

“It All Starts Here & Here & Here”  
Martha Stringer  
Series: Follow Week 3, Beginnings  
Luke 5:11

All my life I’ve traveled to upstate New York to a town in the Adirondacks Park called Tupper Lake. It’s a small village situated along the shores of a lake by the same name, Tupper Lake. The lake - Tupper Lake, is beautiful. Throughout the years I swam in that lake, boated on it and fished in it.

The village of Tupper is small with a population of about 3,500. And it’s poor. The median income is about \$35,000 for a household in the Village which leaves 33% of the population below the poverty line.

It’s not only small it’s mundane compared to neighboring villages like Saranac Lake or Lake Placid. And not much exciting happens here. I mean, just check out this headline from the local paper – the Tupper Lake Free Press, “Village Police to Crack Down on Poop Leaving Dog Owners.” That’s about as exciting as it gets. I love it though. And traveling there as a kid with my parents was the beginning of a life-long love of the Adirondacks.

Capernaum or Caper-nay-um, is a small fishing village nestled alongside the Sea of Galilee. Like Tupper Lake, it’s not a very big or important place. It’s commonplace and poor. But it’s here Jesus chooses to call his first disciples.

It might be helpful to unpack the word Disciple. It’s kind of a churchy-term. Dictionary.com defines a disciple as:

A person who is a pupil or adherent to the doctrines of another and/or one who embraces and assists in spreading the teaching of another.

For Christians it refers specifically to being a follower of Christ. And that is what we are exploring throughout this series Follow. We traveled with Jesus so far from his Baptism in the Jordan River which we looked at two weeks ago, and how when we say ‘Yes’ to Jesus and follow Him as our Savior and Lord He pours the Holy Spirit into us. To his hometown Nazareth where he unveiled His blueprint for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, which is essentially a message of freedom from poverty, slavery, imprisonment, and oppression for *all* people, not just the Jews. A message his own people didn’t want to hear, so much so they attempted to throw him off a cliff for it. To here in Capernaum where Jesus decides to bolster his ministry and build his team starting with the first four disciples. It all starts here.

Do you consider yourself a disciple? In truth, in one way or another, we are all disciples of probably many things already. Maybe it’s a favorite author who wants you buy their book, or an athlete you admire or a sports team. Is it a celebrity endorsing make-up or a motorcycle you must have or perhaps their lifestyle which you are trying to emulate? Maybe you are a disciple of your job or your school, your major, maybe the stock market or food or fashion. Whatever it is, each of us is already a disciple of something.

Discipleship is a disciple in action. It means you are putting into practice the teachings, ideas, and philosophies of the person or thing you are following. You are applying those principles to

your daily living. The question is: will you or are you putting as much time and energy into being a disciple of Jesus as you are putting into those other areas? Like watching football for example?

Yes, I'm going there. I'm gonna throw football under the bus. But in truth I could throw a lot of things under the bus. But since we are in football season it's an easy target. An average football game is about 3 hours and change. If you watch 2 games a week (a low estimate of watching by the way) per 20-week season you are investing 120 hours of your time. When you consider the average worship service is about an hour you would need to go to a worship service about 6 days a week to invest the equivalent amount of time. I like football, I do. I have to – I would have nothing to talk to my husband about from September to the first Sunday in February if I didn't. But I find it strange how time-strapped people who barely find time to come to church on Sundays from February through August, suddenly have all these extra hours every Sunday, or Monday night or Thursday night for watching football.

Jesus was already known by people of the larger Galilee region. He has been healing and teaching all over Galilee. He cast out a demon in one of their synagogues and healed the ailing mother-in-law of one of the local families. Word of his miracles were circulating, and massive hordes of people are coming out to see him and hear him speak. On this day, actually morning, the crowds are thick and pressing in to get to Jesus

In Luke 5:1 we read, "...the multitudes pressed about him to hear the word of God."

So, He decides to climb into one of the fishing boats docked along the shore line with the intention of pushing out to speak to the crowd from the boat.

This is what is known as the Jesus Boat, a fishing boat from the 1st century AD. It was discovered in 1986 on the north-west shore of the [Sea of Galilee](#). The remains of the boat measure 27 feet long, 7.5 feet wide. There is no direct connection to Jesus and this boat, but most likely this, which is a replica of a fishing boat we saw in a chapel in the town of Migdol or Magdala home of Mary Magdalene, is what the fishing boat Jesus climbs into would look like.

Luke says: "One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret (a.k.a. the Sea of Galilee) with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, He saw at the water's edge two boats, left by the fishermen who were washing their nets." (Luke 5:1-2)

That's how we know it is morning: fishermen fish at night and after fishing wash and put away their nets.

The boat Jesus chooses this day belongs to a local fisherman named Simon. Luke writes: Jesus climbs into the boat and asks him: "Can you put out a little from shore?" (Luke 1:3)

You must imagine Simon's mindset at this point. He is familiar with Jesus. We know Simon's brother Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. It is possible Simon witnessed Jesus' baptism or at the very least heard about it from his brother. And the ailing mother-in-law Jesus healed was Simon's mother-in-law. But he's been up all night working at his trade of fishing, not very successfully, and probably is tired, discouraged and looking forward to clocking out for the day. Never the less he decides to comply with Jesus request. Simon dutifully pushes them out and

waits till Jesus finishes preaching so he can row them back to shore finally go home and go to bed.

But after he finishes his message, Jesus doesn't want to go back to shore. He instructs Simon to row out to deeper water and let down his nets. (Luke 5:4) Wait a minute – what? No, no, no Jesus. The timing is all wrong – Simon is an experienced fisherman and knows fishing is best at night. Fish are easier to catch in shallow water and considering that Simon has already been up all night working without success, and by the way Jesus – you are a carpenter – he attempts to dissuade Jesus: “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything.”

This is a pivotal moment for Simon. He can let down his freshly-cleaned-ready-to-be-put-away-nets to catch fish against all odds or refuse and row them back to shore and go about his business.

I imagine this next statement is preceded by a big exasperated sigh, as Simon agrees” “Because you say so, I will let down the nets.” Luke 5:5

And that decision changes the course of his life. His nets, and those of his fishing partners, are so full of fish the boats almost sink. (Luke 5:7)

Simon is amazed – so much so he sinks – to his knees.

“When Simon Peter saw this (the overflowing nets) he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man! For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.” Luke 5:8-10

Why does Simon respond this way? He’s heard Jesus speak with God’s authority and just witnessed this amazing miracle and he tells Jesus to go away? Maybe he’s afraid, as a Jewish man he has been taught a Holy God cannot be in the presence of sin. But I think it’s that he is ashamed. I think despite what he has already heard and witnessed Jesus do, Simon still didn’t believe Jesus could fill his nets with even one fish, let alone fill his nets to overflowing.

Yet Jesus doesn’t condemn Simon for his unbelief. Jesus offers him comfort, compassion and an invitation to be his companion.

“Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you (will be my disciple) will fish for people.” So, they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:10-11)

This is a major ah ha moment for Simon. For Simon, it all starts here. From now on, without knowing exactly what he is getting himself into, he is on a path of discipleship with Jesus.

We can learn a lot about the pathway of a disciple from Simon Peter.

First, Discipleship starts Here.

By that I mean Jesus will call you right where you are. Notice Peter is asked to take a step, not in a house of worship, not while he was in prayer, not in his own home, but while he was at work.

It's important to always be aware Jesus will use the most ordinary, often mundane moments to reveal himself wherever and whenever he chooses. I think we often expect Holy things to happen in Holy places. But they happen at your desk or in your dorm room or your dining room table. We should always be ready, be aware, be prepared, for Jesus to speak to us, to call us, in every possible place and ask us to take a step. And sometimes even the smallest step can yield huge change.

Because what starts as a small step for Peter will turn out to huge leap for Christianity. He will eventually be the leader of the disciples.

Which reminds us that Discipleship starts Here – Just how and who you are.

When Peter falls to knees before Jesus and says go away from me! Jesus doesn't say –you're right! Go to seminary, go brush up on your Old Testament theology, go dunk yourself in a mikvah. Then come back to me and we'll talk about being my disciple. He wants you just how you are. With all your flaws and failings. He wants to use you just how you are, and he will be with you every step of the way. Discipleship is a journey; a series of steps. But it is not linear. Sometimes you step forward. Sometimes sideways, sometimes backward. There will be some miss-steps along the way too.

Simon Peter was eager, aggressive, outspoken and impulsive. His mouth was often motoring ahead of his mind. In fact, he often stepped his foot right into his mouth. The author and scholar John MacArthur nicknamed Simon the disciple with the foot-shaped mouth. No other disciple speaks as often as Peter, or confessed Christ as forcefully as Peter. He is also the disciple Jesus is often scolding for what he says – even at one point calling him Satan. But Simon is the one Jesus will shape and train to be a leader. He is one Jesus will later nickname Peter, which means “rock”. He is the disciple Jesus will commission to be the one to build his church. Flaws and all. God uses ordinary people like me, like you, like Peter, to do extraordinary things.

But beware – Jesus might ask you to give something up as part of being a disciple. To clean out your net of earthly desires or possessions or pursuits. He will ask you to get rid of the earthly fish to make room for the spiritual fish. He will ask you to commit to learning from him, to studying his word and serving him. It's going to require you to prioritize your time. But the rewards are so much greater than a net full of earthly fish that eventually are going to spoil. And did you notice that when Peter's net as overflowing with fish it still didn't make him happy. He didn't feel fulfilled. He just hit the Capernaum equivalent of the mega million dollar jack pot! Fill your net with lives, with relationships, with God's word with service. Those things will never spoil.

And finally, Discipleship starts Here – Today

And tomorrow and the next day and the next day after that. It starts every day we get out of bed and say Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

When John the Baptist was baptizing people, he was asking them to repent and believe the Kingdom of Heaven was near. We know now what John didn't know, what Peter didn't, know and what any of the disciples didn't know. We know the end of the story! We know Jesus lived,

died and rose again. And when he did, he gave the power of the Holy Spirit to us! He gave it to Peter and Peter brought 3,000 people to Christ at Pentecost!

When we had the renewal of Baptism when we kicked off this series, I had the privilege of baptizing some of you and when I asked you “Who is your Lord and Savior?” You responded: “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” I was so moved as I baptized you - so many of you had tears in your eyes. That was the power of the Holy Spirit at work in you. When you make this statement, it doesn’t mean you must have all the answers or that your path of discipleship is once and done. Declaring Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior means you are committed to exploring what it means - finding out what it means and tapping into power of the Holy Spirit every day.

My husband Paul and I came to Woodside 24 years ago. I wasn’t really raised in a Christian household so coming to Woodside and making the decision to join this community was a small step for Christianity but a huge leap for Martha Stringer. So, at 30-something years old, about the age of Jesus, about the age of Peter, I was baptized by Pastor Doug and we joined this community. I believe with all my heart my baptism was the first step of my journey of discipleship. And there have many, many steps since. And each step led me to this point in time.

This might seem silly, but one step I took was to participate in the Vacation Bible School plays we did every summer. I was Dr. Do Lots! I was Stella the Star! I was Coco Banana! I met Gary Lasasso doing one of those skits. Gary was active in Community Theater at the time which I knew nothing about. And he shared with me about it – how to audition, etc. So, I did. I took the step and ended being active in Community Theater myself.

I met Dani Ziembra doing a show. I was able to share with her about my faith, about Woodside and Dani eventually started coming to Woodside. She in turn shared with her mother Eileen and Eileen is attending Woodside. Dani, Eileen and I were part of the 38 who travelled to the Holy Land this past summer. So were Eileen’s sister Joan and their cousin Diane because Dani and Eileen shared with them. Now Joan is coming to Woodside.

The fact they are coming here is amazing. But what’s even more important and was even more amazing for me was to witness the four of them be baptized in the Jordan River. That brought tears to my eyes.

When God calls you to take a step don’t answer with – “go away from me! I am a sinful woman, man, child, person!” Don’t be afraid. Take a step and if you keep in step with him you may stumble but you won’t fall.

God will use ordinary people in ordinary situations, in extraordinary ways.

Will you take a step?