

Introduction

1. My call to seminary was a call to prepare.
 - a. In 1988, as I sensed God's call to attend seminary, I tried to discern what ministry God was calling me toward—pastoring? teaching? missions?
 - b. I could not discern his particular call. So, I finally decided it was simply a call to prepare.
 - c. Since surrendering to God's call to full-time ministry, I have served in each of those roles. I have been a pastor in churches for 27 years; a teacher in seminaries for 23 years, and have served in short-term mission efforts in Mexico, Indonesia, Cuba, Russia, and China.
 - d. We all have a call to follow Jesus and to learn and grow in our ministry with him.
 - e. Daniel Akin proposes that “In essence Jesus puts before us a blank contract and says, ‘Sign at the bottom, and I will fill in the details!’” (Daniel L. Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 21).
 - f. In this lesson, Jesus called his first four disciples to follow him on a life-changing ministry journey. They did not know all that this journey would entail, but they responded to the master's call.

2. Read Mk 1:16-20.**A. Jesus and the Sea of Galilee (16)**

1. “As Jesus walked (Gk., *paragon*) beside the Sea of Galilee . . .” (16).
 - a. As we have noted, Mark emphasized Jesus' ministry in Galilee, which was a Gentile region.
 - b. Galilee extends from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Golan Heights in the east. It was bordered in the north by the Lebanon mountain ranges and Mt. Hermon. In the south it was bordered by the Jezreel Valley.
 - c. Galilee is divided into two parts. (See Map 1 below.)
 - 1) **Upper Galilee** has peaks 2000 to 4000' tall and was in Jesus' day quite geographically isolated. Though well-watered and heavily forested, it was not densely settled.
 - 2) **Lower Galilee** lies due west of the Sea of Galilee and consists of rolling hills below 2000' and is separated by broad valleys. Jesus' hometown of Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee are part of this region. It was easily traversed and heavily settled. It enjoyed agricultural prosperity principally with wheat, olives, and grapes. Galilee was the most accessible to foreign invasion and influence. It became the melting pot of Israel and was more cosmopolitan than the more remote regions of Samaria and Judah to its south.
 - d. The **Sea of Galilee** (See Map 2 below.) was originally known as Lake of Chinnereth, which is related to the Hebrew word meaning “harp” and apparently a reference to the shape of the lake. Chinnereth is also a town on the northwest shore of the lake near Capernaum. The Greek form of the name Chinnereth is Gennesaret. So, it was also known to the Greeks as the Lake of Gennesaret. In Roman times King Herod renamed it the Lake of Tiberias to curry favor with the famous Roman Caesar. It is a freshwater lake 13 miles long north-to-south and 7 miles wide east-to-west. Its surface is 690 feet below sea level, making it the lowest freshwater lake in the world. The northern portion of lake is 750 feet deep and the southern portion, which is shallower, is the source of the Jordan River, which flows south into the Dead Sea. It is surrounded by high slopes to the east and west. It is just about halfway between the heights of Hermon (9200') and the depths of Dead Sea (1300' below sea level). These drastic elevation changes result in a bowl shaped depression around the lake which often leads to the sudden formation of violent storms on the lake. The only large plain was on its northwestern shore where Capernaum and Gennesaret were the main villages. The warm climate, abundant water, and extended growing season made the region agriculturally important. Fishing was an important industry as well.
 - e. Jesus would establish a base of operations in Capernaum, a fishing city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

2. During his walk by the sea, Jesus encountered two disciples.
 - a. Simon (Hb., *shama* = “he who hears”; *simos* = “one with a hollow face and a wide, flat nose”). Jesus renamed him Cephas, which is Aramaic for “rock.” He is known better to us as Peter (Gk., *petros* = “rock”), the Greek form of his Aramaic name. He is a central character in all the gospels and Acts.
 - b. Andrew (Gk., *andreas* = *andros*,= “of man” or *aner* = “man.”). He was Peter’s brother. His name appears six times in John, four times in Mark, twice in Matthew, and once in Luke-Acts.
 - c. Peter and Andrew were also known by the name Barjona (Mt 16:17), which in Hebrew means “son of Jonah.” This suggests that either their father or a patriarchal ancestor was named Jonah.
 - d. These brothers were from Bethsaida, another fishing village on the lake’s northern shore (Jn 1:44).
 - e. As professional fishermen, they were “fishing” (Gk. *amphiballontas*).
 - f. This was not the first time that they had encountered Jesus.

“The next day John [the Baptist] was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’ They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means “Teacher”), ‘where are you staying?’ ‘Come,’ he replied, ‘and you will see.’ So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter)” ” (Jn 1:35-42, [insertion mine]).
 - g. This is another example of the power of reading the four gospels synoptically. They give us a fuller picture together from different perspectives.

B. The Call of Andrew and Peter (17)

1. “Come follow me” (Gk., *duete opiso mou*)
 - a. This is the classic call statement of Jesus. It is not an imperative. It is a construction of an adverb and a prepositional phrase. The verb “follow” is implied in the English translation.
 - 1) This call is not a strong command but a graceful invitation.
 - 2) Jesus called the disciples as they were where they were.
 - 3) It was an open invitation but required a response of faith.
 - b. Daniel Akin writes, “In the rabbinic schools of the day, the aspiring student sought out the respected rabbi. Further the student’s allegiance was to the Law, not to the teacher. Jesus’ form of discipleship is fundamentally different! Jesus seeks them out, and their allegiance will be to Him” (Akin, 20).
 - c. Jesus planned to train and repurpose these fishermen into fishers of men.
2. “I will send you out to fish for people” (NIV) = “I will make you fishers of men” (KJV)
 - a. Warren Wiersbe shares that “Jesus did not invent the term ‘fishers of men.’ In that day, it was a common description of philosophers and other teachers who ‘captured men’s minds’ through teaching and persuasion. They would ‘bait the hook’ with their teachings and ‘catch’ disciples. It is likely that as many as seven of our Lord’s disciples were fishermen (John 21:1-3). Surely the good qualities of successful fishermen would make for success in the difficult ministry of winning lost souls: courage, the ability to work together, patience, energy, stamina, faith, and tenacity. Professional fishermen simply could not afford to be quitters or complainers!” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 23).
 - b. This phrase “fishers of men” originates in the Old Testament, which refers to God or his emissaries as fishers of men in a context of righteous judgment.
 - 1) Jeremiah prophesied against sinful Judah, “‘But now I will send for many fishermen,’ declares the Lord, ‘and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols” (Jer 16:16-18).
 - 2) Amos confronted sinful Israel, “The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness: ‘The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks” (Am 4:2).

3) William Lane in his commentary on Mark writes, “The summons to be fishers of men is a call to the eschatological task of gathering men in view of the forthcoming judgment of God. It extends the demand for repentance in Jesus’ preaching. Precisely because Jesus has come fishing became necessary” (Lane, *Mark*, 68).

3. The suddenness and urgency of the call and response reinforces the truth that God has arrived on the scene in the form of Jesus. The kingdom of God has drawn near. The time of judgment is at hand. The urgent message of repentance must be shared with all people.

C. The Response (18)

1. “At once (Gk., *euthus*) they left their nets and followed (Gk., *hkolouthsan*) him.”
2. The response was immediate action as we often see in Mark. While we know this was not their first encounter with Jesus, the time had come to fish or cut bait. The point of decision was at hand.
3. The decision to “follow” Jesus was made at a point in time—that moment was now. What lay ahead remained to be seen, but the commitment was made.
4. The call to discipleship came with a sacrifice as it almost always does. To follow Jesus means to leave behind something else.
 - a. For Peter and Andres, and soon also for James and John, it would mean leaving behind their livelihood, their family and friends.
 - b. They did not know the full consequences of this momentous decision, but that would be revealed in time.
 - c. For me, the call to seminary meant leaving behind a possible life in engineering management. That transition took almost four years to complete, but the decision to follow came at a point in time and the sequence of events unfolded from that faith decision.
5. The disciples would return to their nets again, but they had been changed, and would leave them once more to follow the resurrected Jesus in ministry reaching to the ends of the earth (cf., Jn 21, Mt 28).

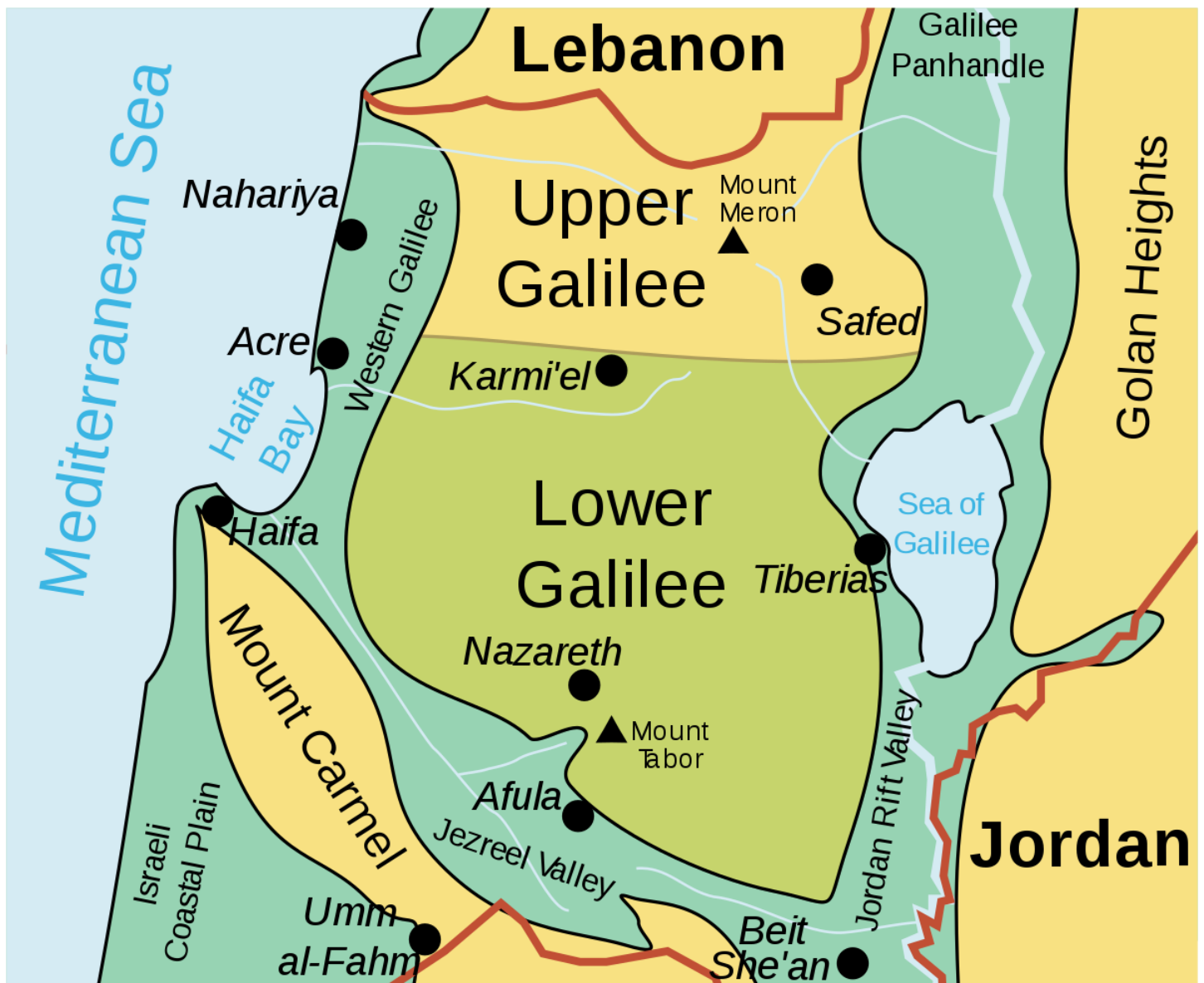
D. The Call of James and John (19-20)

1. Like Andrew and Peter, James and John were doing the preparatory work of fishermen in cleaning, mending, and folding their nets for their next fishing trip. (19)
2. We are not certain of the relationship of Andrew & Peter with James & John.
 - a. They most likely knew one another at least as competitors for the best fishing spots and sales in the market.
 - b. Perhaps Andrew had introduced James and John to Jesus just as he had done with Peter.
 - c. Again, this was most likely not the first time that they had encountered Jesus.
3. The call of Jesus came with the same sense of immediacy as “Without delay (Gk., *euthus*) he called them” (20).
4. Their response was the same as that of Andrew and Peter. “They left (Gk., *aphentes*).” Having heard the sovereign call of Jesus, they responded with radical, immediate obedience.
5. They left their father and the hired men and followed Jesus. Their father would be provided for with the help of hired men. Perhaps these hands were in place because of their impending departure.
6. The call to be a disciple demands radical obedience. **Read Mk 3:33-35** (cf., Mt 10:34-37; Lk 14:26).
 - a. These four men plus eight others would soon be commissioned by Jesus as his disciples (cf., Mk 3:13-19).
 - b. After following and being trained by Jesus, they would make their first fishing-for-men trip (cf., Mk 6:7-13).
 - c. They were not fully formed fishers of men from the start. Discipleship is a growth process. It is a process of becoming (Gk., *genesthai*) fishers of men (cf., Mk 1:17).
 - d. What they would become depended on how well they followed Jesus in faith.
 - e. Ultimately, most of them but not all would become fully trained and licensed fishers of men when they once again met the resurrected Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (cf., Mk 16:7).

E. How Will You Respond to Jesus' Call?

1. Will you listen for Jesus' call to you in the midst of daily life?
2. Will you follow him even if his call comes at an inconvenient time or place or requires a sacrifice?
3. We each make a choice. We follow or we do not. There is no middle option.
4. The central call of Jesus to us has not changed—"I will send you out to fish for people"
 - a. We are called to go out in daily life with the gospel (cf., Mt 28:18-20).
 - b. We must know our fish—the people to whom Jesus sends us.
 - 1) We must go where the fish are—cultivate friendships with those who don't know Jesus.
 - 3) We must use the proper bait—the words and actions of Jesus demonstrated in our lives.
 - 4) We must be patient. We cannot force results but must trust the Spirit to draw in those who are ready to be saved.
 - 5) We must know how to land the fish with the plan of salvation—Admit; Believe; Confess.
 - 6) If we aren't always successful, we must grow and learn from our mistakes as we strive for perfection and trust Jesus to do what only he can.
5. Discipleship completes its cycle when the Spirit works through us to draw others into the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus. We become fishers of men so that they too might become fishers of men.

Map 1 – The Region of Galilee



Map 2 – The Sea of Galilee

