



Sermons from  
First Presbyterian Church

**“The Body Conundrum”**

The Rev. James Monnett

January 22, 2012

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 1:14-20

<sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

In the late 1980s Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers were one of the hottest bands around. Their show at Blossom Music Center was sold out - about 19,000 lawn and seats.

A night before the show, my best friend was handed four floor seats. He called me and I was in. Pat was in, and I called Bobby.

Bobby did not believe me. No way I had free tickets to Tom Petty. No way.

The next day we picked everyone up in John's maroon Ford fiesta. 45 minutes later we were sitting in the long lines of traffic, when Bobby suddenly interrupted the conversations demanding to know where we were.

We refused to answer.

I would like to say we made him pay for parking, but who knows.

Would you drop everything to go see Tom Petty live? How about Deadmau 5? Or Katy Perry? Or Michael Bluble? What about Wicked? How about the How bout Wait, Wait, Don't Tell me this past Thursday at the Fox in Detroit?

What would you drop everything to see?

Michigan the Rose Bowl?

Honestly, the only time we really drop everything and go is when the fire alarm sounds. The first thing you do when the fire alarm rings is move.

On a mid high trip nearly a decade ago I was staying in a dorm at Lee University in Tennessee at the Great Escape youth conference in July. When the fire alarm rang we piled outside, into the balmy 94 degree night. One of my juniors came out wearing only a towel from his shower. But the alarm went, the leaders all yelled for everyone to precede us outside and out came all the kids in the shower.

The alarm rang, we went. We went again that night at 12:30 and then once more at 3:30 a.m. It was a long night.

Much is going on in our short passage this morning. But verses 17 and 18 slam into us. They are jarring. Their immediacy presses us. It challenges us. It does not take “no” for an answer.

Mark is famous for this. There isn’t a lot of easing into anything in the gospel of Mark. He begins the entire gospel not with the birth story, no angels, wise men or donkeys. Rather he drops right into it with:

***<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,***

Boom Mark gets right into the heart of everything. Genesis starts with similar words, “in the beginning God created,” and here we begin with Good News about Jesus the Messiah – or savior – the Son of God. There will be no ambivalence. No wishy washy stuff here. Let’s get right into it.

This book is about Jesus who is the savior, the Son of God.

In verse 14, John the Baptist is arrested – so if you were going to follow him - and not Jesus let’s be clear - John is arrested, and soon to be executed. He is a prophet, but he is NOT the messiah. John is arrested and Jesus goes to Galilee to “preach the good news.”

Who is He preaching to?

Who is listening?

Who needs a savior?

Who needs a messiah?

Who is ready to drop everything and follow him?

Verse 16, Jesus is passing along the edge of the sea and he sees the fisherman, Simon who becomes Peter, his brother Andrews and the Thunder Brothers – James and John. Jesus says to them in verse 17:

***‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’***

Or as we learned in vbs, “I will make you fishers of men.”

And then BOOM here it is in verse 18:

***And immediately they left their nets and followed him.***

***Follow me and I will make you fish for people.***

***And immediately they left their nets and followed him.***

If this were high school Sunday School, a question I would now be asking, maybe we call it the Bobby Conundrum. Who is faithful? The one who gets in the car NOT believing we have free Tom Petty tickets. Or the person who believes we’ve got the tickets, but decides to stay home and clean their fishing nets – if I may mangle my metaphors.

Who is faithful? The one who believes, but does not follow. Or the one who does not yet believe, but follows?

And I love that Jesus is talking about following. This is not about understanding important theological concepts like justification, sanctification, atonement, and the incarnation of the divine into the human. Like Bobby, Simon Peter, Andrew and the Thunder Brothers just follow.

They set their tasks aside and follow.

Jesus says "Follow me." What do we do?

Following Jesus is a lot easier than having all the answers.

In the last thirty days, I have been asked by teenagers variations of all of the following questions:

- How do we know the Holy Spirit is here in worship?
- What does it feel like to have God show up?
- How could a loving God, let this horrible disease affect so many people?
- Why do my friends do things that are so bad for them?
- How do I pray to let God know I believe?

Together we could answer many of these questions. But Jesus isn't asking us to get all our questions answered. We probably could generate another list of questions for God for things we wonder...things we struggle with....but Jesus isn't asking for us to understand everything.

He asks us to set aside our needs to know, or to do, and to simply follow.

Where will He lead us?

I don't know. But I am cannot wait to find out. Amen.

---

Because sermons are meant to be preached and are therefore prepared with the emphasis on verbal presentation, the written accounts occasionally stray from proper grammar and punctuation. Copyright ©2012 by James Monnett. All rights reserved. These sermon manuscripts are intended for personal use only and may not be republished or used in any way without the permission of the author.