My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. Our Lord God of our grateful hearts, minds, Spirits, and souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

Most of you know I’m a second-career pastor. I was in the financial services industry and later software industry that sold stuff to companies I used to work for. I did it fairly well, and despite what my boss said, it was not life or death if the next contract didn’t get closed. I provided good service for others, who often had no sense of the scope of what was required to bring that service to them. But for me, it was a steady check that provided health insurance and some modicum of security that I could pay the mortgage and put food on the table.

There was certainly nothing wrong with doing what I did. From youth, many of us are advised to go to school and get an education so that we can get a good job. It’s advice I followed; I did it “right”, according to how things were back then. But apparently doing it right wasn't what God wanted, because somehow I ended up in seminary.

These early fisher folks that we read about Jesus calling, though, are in a family business—not a family pastime. Simon Peter and Andrew, the first set of brothers we encounter, aren’t with their father, or at least he’s not mentioned, but we can imagine that they are fishermen because their father was before them and his father before him and so on. They rely on the fish they catch not only for food on the table but also for trade in the marketplace and money in the purse. They are fishermen, working the nets, in the same way, in my case, I was an insurance adjuster and later an account executives. Fishing is what they do, day in and day out.

The Zebedee boys, James and John, also fishermen, and they’re mending the nets with their father when Jesus calls them to follow him. Our narrator reports that they immediately leave the boat—and their father—and follow Jesus.

Jesus is changing names, and dragging young kids away from all that they know, and he’s doing this on the heels of a major shift. John the Baptist has been arrested. The powers that be are starting to take notice and they’re now bearing down on the preachers who say that God’s kingdom has come near. The privileged class feels threatened--even though they are being invited to participate in something greater.

The conversation between the parents that night at the Zebedee house was probably one that we can pretty easily envisage if these were our kids. I’d like you to put yourself in those shoes for a minute. “What do you mean, you boys aren’t coming home? You’re pulling my leg, right, kids? You’ve followed this wandering rabbi, the one whose cousin is in jail? Are you on somethin’? Is this some kind of cult that could get us trouble? Do you know this fella has ticked off the folks we rely on for our social status, reputation, and ability to go to the market to sell our fish?” These are real questions.

And it’s a story as old as time. Young kids struggle with stability of what’s here versus the adventure of what’s out there. Where do we fall on that continuum of conversation in the Zebedee household? Are you in disbelief? Shock? Outrage? What’s your reaction if your kids up and left everything on the shore?

Things are changing.

Jesus responds with a sense of urgency. He needs to speak even more boldly of the nearness of God’s kingdom, one for all peoples of the world. And he needs to enlist some workers in what will prove to be arduous and serious work. Simon and Andrew’s assignments have to change because the culture--indeed, the world--has changed. It’s just hard for older folks who are used to another worldview to see it, and even more hard when it pulls their kids along with it.

But we have to love how Jesus calls these brothers to follow him, and this is probably why they want to “come and see”, and abide in his love and his work. He doesn’t say he’s going to make them teachers or rabbis. He doesn’t say that they’ll be preachers or evangelists or baptizers. He says, “Come follow me and you will do the same thing you’ve been doing for generations: fishing. Except now you’ll be fishers of people.” He speaks to them in a language they’ll understand and gives them a job they can do. They know how to fish.

It’s true that a lot of the images used in scripture don’t always connect with a modern reader. Shepherding and fishing might not be among our everyday professions, and if they are, they have changed radically since Andrew and Peter and the Sons of Thunder stood on the lakeshore. Even if we’re familiar with an agrarian life, the Bible’s agricultural images are quite different from what we know today. Yet the call that Jesus casts over the waters of today is the same as the one that those first disciples heard.

One of the dangers of using call language to talk about being a disciple of Jesus can be that it seems to be owned by clergy. Ministers and pastors talk “the call” and the story surrounding it because we’re taught and coached to do so throughout our training. Talking about our call to ministry becomes comfortable in ways that perhaps aren’t all that comfortable for others—it’s the language ministers speak, but it’s not all that obvious or tangible to others who are doing other-than-religious work. So let me ask this another way, and ask each of us what it means to be called to discipleship and whether we are ready now, or ever will be, to answer the call.

When these first four disciples were invited to fish for people, they dropped their nets and left their boats behind. I’m going out on a limb here, but I think for a lot of folks hearing Jesus call us to discipleship can feel like an invitation that we resist because we are largely confused and afraid of its implications. Does it have to be that stark of a choice? Do we have to leave our livelihood behind to follow Jesus? Do we have to walk away from our families and perhaps everything we know?

I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

Let’s not confuse a call to discipleship and a call to professional ministry. The life of discipleship is one for all people, folks serving and following Jesus in the midst of our lives as cashiers, woodworkers, project managers, small business owners, accountants, teachers, stay at-home parents, and any manner of other things.

Being a disciple means seeing Jesus as the light of the world, and making that real so that folks are less focused on the negative drama of their ambitions and more on the potential for one another’s love and acceptance.

Being a disciple means striving to be unified in the gospel, as a community of faith—unified not by the many things that could divide us but by God’s good news for the world and for us.

Being a disciple means being the ordinary, everyday people walking along Great Bay with those in need, and traveling to bring good news to our neighbors near and far. It is possible, of course, that we might have a metaphorical boat we need to leave behind, the angst and agony of our old lives. But Jesus’ call seems to be less about what we leave behind and more about our eager response to follow him as everyday people—a call that continues to come today, whatever our lakeshore looks like.

Thanks be to God, Amen.