

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people. ”

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” What kind of “kingdom” is he talking about? As we will see in the gospels, his kingdom is a completely different kind of kingdom from the kingdoms of the world. The kingdoms of the world honor people who are wealthy and powerful, but Jesus honors people who know how to love and how to serve. In his kingdom, the greatest is the one who serves.

Jesus walks along the sea shore and calls four fishermen to follow him. Why did he choose them instead of powerful, well-educated people? They were simple folk, common people, fishermen from Galilee. They probably didn't know how to read. It might surprise us that Jesus chose people like these to be his closest companions and the ones in whom he would put his trust. We might have expected him to look for talented, learned people with gifts of leadership and public speaking. We might have expected him to choose deeply religious people who were well trained in the Scriptures and in theology. But he chooses instead these simple, common folk, fishermen by trade. Jesus knew that these fishermen understood everyday life. These fishermen mingled with people everyday. By calling these fisherman to be his disciples, Jesus shows us that his kingdom includes and welcomes all and that even the least may play an important role in it. This is good news for us!

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Jesus invites us as we are to come and follow him; he sees a potential in us that may not be recognized by others, or even by ourselves. He sees, and chooses us, common as we are. We do not have to be special people with lots of education or skills in order for God to love us and choose us and use us.

When Jesus called the fishermen, he gave them a simple invitation: "Follow me." He does not ask them to save the world by their heroic performance. He simply asks them to follow him, to share in his work, and to bear witness to his message. The work is his, not theirs. They have only to follow. Also he tells them that now they are to fish for people, to bring others into the orbit of God's love and into the ongoing mission of God's kingdom' - love, compassion, empathy and care.

This Gospel reading invites us to think about how Jesus is asking us to follow him in this new year. As members of the ECD, we worship together every third Sunday, and we pray for each other throughout the week. We can help each other understand our own individual call. Jesus calls each of us to serve him in our own way. He invites us to know our gifts and our potential. He wants us to use our personalities, our skills, and our love to serve others in his Name.

We Deaf people are a minority in this society. We all need to know that we are loved. We all need something that gives us some purpose. We need to find ways to invest ourselves in love and service. We need to help others to feel that they are a part of our community by showing them love, care and support. There is no room for exclusion or for cliques in our community. Jesus says to us,

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“Follow me,” just like he did to the disciples. We, too, have to learn to become “fishers of people” and witnesses of the good news of Jesus Christ. You can make a difference in other people’s lives by showing them love and care, empathy and acceptance. When we love each other and respect and value every person, we will be building his “kingdom” on earth.