

## The Fork in the Road of Life

Luke 5:11 “So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.”

Sunday, July 30, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction: Life is a series of choices, a few of them are major, and most of them are small. I propose that a small decision in this passage led to big decisions, and it all started with the Word of God.

### Luke 5:1-3

<sup>1</sup>One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

This story, in the book of Luke, is the story of a big fork in the life of Peter and his friends. Please note that it starts with a series of significant smaller choices. It all started with a desire, a choice from the people, to hear from God. Note verse one. The people listening to Jesus treated his words as the word of God. That phrase, “Word of God”, is what the scholars call a subjective genitive. That means that the phrase does not mean “the message about God”, but rather it means “the message that comes from God”. The people approached the message that Jesus was giving with the idea that they were hearing a message from God for them. We modern Christians can lose this when we're lukewarm, when we are neither passionate about our faith nor cold-indifferent and calloused toward Christ. When we're lukewarm we forget that God wants to speak with us. We forget that God wants to speak with us in the sermon, even if it's not a very good sermon. We forget that God wants to speak with us through His written Word every time we open the Bible. The series of little forks, small decisions, that were important in the preparation for the big decision, was the choice by the people to listen to the words of Jesus as if they were the very words of God for them today. It all started with the desire to hear from God. The Scripture, in fact, tells us that power accompanies the Word of God. Note this passage in First Thessalonians-

### 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

<sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

When we hear the Word of God, either in our mind as we read and study, or spoken to us in a Bible study or in a sermon, we should try to place ourselves, in our imaginations, in the scene of which we hear because God had each of you in mind when it was recorded. Decide to treat every sermon, every opportunity to study the word, as a chance to hear from God Himself. The choice to treat the words of Jesus as a message from God was a little fork that led to the big fork for Peter and his friends soon after. It's the little forks, the little choices to obey Christ in small ways every day, that often a lead to the “big forks” that is, life – changing encounters with the Spirit of God.

### Luke 5:4-8

<sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down<sup>o</sup> the nets for a catch.”

<sup>5</sup>Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

<sup>6</sup>When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

<sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”

After Jesus’ powerful sermon, He makes a request that doesn’t make sense. He turns to Simon and asks him to put his nets down into the deep water for a catch. It is bad timing, the fishermen are probably tired because they have, most likely, been out all night without much success. Daytime was not considered the best time for fishing, and the fishermen could have given Jesus many excuses to simply not bother. But they do what He tells them to do and a miracle, demonstrating the dominion Jesus had on the earth, stops them in their tracks. Note the effect the miracle had on Peter. It is similar to the effect that the vision of Almighty God on His throne had upon the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:5

<sup>5</sup>“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

Miracles take place when Almighty God interacts overtly with the daily life. When God that interacts in this fashion with the daily life, which He desires to do because He wants to be involved in our daily lives, these miracles show God for who He is and us for who we are. They show us His holiness, and they show us our sinfulness. Note, for example, the effect that the gift of prophecy can have on a person.

1 Corinthians 14:24-25

<sup>24</sup>But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand<sup>0</sup> comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all,<sup>25</sup> and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Luke 5:9-11

<sup>9</sup>For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,<sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, **“Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.”**<sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Jesus, after this amazing event, tells them not to be afraid and that from now on they will become “fishers of men”. One of the wonderful things about this statement is that Jesus made it as a statement of fact: in the original language it states “you will become fishers of men “. He doesn’t simply order the disciples, and us, to become “fishers of men”, He makes it a statement of certainty. Any Christian sincerely seeking to grow in Christ will be an influence on others and, to a greater or lesser extent, becomes a “fisher of men”. One of the words used in this passage literally means to “take prisoners for Christ”. If unlike the fish, who were captured from the lake and die soon after, the words here indicate that we are to “take alive” people for Christ; that He will use us to influence others to become “prisoners for the lord”, people totally devoted to him. The result of this encounter

was at the disciples left everything they had to follow Christ. Now remember I asked you earlier to use your imagination whenever you read or hear about a passage in the Bible in a sermon. I asked you to place yourself there in that scene, to think of it as if you were actually there. The disciples were willing to leave behind everything to follow the caller Jesus what do we need to leave behind today in order to continue following Jesus. Consider this passage in the book of Hebrews --

Hebrews 12:1

'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Is now a good time to ask ourselves, "is there anything that would keep us from following Christ with an even greater love than we have for him now?" "Is there anything that does hinder us, is there any sin that so easily entangles?" Choosing to take something that hinders our devotion to Christ today and give it to the Lord in prayer is a fork in the road of life, choice, that can lead to bigger forks.

- Conclusion:

Discipleship involves events that include both a "walking tour, and a" walking away ". This is a "fork in the road of life". There are many forks, and the little forks are often just as significant as the big forks.