John 1:35-51; Luke 5:27-32.

LESSON 18 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 4:12-25;

¹² ¶ Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

¹³ And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

¹⁴ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

¹⁵ The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

¹⁶ The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

¹⁷ ¶ From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

¹⁸ ¶ And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

¹⁹ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

²⁰ And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

²¹ And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

²² And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

²³ ¶ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their

NOTES:

The Universal Gospel

The Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus came to preach was a message from Heaven that was to spread into all the earth. When Christ started His ministry in Galilee He called unto Himself disciples whom He could teach to be fishers of men, and who would later be the leaders of the Church.

There were no newspapers when Jesus walked on earth; there was little way of advertising the great truths Jesus had to proclaim, so He chose men who would help Him preach. He taught them His doctrine and how to live, and later sent them out into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature (**Mark 16:15**; ¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature).

The Rugged Way

It was not easy to be a disciple of Jesus. He called men who were willing to deny themselves to follow the Saviour. One time He explained that the birds had their nests, and the foxes had holes to live in, but He Himself had nothing to call His own -- nowhere to lay His head (**Matthew 8:20**; ²⁰ And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head). Another time He told His followers that they would be "hated of all men for my name's sake"; but He also promised, "There shall not an hair of your head perish" (Luke 21:17,18). A true Christian doesn't care if the people of the world hate him. He lives to please his heavenly Father, and is looking for a reward in Heaven.

When Jesus was looking for disciples He did not go among the scribes and Pharisees, the men who had studied the Old Testament Scriptures and were at the head of the Jewish church. Those men were filled with their own ideas and would not listen to Christ's teachings. Neither did He go among the rich, because they thought they had all they needed and were not looking for the heavenly Kingdom. But Jesus went down among the humble folk and sought out men who needed help and who loved the truth. Among them He found men whom He could trust to carry on His great work after He had gone back to Heaven.

The first men Jesus called were Peter and Andrew. They earned their living by fishing. One day Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee and saw them washing their nets. When Jesus asked Peter to take his boat out and let down the net for fish, Peter answered that they had worked all night and hadn't caught anything. He didn't believe he would catch anything now, but he obeyed Jesus' command.

Peter and Andrew had met Jesus and believed He was the Messiah when John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (**John 1:40, 41**; ⁴⁰ One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.), but they probably never expected such a miracle to happen as they saw when they raised their net. There were so many fishes in it that it broke. They beckoned to the men in another ship to come and help them, and the load of fish was so great that both ships almost sank. Peter fell at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man." He didn't feel worthy of such a blessing. That contrition in Peter was what Jesus was looking for: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

²⁴ And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

²⁵ And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judaea, and *from* beyond Jordan.

John 1:35-51;

³⁵ ¶ Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

³⁶ And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

³⁷ And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸ Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

³⁹ He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

⁴⁰ One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

⁴¹ He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

The Way of Sacrifice

After the ships had come to land, Jesus told Peter and Andrew to follow Him, He would make them fishers of men. What a calling! They didn't look at that heap of fish and say they had to go and sell them first. They left them for someone else to take care of, and followed Jesus. It meant a great deal for them to give up their means of earning a living, but they had heard the call of Jesus, and they had faith enough that He would take care of them. His children need more of that faith today. What we have in this world is not important. Souls are dying; and God is calling for labourers in His vineyard who will be forgetful of their own pleasures and comforts and will carry the message of salvation to the lost.

Christ, with His first two disciples, walked along the Sea of Galilee a little farther and met some more fishermen. John and James had been fishing with their father, Zebedee, and were mending their nets. They also were quick to answer the call, and left their work to follow Jesus. We do not read that any of these fishermen ever went back to their trade.

For a little while after Jesus was crucified they seemed at a loss to know what to do, so one day they decided to go fishing.; But Jesus appeared to them and instructed them that their ministry must go on; even though He would no longer walk with them in the flesh, He would still be with them in the spirit (**Matthew 28:20**;²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you *always*, *even* unto the end of the world). They therefore forsook their nets forever, and gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

The Scripture also says that James and John left their father. Sometimes in these days Jesus requires His children to leave their parents and homes to work for Him; but He has promised, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).

"Come and See"

The next disciple that Jesus called was Philip. He believed immediately that Jesus was the Son of God, and went to tell Nathanael that the Messiah about Whom Moses had prophesied, had come. He was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nazareth was a small town where a poorer class of Jews lived, and was not a likely place for a great man to come from. Nathanael said to Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip didn't try to persuade him; he just said, "Come and see."

Jesus wants each one of us to "come and see." He does not expect us to take anyone else's word for our salvation. When we get saved "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

The greeting Jesus gave Nathanael was, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" He could look into the heart of Nathanael and see that he was not deceitful like the scribes and Pharisees who made a big pretence of being religious. The Jews were all Israelites, and they looked back to Abraham as the father of their faith. But Jesus told them that the devil -- not Abraham -- was their father, because their deeds were evil. He said Abraham would never have done the things they were doing. Therefore, when Jesus saw that Nathanael was not a hypocrite, He called him an "Israelite indeed."

Jesus had seen Nathanael before Philip called him. Jesus is looking for followers today; and when He sees an honest heart, though a great way off, He will draw him by letting conviction rest upon him. Sometimes Jesus has to talk to a sinner a long time before he will repent, but if He sees in a man a desire to serve Him, He has long patience with him.

⁴³ ¶ The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

⁴⁴ Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

⁴⁵ Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

⁴⁶ And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

⁴⁸ Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

⁵¹ And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Luke 5:27-32.

²⁷ ¶ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

²⁸ And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

One of the Despised (I Corinthians 1:28)

Levi was called to be a disciple from a class of men whom the Jews hated. They were tax collectors who were hired by the Roman government to collect tribute money from the Jews. Often they were not honest, and would take more money from the people than they were supposed to take, and would keep part of it for themselves. They were also called publicans, and we read that Christ loved them and made them His friends. Maybe you wonder how Jesus could love that kind of people; but they admitted they were sinners, and many of them came to Jesus and repented.

We remember the story of the Pharisee and publican going to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee "stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are . . . even as this publican." But the publican felt so sorry for his sins he would not even look up but smote his breast and prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said the publican went to his house justified rather than the Pharisee because the publican repented. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

As soon as Levi heard the call of Jesus he left everything to follow Him. He caught a vision of the heavenly Kingdom, and the money he received for his work did not interest him any more. He was so happy that Jesus had called him to be a disciple that he made a big feast and invited many of his friends. He probably wanted them to hear the story of Jesus, too. Jesus was glad to preach to them because He knew they needed a Saviour, and He wanted to help them.

"Greater works than these . . ." (John 14:12)

After Jesus had called His disciples He went about Galilee preaching in the synagogues and doing many miracles. People came from all the country around there to be healed of their diseases, and Jesus healed them all. We don't read that He ever turned anyone away who came to Him for aid. While He was doing this wonderful work He was teaching His disciples the work they should do, and He told them they would do even more than He, because He was soon to return to His Father in Heaven.

QUESTIONS

1. What message did Christ preach that was the same as John's message?
2. Did the disciples obey Jesus' command to "Follow me"?
3. Name six whom Jesus called to follow Him.
4. Did Philip recognise Jesus as being the Christ?
5. What did Philip say to Nathanael concerning Jesus?
6. What is promised to us if we leave all to follow Him?

³⁰ But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

³¹ And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

³² I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.