

Luke 5:1-11  
Who Signed Me Up For This?  
WRCOB 1.24.21

I begin by sharing a story  
From Wanda Vassallo, of Dallas Texas.

She had a friend who taught first grade.

The teacher told her about an interaction she had  
With a student on the first day of school.

Ryan, who had graduated from Kindergarten  
Was accustomed to going home at noon.

So on his first day of school, at 12 noon  
He got his things ready to leave for home.

The other students were heading to the cafeteria.

The teacher asked him what he was doing.

“I’m going home,” he replied.

The teacher explained to him  
That now he was in the first grade  
He needed to stay all day.

“You go eat lunch now,” the teacher said.  
“And then you come back to the room  
And do some more work before you go home.”

Ryan looked at her as if she were kidding.

When he realized she was not  
Ryan put his hands on his hips  
“Who signed me up for THIS?”

Today, we look at the subject of Christian vocation  
And seek to answer the question  
“Who signed me up for this?”

No, not THAT question . . . this question  
What compelled four commercial fishermen  
After their biggest catch  
To drop everything and follow Jesus?

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Jesus began his ministry.

He traveled throughout Galilee  
Ministered in towns like Nazareth and Capernaum

Preaching, teaching, and healing wherever he went

Before today’s passage  
Jesus healed Simon Peter’s mother-in-law

Today, we find Jesus  
Preaching from the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

So large a large crowd had gathered  
That it forced Jesus to get in a boat  
And put out a little from shore

After he finished preaching  
He told Simon Peter to go out in deeper water  
And drop the nets.

They would catch some fish there.

They had been out all night and didn’t catch a thing.

I’m sure Simon Peter looked at Jesus  
The way Dr. Thoko would look at me  
If I tried to tell him how to do his job!

A carpenter telling a commercial fisherman how to fish.

Don't that beat all?

And yet, as the story goes  
    Simon Peter did what Jesus told him  
        And caught a boat-load of fish.

He even had to get assistance from James and John  
    And even then they barely got back to shore.

It hit Peter then  
    That Jesus was something more  
        Than just a faith-healer and preacher.

So convicted he dropped to his knees in humble recognition.

We close the story with Jesus' call for them  
    To be fishers of men.

And with that  
    The four fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James and John  
        Pulled their boats onto shore.

Left everything  
    (I presume that includes even their morning's catch)  
        And followed Jesus.

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Here we have four rational men  
    Doing a very irrational thing!

Just when they finally get a decent catch

Finally, when things could get a little easier  
    When they might get on top of some expenses

Have a little extra for their kids' education

Or maybe even purchase that sleek, new boat  
From down at the Galilee Marina

Instead, they drop everything to follow Jesus!

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Our story today is a story concerning the call to “vocation”.

These four men were career commercial fishermen.

They learned their trade from their fathers  
And their fathers . . . their fathers before them.

There was never a question after high school  
That they would ply the trade  
Their ancestors had plied for generations.

But here they are  
Thousands of pounds of fish in the boat

Only to leave it all to follow Jesus  
To the ends of the earth and beyond.

Personally, I’d like to know what their wives and children  
Thought about all this?

So what’s going on here?

How do we interpret this impulsivity  
On the part of these four men?

Well, the way I see it  
What we’re seeing here is the difference  
Between career and vocation  
A job and a calling.

The word *vocation* comes from the Latin word *vocare*, to call.

Our word, voice, comes from this word.

Vocation, then, means the work God calls you to.

It would be an easy thing

If we knew which voice is God's voice

Amongst the multitude of voices in our lives.

Is it God's voice calling?

Or is it my ego?

Is it the voice of my parents' expectations?

Or the voice of my own selfishness?

There are many voices vying for our attention.

Frederick Buechner explains how we might discern  
God's call to vocation.

There are two criteria for determining vocation

*The kind of work God usually calls you to*

*a) is the kind of work that **you** need most to do and*

*b) that the **world** most needs to have done.*

*If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b).*

*On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping your patients much either.*

Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John

Were absolutely, positively, convinced

That it was God's voice they heard

In the voice of Jesus.

They left their careers and began their vocations.

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We loosely interchange the words job, career, and vocation  
As if they mean the same thing.

But they really have different meanings.

I found the website *Crosswalk* very helpful  
In delineating between the three.

Vocation sits at the top.

Vocation incorporates

- Calling
- Purpose
- Mission
- Destiny

This is the overall vision, the essential call from God.

It is how we put to use our God-given talents.

It becomes part of who you are.

It is through vocation you'll impact the world for God.

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Career is another Latin word, according to *Crosswalk*.

Its literal meaning is *cart*.

Career is the wheels to your vocation.

It is also the means to an income.

It is what you train for

Whether it is medical school or welding school.  
Graduate school or community college.

Now, a job is the most specific term.

It is what you do day in and day out  
The explicit decription of the work you do.

We can have many jobs in life  
And have only one vocation.

For an example, Crosswalk states

*If part of your vocation is to help reduce pain and suffering in the world, you may choose being a nurse as your career. There are plenty of jobs for nurses.*

Ideally then, a job is what you do for a paycheck  
And what you do to advance your career.

The career is the avenue in which you have taken  
To fulfill the call God is calling you to.

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A great example of this is the life of Albert Schweitzer.

Schweitzer was born in 1875 in France  
To Lutheran parents  
His father was a Lutheran pastor.

He studied theology and music  
And became a world-renowned concert organist.

He reached the apex of a career in music.

But at the age of 30  
He heard a call to vocation.

He returned to school and studied medicine  
And became a medical doctor.

He and his wife, Helene  
Started a hospital in an undeveloped area of Gabon  
In Central Africa.

He and his wife lived and worked for the rest of their lives  
From 1913 until his death in 1965 (52 years)  
Doing what God called him to do.

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The call to vocation is the call  
In understanding how best  
To live out the greatest commandment.

When asked by an expert in law  
What the greatest commandment in all of Scripture was

Jesus replied,

**Matthew 22:37 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

And so, whether your job is an electrician, nurse  
Doctor, teacher, truck driver or police officer  
Farmer, factory-worker or pastor.

If God has called you to it  
It is not only a job or a career  
It is your vocation.

Be the best electrician, the best nurse  
The best doctor, teacher, truck driver  
And police officer you can be

Because when God calls you to it  
You are ultimately doing it for God and neighbor.

I am sure there were multiple occasions  
When Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John  
And the rest of the disciples and followers

Had the same question as the little boy  
In our opening illustration

“Who signed me up for this?”

But when God calls, God provides.

God does not call the qualified.  
God qualifies the called.

In the early 90s  
I went from milking cows for a living  
To serve as a missionary to Nigeria.

Was I qualified, heck no!

But I was absolutely convinced God wanted me there  
Perhaps the biggest influence and impact of my life.

We will never be content  
Until we can discern God’s call

And identify the purpose for which we were called.

I close with words from Frederick Buechner

*The place God calls you to is the place where your deep  
gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*