

2nd Sunday After Pentecost

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. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Many famous teachers of the past had their disciples or apostles, so it is interesting to think about what principles Christ used to choose *His* apostles. Our Savior did not go to Jerusalem, where educated young professionals could be found. He did not seek advice and recommendations from the leading religious teachers of the time. But, nevertheless, the people he selected built the largest and most powerful organization in human history.

S. I. McMillen in the book *None of These Diseases* told the story of a girl who was applying to college. One of the questions on the admissions application was: "Do you consider yourself a leader?" The entrant answered sincerely: "No." She realized that this answer would probably significantly worsen her chances—the competition was great, and so she had little hope for a positive answer. A week later, a response came from the college: "Dear Applicant: An analysis of the entrance questionnaires submitted this year showed that 1,452 new leaders have enrolled in our school. Your application for admission has been accepted, as the administration considers it critical to have at least one follower among the students." In a leader-filled, narcissistic world, Christ seeks followers who are ready to follow Him.

The Sea of Galilee is a large freshwater lake 13 miles long and 7 miles wide. Along its coast were numerous fishing villages, of which Capernaum was the largest. The economic system of that time did not know the free market, and fishing was regulated by the state in the interests of the state itself. The elite of the time consisted of a Greco-Roman population associated with the Roman occupation and of wealthy Jewish families close to King Herod and his sons. The rest of the population lived on the brink of poverty.

The government profited from fishing in various ways. No one had the right to fish without a special license. Such rights were not sold to individuals, but to groups of fishermen, usually united by family ties, such as brothers Peter and Andrew or the family of Zebedee.

Additional taxes were imposed on the processing and sale of fish, as well as on transportation to the market. Caesar, Herod, and numerous tax collectors made the greatest profit from fishing. The fishermen themselves, after paying all the taxes, were in need, no matter how rich the catch.

A few years ago, the City of London was flooded with complaints about local public transport. Half-empty buses would pass the bus stop, despite the crowds of impatient passengers. When asked to explain their actions, the officials responsible for public transport issued a statement: "It is extremely important for transport to follow a certain schedule. If the buses stop at each stop, they will not be able to perform their duties at the appointed time."

The question arises: What is wrong with this statement? Transport management has misdiagnosed priorities. In their opinion, the main task of the buses was to adhere to the established schedule. In fact, their function was to transport passengers to their destination. Wrong priorities have led to the transport system ceasing to do what it was designed to do.

Next question: Why did God create each of us? The Apostle Paul says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). That is, each person must do the "good works" that the Lord has entrusted to him. Some believe that it is enough to go to church once a week to please God. But this is not so, because the Lord wants much more from us.

The majority theoretically agrees that human life in all its manifestations should be a service to God, but everything, even a small church affair, moves sluggishly. "It's a good idea, but I don't have time right now," is the usual response from people who will never have time. For each of us, human affairs end only with our death, and until that moment each of us is constantly busy with something.

So, dear Believers! Reflecting on the calling of the apostles, we should note that the Lord never called the lazy or idle for service. God's call always comes to those who work constantly and persistently. Moses grazed the flock on Mount Horeb, Gideon beat the wheat in the grindstone, Saul searched for the lost donkey, David grazed his father's flock, Elisha plowed with twelve pairs of oxen. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer, Amos was a shepherd, Matthew, a tax collector; Peter, John, and Andrew, fishermen. The Lord chooses those to serve who work hard because they know how to work, accept responsibility, and can achieve results.