

MATTHEW 4:18-22

[PRELIMINARY REMARKS]

- Good to be back in pulpit.
 - Traveled to Hungary to be part of a mission conference.
 - Took a few days off with my family over TG.
- Grateful for sermons our team preached while I was gone.
 - Does my soul good to hear them.
 - God is raising up cohort of great leaders in our church.
- Now we're in the most wonderful time of the year—decorations are up, gifts are being bought, and calories don't count.
- And in the middle of it all, we're thinking about how we can—*Prepare Him Room*.
 - As a church:
 - Don't want to settle for a superficial spiritual life.
 - Want to go deeper with God.
 - That's why we've been studying Acts—The church at its best.
 - And that's also why we're doing this short Advent series—to take up the full life God offers us, we often need to let some other things go.
 - Is there something in me that needs to die so I can experience the life of X?
 - Do you need to let go of something that's holding you back?
- Last week: Mike spoke about **distraction**: How do we clear the clutter of our lives—to make room for Jesus to do his best work?
- This week: I want to talk about **comfort**: Are there some comforts we need to give up to make room—in our schedules and in our souls—to abide in the best things this Xmas?

[Transition]: We'll get into that today by looking at another unsung hero of the Bible.

- Last week we met about **Martha**...
- This week, we'll meet **Andrew**: An ordinary man who gave up comfort to follow X.
 - **[Read Matthew 4:18-20]:** While walking by the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.
 - **[Pray]**

[INTRODUCTION]

- Do you know what it's like to be known bc of your connection to someone else?
 - **Sibling:** I have an older sister—at school I was always *Sarah's brother*.
 - **Spouse:** Sometimes Rosie is known as *James's wife*, but in other places I'm known as *Rosie's husband*.
 - **Children:** Sometimes my kids are known bc of their connection to me, but in other places I'm known as their dad.
- Do you know what this is like?

[STATE]: Andrew—the disciple we meet in our text—certainly understood it.

- Andrew and Peter were brothers:
 - But whenever their relationship is mentioned in the Bible, Andrew is always described as *Peter's brother*—it's never other way around.
 - Like people said: *Andrew? Who the heck is Andrew? Oh, Peter's brother!*
 - We see an example of this in **V18**.
 - **[Jesus] saw two brothers, Simon... and Andrew his brother.**
- Even now, most of us don't know that much about Andrew.
 - Name only appears about a dozen times in the Bible.
 - Typically as part of group or an incidental detail.

[ILLUSTRATE]: But here's four things we do know about him from this passage:¹

1. First, he's got a fantastic NAME.

- Andrew = Greek for *manly, strong, or brave*.
 - Reminds me of an old pastor who mentored me.
 - He was about 5'4" and he can't have weighed more than 120lbs.
 - But his name was Butch Hardmann... Tiny man, enormous name.
- Well, here we meet his NT equivalent:
 - Andrew—*manly, strong, brave*.
 - (If you're called Andrew—call your parents and thank them later.)

2. Second, we know that Andrew was a FISHERMAN.

- He operated a fishing business with his brother.
 - Rose early and worked with his hands...
 - Set sails, caught fish, and mended nets...
 - Went to bed tired, before doing it all again the next day.
- This is what he knew. This is what he was good at. This is how he made a living. This is where he was comfortable.

3. Third, we know Andrew was willing to GIVE IT ALL UP to follow Jesus.

- In **V19** Jesus says to Andrew and his brother: **Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**
 - This call to **Follow me** wasn't about taking the afternoon off.
 - Jesus, remember, was a rabbi.
 - In those days, rabbis were religious leaders who would collect a handful of disciples or followers.
 - These disciples would then follow their master around from place to place—listening to their teaching and imitating their way of life.
 - The call to **follow me**, then, is more dramatic than it might sound to us—it's more like a proposal:
 - Stop what you're doing and leave it behind.
 - Devote yourself to a new life.
- What's Andrew's response to this life-changing call?
 - **V20: Immediately they left their nets and followed him.**
 - **Immediately**—without question or hesitation...
 - **He left his nets**—the way of life he was accustomed to, the thing he was good at, the way he earned a living, the future he envisioned, everything he knew that was secure...
 - **And followed Jesus**—making Christ his master.
- He gives up comfort to follow Christ...

4. Which takes us to the last thing we know—Jesus BLESSED his decision.

- In **V19** he promised that if Andrew would **follow him**, then he would make him a **fisher of men**—and, you know, that's exactly what happened.
- On one hand, Andrew is never the center of attention: We have no record of him **preaching** to a great crowd, no **letter/Scripture** that bears his name, he never performs a **miracle**.
- And yet—he has an extraordinary impact...
 - Earlier we said Andrew typically appears as part of a group/incidental detail.
 - But there are 3 occasions when we read of him doing something that contributes to the narrative:
 - **Jn 1:35-42:** Andrew brings his brother to Jesus.
 - **Jn 6:1-13:** Andrew brings wee boy with 5 loaves/2 fish to Jesus.
 - **Jn 12:20-26:** Andrew brings a group of inquiring Greeks to Jesus.
 - Andrew has great faith:
 - He trusts Jesus can do something with his brother.
 - He trusts Jesus can do something with a wee bit of bread and fish.
 - He trusts Jesus loves all people—even outsiders like these Greeks.
 - So, on each occasion—he has an impact:
 - **3K will be saved** through just one of his brother's sermons.
 - **5K will be fed** through the morsels placed in Christ's hands.
 - **The gospel goes to the nations** through his quiet obedience.

- Whenever we read of Andrew, he's bringing people to Jesus.
 - We might not know much about him...
 - But there are once lost souls and hungry kids and Greeks in heaven who know his name.
- Here's the point: Jesus did in fact make him a fisher of men.
 - If Andrew had refused to give up comfort...
 - He'd have remained a fisher of fish and never become a fisher of men.
 - He'd have missed the meaning, purpose, and joy Jesus had in mind.
 - But he did—he let go of the life he had to receive the life Jesus offered.

[Transition]: And this is where reading his story starts to read *us*.

- At Xmas, Jesus draws near—but will we create the space for him to do so?
- As Andrew put down his nets:
 - Not bc they were bad, but bc they were too small for the life X had in mind.
 - Is there a comfort we need to put down to prepare him room?

[APPLY]: Let me give you a handful of possibilities—see which one resonates with you.

1. Maybe, like Andrew, it's the comfort of financial or vocational security.

- Is Jesus inviting you to loosen your grip—on a career path, a financial plan, a sense of stability—not bc it's bad but bc he wants to take you somewhere better.
 - Might mean a change of plans—Jesus is still calling people into FT ministry.
 - If you feel that tug—follow him!
 - The church needs people who want to love it with all they have.
 - It might not be the easy choice—but it will be the right choice.
 - Maybe that's not it—maybe you're doing what he's called you to do but he's inviting you to do it differently.
 - To work less hours and prioritize your family.
 - To use your job not only to make money but to serve your boss, employees, or customers well.
 - To make his love known in the place you go every day.
- Is that the place you need to prepare him room?

2. Or maybe it's the comfort of mindless escape.

- For some of us, comfort isn't money—it's Netflix, social media, sports, and the like.
 - When we're tired or overwhelmed, we slip into habits that take the edge off—another show, another scroll, another snack, another glass, another late-night rabbit hole that numbs instead of restores.
 - Those aren't always bad—but they can be too small for the life Jesus offers.
 - Maybe the net Jesus is asking you to put down is the way you check out—that you might create space to check in with him.
- Is that where you need to prepare him room?

3. Or maybe it's the comfort of social standing.

- Ways of presenting, speaking, or relating that are familiar and safe but aren't forming us into the likeness of Christ.
 - Caught up in the social dynamics you find in every town—including Knoxville.
 - Want other people to see you a certain way...
 - As beautiful or successful.
 - A leader in the community with a perfect family.
 - Find you can't really be vulnerable with others—let them see so much but only the things that enable you to keep your image intact.
 - Part of you wants to be more honest.
 - But another part confuses vulnerability for weakness so you can't...
 - As a result:
 - People think you're a certain way...
 - But at home—or in your heart—you know you're not like that.
 - Maybe Jesus is asking you to let people see what you're really like, so he can move in and do a beautiful work.
- Is that where you need to prepare him room?

4. Or maybe—at Christmas—it's the comfort of keeping your faith private.

- We're grateful for Jesus—but talking about him feels risky, awkward, exposing.
 - We can't remember the last time we tried to bring someone closer to Jesus.
 - Lack faith to believe Jesus will do something with what we put in his hands.
- It reminds me of how **D. L. Moody** came to Christ.²
 - Moody was a 19C preacher and evangelist—tens of thousands of people came to Christ through his ministry.
 - But this amazing work had a very ordinary beginning.
 - Started with a man called **Edward Kimball**.
 - No one has ever heard of him—he's no more than a footnote in the annals of church history.
 - But he was the guy who brought the 19-year-old Moody to Jesus.
 - Here's how Kimball remembered it:
 - *I decided to speak to Moody about Christ and about his soul. I started down town to Holton's shoe store. When I was nearly there I began to wonder whether I ought to go just then during business hours. And I thought maybe my mission might embarrass the boy, that when I went away the other clerks might ask who I was, and when they learned might taunt Moody and ask if I was trying to make a good boy out of him. While I was pondering over it all I passed the store without noticing it. Then, when I found I had gone by the door I determined to make a dash for it and have it over at once.*
 - Once inside, Kimball found Moody working in the stockroom. There, Kimball continues: *I spoke with limping words. I never could remember just what I did say: something about Christ and His love; that was all.* But there and then Moody became a Xn.

- Are you silent about your faith? Or are you only friends with other Xns?
 - Maybe that's the net you need to give up.
 - Tell someone about the hope you have or invite them to a Xmas Eve service.
- Is that how you need to prepare him room?

5. One more: If you wouldn't describe yourself as a Xn, maybe the thing you need to give up is the comfort of keeping Jesus arm's length.

- Maybe it's not money, Netflix, social standing—maybe it's hesitation about following Jesus at all.
 - Maybe you're interested in the things of faith—even coming here to church.
 - But you've not been ready to step over that line.
- To prepare him room might mean saying yes to him—ask him for forgiveness, trust him with your life, put your future in his hands—and follow him.
 - If that's you today, he's asking you to do it.
 - You don't need a perfect life or a history of service.
 - You just have to say yes to him.
 - If you do that:
 - Your life won't be smaller; it will be bigger.
 - And after this one—eternal life to come.
- Is that how you need to prepare him room?

THE CLOSE: Does one of those things resonate? Or maybe it's something else?

- The point is this: Whatever comfort he's inviting you to give up—do it.
- Of course it will be difficult:
 - It was for Andrew...
 - And it will be for us...
 - Don't be surprised that dropping comfort is—well, uncomfortable.
 - Following Jesus is—oof—it's a challenging thing!
- But the one who calls us away from comfort is the one who left the comfort of heaven for us.
 - He'll see us through to the comfort of our eternal home.
 - And right now—he'll give us great joy in following him.
- He'll do that—if we prepare him room.

CONCLUSION

- We might not want to be known by our connection to someone else...
- But this Xmas, may we all be known for our connection to Christ.

Where do you need to prepare him room?

Endnotes

¹ The details of this section are taken from the chapter on Andrew in John MacArthur's *Twelve Ordinary Men*.

² MacArthur, 82-83.