

What do you and I need to do
To become fishers of souls?

Somehow we followers of Jesus' way
Have built up this romantic image of the disciples:

Leaving everything behind,
totally trusting God,
forgetting and forsaking
wives and fishing boats and society
Peter James John and the others
All went to work full time for Jesus.

"Just follow me,"
Said Jesus
"And we're good."

But look where Jesus goes after that –
and where his disciples follow him.

The gang moved through Nazareth
all around the sea of Galilee,
by Jacob's well in Samaria
where the ne'er do well woman dwelt
To the poor, the sick, the smelly crowds
and ultimately
They followed Jesus
To where he hung Dying as a cast off criminal
outside the capital city Jerusalem
between two thieves.

And what were they doing all that time?

According to the book of Acts
Jesus and the disciples went about doing good.

Jesus' preaching and teaching
Can't have occupied more than say
5 or 10% of Jesus' time and the disciples attention.

Most of the time, they weren't in class being lectured to.

They were in a lab practical –
living in that faith
Being and becoming and demonstrating

the love Jesus proclaimed and lived.

They were doing that
Right in the same places where the disciples had always lived.

They still had to work.
They still had to eat.
They still had babies,
And raised families.

In order to follow the example of the disciples,
to become fishers of souls,
We likely don't need to change much of what we do.
We need a radical change in how we do it.

The transformation we seek in the world begins within us.

We are perfectly fine as we are, where we are. And who we are.

The repentance the transformation
Which Jesus demands and which we seek
begins Within us –
and we go from there.

When Jesus called those first disciples by the sea of Galilee,
it was a personal call.

Jesus doesn't call us
As followers of Jesus way
away from we are at the Core of our being.

Jesus calls us to fulfill who we are.

Repentance and following Jesus
are not about leaving something behind,

Following the Way of Jesus is about
Who we are deep within us-
It's a gift already given to us.

We simply need to unwrap and accept it.

Christ took something they were familiar with,
the stuff of their everyday lives,
and he made it more
And he made what already existed better,
Filling it with love and compassion and Beauty.

So I want you to fill-in your own blank today.

Maybe if you're a fisherman-
You could be a fisher of souls.

But what if you're a college professor?
Jesus calls you to be a professor of souls

Or cashier of souls,
Or student of souls,
Or social worker of souls
Or a retiree of souls.

Whoever you are, Whatever you do, wherever you are

Jesus wants you to repent,
To be transformed
To follow him today.

That change will be our true conversion,
Our true repentance,
Our true life transformation

The monk Trappist Thomas Merton
Wrote the first religious book to every make the NYT best seller list-
In 1948.

It detailed his entrance into monastic life-
His love for God
His embrace of all those monkish things-
Long hours of prayer
Fasting,
Service,
And above all – aloneness.

But it was over seventeen years later
That he had his true conversion

To his truest self,
His true vocation in following Jesus.

He had this Epiphany,
This calling
Not inside the monastery walls
Not while praying and fasting and preaching,
But while he was on a shopping trip
for the monastery
In downtown Louisville Kentucky
Surrounded by busy shoppers.

He wrote:
In Louisville
Of Fourth and Walnut,
in the center of the shopping district
I was suddenly overwhelmed
with the realization
that I loved all those people,
that they were mine,
and I theirs,
that we could not be alien to one another
even though we were total strangers.
It was like waking from a dream of separateness,
Of spurious self isolation
In a special world.

This sense of liberation
Was such a relief and joy I almost laughed out loud.
If only everybody could realize this
But it cannot be explained.
There is no way of telling people
That they are all walking around
Shining like the sun.”

Come have the epiphany.
Come follow Jesus.
Come be who you truly are
Come be who you truly are together.

Amen.