

PSALM 130 AND MARK 1:14-20

JESUS CALLS US O'RE THE TUMULT OF OUR LIFE'S WILD RESTLESS SEA. DAY BY DAY HIS SWEET VOICE SOUNDETH, SAYING "CHRISTIAN FOLLOW ME."

THE GENTLE CALL OF THE SAVIOR TO SINNERS AS EXPRESSED IN THIS HYMN IS A SHARP CONTRAST TO SOME OTHER CALLS TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN CHRIST.

FOR EXAMPLE: "SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD" IS A SERMON BY THE AMERICAN PASTOR JONATHAN EDWARDS, PREACHED IN 1741.

THIS WAS A HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL SERMON. IT HELPED TO LAUNCH A REVIVAL CALLED THE GREAT AWAKENING. IT EMPHASIZED GOD'S WRATH UPON UNBELIEVERS AND THE FATE OF A FIERY HELL.

EDWARDS PREACHED THAT IT IS THE MERE WILL OF GOD THAT KEEPS THE WICKED FROM BEING CAST INTO THE FURNACE OF HELL.

THE UNDERLYING POINT WAS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN HUMANS A CHANCE TO CONFESS THEIR SINS SO YOU BETTER REPENT.

SUCH SERMONS WERE COMMON IN THE PAST, AND ARE STILL PREACHED BY AT TIMES EVEN TODAY.

AND THERE IS SOME BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE WARNING ABOUT GOD'S JUDGMENT.

FOR EXAMPLE, JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CALL TO REPENT CAME WITH A WARNING ABOUT JUDGMENT.

THERE ARE ALSO SIMILAR WARNINGS IN OTHER PLACES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

IN FACT EVEN JESUS ENDED SOME OF HIS STORIES WITH A WARNING ABOUT BEING THROWN INTO THE OUTER DARKNESS- WHERE THERE WILL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING, HOWEVER DOES NOT FIT THIS HARSH PATTERN OF SEEKING TO FRIGHTEN PEOPLE TO FOLLOW JESUS.

THIS MOST CERTAINLY IS BECAUSE AT ITS HEART THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S LIFE AND MISSION WAS TO CALL US TO HIMSELF, AND THUS TO GOD, OUT OF LOVE NOT ANGER OR FEAR.

THIS IN NO WAY DIMINISHES THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN AND OUR REBELLION AGAINST GOD.

BUT THE CALL JESUS ISSUES IS LESS ABOUT AVOIDING PUNISHMENT, AND MORE ABOUT BEING TRANSFORMED BY OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

PSALM 130 REMINDS US: "IF YOU O LORD, SHOULD MARK INIQUITIES, LORD WHO COULD STAND?"

BUT THERE IS FORGIVENESS IN YOU THAT YOU SHOULD BE REVERED."

THE WORDS OF THE PSALM TEACH US THAT GOD CALLS US INTO REPENTANCE BECAUSE GOD IS WILLING TO FORGIVE.

AND GOD CALLS US SO THAT WE MAY LEARN TO LOVE AND HONOR GOD.

AS THE HYMNS SAYS: JESUS CALLS US FROM THE WORSHIP OF THE VAIN WORLD'S GOLDEN STORE, FROM EACH IDOL THAT WOULD KEEP US, SAYING, "CHRISTIAN, LOVE ME MORE!"

SO LET US LOOK THEREFORE AT THE SAVIOR'S CALL AS IT IS FOUND IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

JESUS ANNOUNCED THE KINGDOM OF GOD WAS WITHIN REACH AND TO REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS THAT GOD WAS INVITING THEM TO BE A PART OF IT.

HERE, REPENTANCE WAS NOT ABOUT AVOIDING PUNISHMENT BUT RECEIVING A BLESSING. CONSIDER THIS STORY:

IT WAS NEWS YEARS DAY IN 1929 DURING THE ROSE BOWL THAT A PLAYER NAMED ROY RIEGELS RECOVERED A FUMBLE.

UNFORTUNATELY IN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE PLAY RIEGELS RAN TOWARDS THE WRONG GOAL AND HAD TO BE TACKLED BY ONE OF HIS OWN PLAYERS.

AFTER A FEW PLAYS THE OTHER TEAM GOT THE BALL BACK AND SCORED, JUST BEFORE HALF-TIME.

THE PLAYERS ALL WENT INTO THE LOCKER ROOM, BUT RIEGELS SAT IN THE CORNER DESPONDENT OVER HIS ERROR.

THEY EXPECTED THE COACH TO SHOUT OR AT LEAST GO OVER ALL THE PROBLEMS WITH THE FIRST HALF, BUT HE WAS SILENT UNTIL JUST BEFORE THE START OF THE SECOND HALF.

LOOKING THE TEAM OVER HE SAID THAT EVERYONE WHO PLAYED IN THE FIRST HALF WOULD DO SO AGAIN.

RIEGLES TOLD THE COACH HE WAS TOO ASHAMED TO RETURN TO THE FIELD, BUT THE COACH INSISTED, REMINDING HIM THE GAME WAS ONLY HALF OVER.

THIS FOOTBALL STORY REMINDS US ABOUT THE POWER OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS, AND HOW WE ALSO ARE GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE.

INDEED AS LONG AS SOME TIME REMAINS ON THE CLOCK THE GAME IS NOT OVER, AND WE HAVE THE CHANCE TO REPENT AND DO BETTER.

REPENTANCE IN FACT IS MORE THAN FEELING SORRY, IT INCLUDES A DESIRE TO CHANGE AND AN ATTEMPT TO DO SO.

IT IS ABOUT GETTING BACK ON THE FIELD, GRATEFUL FOR ANOTHER CHANCE AND STRIVING TO DO BETTER.

TRULY, IT IS SO MUCH BETTER IS FOR US TO REPENT AND ACT OUT OF LOVE FOR AND GRATITUDE TO GOD, THAN TO DO SO OUT OF FEAR.

IN FACT OBEYING GOD OUT OF LOVE CARRIES WITH IT A STRONGER AURA OF SINCERITY THAN DOES OBEDIENCE MOTIVATED BY FEAR.

ACCORDING TO ALL FOUR GOSPEL ACCOUNTS JESUS NEVER SOUGHT TO INTIMIDATE PEOPLE TO REPENT AND FOLLOW HIM.

THIS IS NOTE WORTHY SINCE JESUS HAD THE POWER AND AUTHORITY TO DO SO, BUT HE CHOSE NOT TO USE HIS POWER OR AUTHORITY IN THAT WAY.

FOR EXAMPLE, CHRIST'S CALL TO HIS FIRST DISCIPLES INCLUDED THE PROMISE THAT IF THEY FOLLOW HIM HE WILL MAKE THEM INTO A DIFFERENT KIND OF FISHERMEN.

IN OTHER WORDS, HE OFFERED TO TEACH AND EMPOWER THEM TO DO MORE THAN JUST MAKE A LIVING, AS IMPORTANT AS THAT IS.

THEY WERE CALLED TO WALK WITH JESUS, LISTEN TO HIS VOICE AND TO LEARN FROM HIM.

AND LATER, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE DAY OF PENTECOST, JESUS' FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN EMPOWERED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO HIS WORK IN THE WORLD.

THIS IS SOMETHING FOR US TO THINK ABOUT, SINCE SO OFTEN CHRISTIANS DOUBT THEY HAVE THE SKILLS OR CALLING TO SERVE THE LORD.

THERE IS A STORY ALONG THIS LINE ABOUT A WOMAN WHO REALLY WANTED TO BE A MISSIONARY, SHE EVEN FELT A CALL FROM GOD TO WORK IN MISSIONS.

HOWEVER IT NEVER WORKED OUT BECAUSE SHE WAS MARRIED AND HAD YOUNG CHILDREN.

THEN, MANY YEARS LATER, AFTER HER CHILDREN WERE GROWN AND ON THEIR OWN, HER PASTOR ASKED DURING WORSHIP IF ANYONE HAD ROOM FOR A VISITING MISSIONARY.

SHE THEN HEARD ANEW THE CALL TO SERVE CHRIST'S MISSION BY HOUSING THAT MISSIONARY, AND MANY OTHERS OF OVER THE YEARS.

THIS STORY OFFERS BUT ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW THE LORD CAN USE THOSE WHO LISTEN FOR HIS CALL AND ARE WILLING TO FOLLOW HIM.

THIS BRINGS TO MIND ANOTHER VERSE FROM PSALM 130: "I WAIT FOR THE LORD, MY SOUL WAITS, AND IN HIS WORD I HOPE."

TRULY, WAITING FOR GOD IS IMPORTANT, AND OFTEN A NECESSARY PART OF FOLLOWING JESUS.

FURTHERMORE, LET US REMEMBER BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS, IN WHATEVER CAPACITY WE ARE CALLED, INVOLVES TRUSTING JESUS' WORDS TO THE FIRST DISCIPLES- "I WILL MAKE YOU."

INDEED DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT ABOUT OUR TALENTS OR SKILLS OR POWER. IT IS ABOUT JESUS PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES AND HIS PROMISE TO WORK WITH AND THROUGH US.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE FIRST DISCIPLES. THOSE FISHERMEN WERE NOT LOOKING TO SERVE GOD IN ANY WAY MORE THAN BEING PROVIDERS FOR THEIR FAMILIES, AND FOLLOWING GOD'S LAW LIKE ANY GOOD JEW.

JESUS, HOWEVER SAW IN THEM WHAT THEY DID NOT SEE IN THEMSELVES OR ONE ANOTHER, WHICH IS WHY HE CALLED THEM TO FOLLOW HIM AND BE CHANGED BY HIM.

NOW, AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED IN THE GOSPEL READING, THOSE WHO WERE CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS HAD TO LET GO OF THEIR NETS BEFORE THEY COULD DO SO.

WHEN WE READ OR LISTEN TO THIS STORY, WE OFTEN IGNORE THIS SEEMING SMALL DETAIL IN FAVOR OF FOCUSING ON THE FACT THEY OBEYED JESUS RIGHT AWAY.

BUT LET'S THINK ABOUT WHAT THOSE NETS CAN SYMBOLIZE IN OUR LIVES. IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT CAN HOLD US BACK FROM FOLLOWING JESUS?

YOU SEE, IN ORDER TO FOLLOW JESUS, WE MUST BE WILLING TO PUT DOWN, OR LAY ASIDE, SOME OF OUR PLANS OR OTHER WANTS.

INDEED, IF WE WILL NOT LET GO OF WHATEVER NETS WE ARE HOLDING ONTO, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO VERY FAR WITH THE LORD.

I AM NOT SPEAKING HERE ABOUT BIG DECISIONS LIKE A NEW CAREER, OR A CHANGE OF LOCATION, OR SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT LIFE CHANGE.

INSTEAD, SO VERY OFTEN THE NETS THAT HOLD US BACK BECAUSE WE HOLD ONTO THEM- ARE FOUND IN THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE.

THESE THINGS CAN BE LOW SELF-ESTEEM, OUR HEALTH, FINANCIAL OR OTHER WORRIES, FEAR OF FAILURE, OR FEAR OF LOSING OUT ON SOMETHINGS IN LIFE THAT WE ENJOY DOING OR HAVING.

ANOTHER VERSE OF THE HYMN SAYS: IN OUR JOYS AND IN OUR SORROWS, DAYS OF TOIL AND HOURS OF EASE, STILL HE CALLS, IN CARES AND PLEASURES, "CHRISTIAN, LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE!"

TRULY, WHEN WE ARE AWAKE TO CHRIST'S CALL AND WILLING TO BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US, WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE THAN WE IMAGINE.

JESUS CALLS US TO LET GO OF OUR NETS, TO TURN AWAY FROM CULTURAL ICONS AND VALUES THAT ARE NOT IN LINE WITH GOD'S KINGDOM.

AND WHEN WE LISTEN TO HIS CALL WE CAN BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION TO NATIONAL AND EVEN WORLD PROBLEMS.

NO, WE CANNOT FIX EVERYTHING, BUT WE CAN DO SOMETHING.

IT IS LIKE THE STORY OF THE CHILD SEEN TOSSING BEACHED STARFISH BACK INTO THE WATER, AFTER A STORM LITTERED THE SHORE WITH THEM.

AN ADULT CAME BY AND SAID YOU “CANNOT SAVE THEM ALL”, AND THE CHILD REPLIED, “BUT I CAN SAVE SOME.”

WE CANNOT SAVE THE WORLD-THAT IS CHRIST’S JOB, BUT WE CAN HELP HIM IN HIS TASK OF FURTHERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE WORLD.

THIS IS WHAT HE ASKS OF AND EMPOWERS US TO DO, IF WE ARE WILLING. MAY GOD GRANT US A WILLINGNESS TO DO SO.

LET US PRAY: GOD OF ALL CREATION, YOU CALL US TO BE YOUR PEOPLE, TO CARRY YOUR VISION IN THIS TIME AND PLACE, TO GO WHERE YOU SEND US.

HELP US, WE PRAY TO WELCOME THE GOOD NEWS OF YOUR GRACE AND LOVE REVEALED IN JESUS- THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. FILL US WITH YOUR HOLY SPIRIT-THAT WE MAY SHARE YOUR GOOD NEWS WITH A WORLD IN NEED.

SHOW US WHERE IN OUR HOMES, OUR PLACES OF WORK, OUR COMMUNITIES AND BEYOND THAT WE CAN PROCLAIM YOUR LOVE IN WORD AND ACTION.

REMIND US OF CHRIST’S CALL AND HIS EMPOWERMENT, WHEN WE SEEK TO DO TOO LITTLE FOR FEAR OF FAILURE, OR LACK OF TIME OR MOTIVATION, AND HELP US SERVE HIM.

AND WHEN WE SEEK TO DO TOO MUCH, THINKING IT IS ALL ON OUR SHOULDERS, REMIND US- YOU ASK OF US ONLY WHAT YOU EMPOWER US AND DESIRE US TO DO.

MAY WE NEVER DOUBT THAT WE DO NOT EARN YOUR LOVE BY OUR DOING ANY MORE THAN WE LOSE YOUR LOVE BY OUR FAILURE TO ANSWER JESUS’ CALL.

TO YOU, O LORD, BE THE GLORY FOR THE GREAT THINGS YOU HAVE DONE AND FOR ALL YOU WILL DO. THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD WE PRAY. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: MARK 1:14-20

JESUS CALLS US O'RE THE TUMULT OF OUR LIFE'S WILD RESTLESS SEA. DAY BY DAY HIS SWEET VOICE SOUNDETH, SAYING "CHRISTIAN FOLLOW ME."

THE GENTLE CALL OF THE SAVIOR TO SINNERS AS EXPRESSED IN THIS HYMN IS A SHARP CONTRAST TO SOME OTHER CALLS TO REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN CHRIST. FOR EXAMPLE SERMONS THAT SEEK TO FRIGHTEN US INTO REPENTANCE.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING, DOES NOT FIT THIS HARSH PATTERN OF SEEKING TO FRIGHTEN PEOPLE TO FOLLOW JESUS. THIS MOST CERTAINLY IS BECAUSE AT ITS HEART THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S LIFE AND MISSION WAS TO CALL US TO HIMSELF, AND THUS TO GOD, OUT OF LOVE NOT ANGER.

THIS IN NO WAY DIMINISHES THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN AND OUR REBELLION AGAINST GOD. BUT THE CALL JESUS ISSUES IS LESS ABOUT AVOIDING PUNISHMENT, AND MORE ABOUT BEING TRANSFORMED BY OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

CHRIST'S CALL TO HIS FIRST DISCIPLES INCLUDED THE PROMISE THAT IF THEY FOLLOW HIM HE WILL MAKE THEM INTO A DIFFERENT KIND OF FISHERMEN. IN OTHER WORDS, HE OFFERED TO TEACH AND EMPOWER THEM TO DO MORE THAN JUST MAKE A LIVING, AS IMPORTANT AS THAT IS. THEY WERE CALLED TO WALK WITH JESUS, LISTEN TO HIS VOICE AND TO LEARN FROM HIM.

AND LATER, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE DAY OF PENTECOST, JESUS' FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN EMPOWERED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO HIS WORK IN THE WORLD. THIS IS SOMETHING FOR US TO THINK ABOUT, SINCE SO OFTEN CHRISTIANS DOUBT THEY HAVE THE SKILLS OR CALLING TO SERVE THE LORD.

LET US REMEMBER BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS, IN WHATEVER CAPACITY WE ARE CALLED, INVOLVES TRUSTING JESUS' WORDS TO THE FIRST DISCIPLES- "I WILL MAKE YOU."

INDEED DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT ABOUT OUR TALENTS OR SKILLS OR POWER. IT IS ABOUT JESUS PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES AND HIS PROMISE TO WORK WITH AND THROUGH US.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE FIRST DISCIPLES. THOSE FISHERMEN WERE NOT LOOKING TO SERVE GOD IN ANY WAY MORE THAN BEING PROVIDERS FOR THEIR FAMILIES, AND FOLLOWING GOD'S LAW LIKE ANY GOOD JEW.

JESUS, HOWEVER SAW IN THEM WHAT THEY DID NOT SEE IN THEMSELVES OR ONE ANOTHER, WHICH IS WHY HE CALLED THEM TO FOLLOW HIM AND BE CHANGED BY HIM.

NOW, AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED IN THE GOSPEL READING, THOSE WHO WERE CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS HAD TO LET GO OF THEIR NETS BEFORE THEY COULD DO SO. LET'S THINK ABOUT WHAT THOSE NETS CAN SYMBOLIZE IN OUR LIVES. IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT CAN HOLD US BACK FROM FOLLOWING JESUS. IN ORDER TO FOLLOW JESUS, WE MUST BE WILLING TO PUT DOWN, OR LAY ASIDE, SOME OF OUR PLANS OR OTHER WANTS.

INDEED, IF WE WILL NOT LET GO OF WHATEVER "NETS" WE ARE HOLDING ONTO, WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO VERY FAR WITH THE LORD. I AM NOT SPEAKING HERE ABOUT BIG DECISIONS LIKE A NEW CAREER, OR A CHANGE OF LOCATION, OR SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT LIFE CHANGE.

INSTEAD, SO VERY OFTEN THE NETS THAT HOLD US BACK BECAUSE WE HOLD ONTO THEM- ARE FOUND IN THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE. THESE THINGS CAN BE LOW SELF-ESTEEM, OUR HEALTH, FINANCIAL OR OTHER WORRIES, FEAR OF FAILURE, OR FEAR OF LOSING OUT ON SOMETHINGS IN LIFE THAT WE ENJOY DOING OR HAVING.

JESUS CALLS US TO LET GO OF OUR NETS, TO TURN AWAY FROM CULTURAL ICONS AND VALUES THAT ARE NOT INLINE WITH GOD'S KINGDOM. AND WHEN WE LISTEN TO HIS CALL WE CAN BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION TO NATIONAL AND EVEN WORLD PROBLEMS.

NO, WE CANNOT FIX EVERYTHING, BUT WE CAN DO SOMETHING. WE CANNOT SAVE THE WORLD-THAT IS CHRIST'S JOB, BUT WE CAN HELP HIM IN HIS TASK OF FURTHERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE WORLD. THIS IS WHAT HE ASKS OF AND EMPOWERS US TO DO, IF WE ARE WILLING. MAY GOD GRANT US A WILLINGNESS TO DO SO. AMEN