



Matthew 4:12–23

*Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues,
proclaiming the good news of the kingdom,
and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*

January 22, 2017

Thoughts for the Week

Scriptures: Isaiah 8:23-9:3, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17, Matthew 4:12-23

I suspect that many of us who take the opportunity to reflect on the path that our life has taken over the years, must often wonder how we ever got this far and why we are following the options that still lie open before us today. I am sure that most of us have changed the path of our early choices any number of times. As a young person we probably had wild, enthusiastic plans of what we would do and what we wanted to become. Then of course, reality sets in, good sense prevails and we continue exploring other options that still seem doable. All of this, it seems to me is not simply our indecision regarding what we wish to do and be during our life. In the best sense, it is an ongoing sacred search, a divine movement of the Spirit to discover not what we want to do in life, but rather what we sense God is calling us to be as this unique person living at this moment of history. In some sense, it's truly a movement of mystery for which we should be thankful.

Vocation or vocations happen for many reasons: as we continue to grow in age we also discover more about ourselves, our intellect deepens, our feelings and emotions become clearer. In short, we grow in God's gift of grace and wisdom.

Not only that, as we process through life we gradually begin to see the needs of the world around us more clearly and hopefully decide that we shall dedicate our remaining years to the betterment of the human community. After all, it is the world around us that continues to call us out of ourselves into the community at large and its many needs.

How we respond to this ongoing invitation to find a distinct place in the community of the world will eventually describe our vocations.

I wanted to say all this because we have a rather strange vocation described for us in the Gospel of Matthew. You may have just heard it proclaimed in church. On an ordinary day on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John are pursuing their chosen profession as

local fishermen. As they are going about their work one morning, they notice a stranger coming toward them. As he passes, he invites them to follow him. Remember, they have no idea who he is or what adventure he is proposing for them. Remember also that they are no doubt married men. If they pick up, leave their boats, nets, wives and families on some unknown venture; now doesn't all that sound rather strange? Nonetheless, according to the gospel that is exactly what they did. We have no gospel evidence that they eventually thought better of it and turned back to their earlier chosen way of life. Rather, when we read further in the gospels and reflect on the history of the early church, we find that they played a major role in establishing Christ's promise of the Kingdom of God. We have no reason to believe that any of this actually happened. Jesus must surely have been an extraordinarily attractive person; his invitation to these men to follow him must have sounded entirely trustworthy.

It could be said, of course, that Christ invites each of us at many times in our life to follow Him on uncharted paths that may seem risky? In some real sense every decision in our life is open-ended. We seldom know clearly where any decision will take us or where it will end up. However, I would like to believe that if we have the sense that Christ is calling us, it's truly worth our while to find out where all this will eventually take us.

Praise the Lord for our Trials and Tribulations

(Concerning my recent visit to University of Michigan ER & Hospital)

Most Christians are compassionate in nature.

This is something that they are taught at a very young age.

The very best teaching, in this regard, is the examples set by their parents and in some part by their neighbors and friends. This compassion has its basic roots in Christ's ministry while he walked among us.

His love and compassion were constantly being shared with all those he came in contact.

One of the best possible experiences of this love and compassion are experienced when we are incapacitated and must rely on the nurturing compassion found at our hospitals and clinics throughout our great country and many other countries in the world.

Consider the dedication and drive necessary for the doctors,
nurses, technicians and other nameless staffers
that take part in the healing processes
each and every day of their lives.

We sometimes take for granted this dedication and skill that are developed by these people.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to praise their profession,
their compassion and their drive for perfection.

God Bless All the Caregivers.

May They Be Equally Blessed in Their Personal Lives Along with Their Families.

Amen

Paul Jenkins, Pastor
Community of Christ - Plymouth

Follow Me And I Will Make You Fishers of Men

To follow Christ is to set aside our own goals and pleasures and to embrace the purposes for which God created us. Those purposes are: to know Him in a personal way and to make disciples of others by teaching them all of Christ's commands. All those who truly follow Christ must exchange their affections, goals and priorities for his.

What does it require to follow Jesus?

It was a call that required complete and immediate attachment for every else. Peter and Andrew "left their nets" suggesting that they left their present occupation. James and John "left their father" suggesting that following Christ takes precedence over even maintaining close proximity to our family. The requirement for following Jesus is not the same for everyone. For some it means leaving their present occupations to follow him. For others it means a willingness to leave family connections and being close to family. But for everyone it is a willingness to exchange their affections, goals and priorities for his.

What is the single most important thing we can do as Christians?

When we learn that some one is dying what is the single most important topic on our minds. "Are they saved?" What this should remind us of, is that what really matters in life is what we are most concerned about at death – whether or not people know Jesus Christ. When someone is dying nothing else really matters, does it?

There have been times in the life of every Christian when they recognized that the greatest thing they could do with their life was to get someone else to Christ. It may be today that Christ wants you to recommit yourself to reaching someone for Christ. Perhaps it is someone that you have given up on? Have you ever really stopped to realize that Jesus wants you to be someone whose heart is moved to reach out to the lost people around you? To accomplish this goal in life would you be willing to lay aside your personal ambition and plans to fully follow Christ?