

JAN. 4, 2018

# 'zebedee doo da, zebedee yay!'

The Jan. 21 Gospel reading detailed the moment that Christ comes across James and John out on their boat tending their nets.

*"Then he called them,"* Mark 1:20 reads. *"So, they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him."*

When I heard this reading, I placed myself in their boat. How would I respond to Christ? What would I do?

(As a side-note, this reading also touches me because my aunt's name was Zebedee. We used to sing, "Zebedee doo da, Zebedee yay! My, oh, my, what a wonderful day!" I recall how she'd chase us with an iron spoon and pelt us with stale biscuits. *Happy times.*)

What would I do if Christ called to me? How would I feel? How would *you* feel?

Remember, you wouldn't be committing to attending a meeting each month, you would be leaving everything you knew behind! Forever!

I've never been a joiner. Well, I do belong to the Dark Web Society. It's darker than the regular Dark Web. It's so dark we don't even use electricity. We just stare at a black screen.

So, my first impulse would be to say to Jesus, "Oh, I'm just so busy these days, what with the boys in little league, the new addition to the house and the wife's mother coming to visit. You know how it is." Any excuse I could come up with.

*Could you leave everything behind?*

What if, for example, James had just built shelves in his bedroom, as I did a few weeks ago? Finally, after several years, I have all my books shelved neatly by my bed instead of in a huge pile that I trip over every night. Would James have left the boat and followed Jesus if he had just built nice bookshelves in his bedroom? Would the lull of newly organized books keep him from leaving?

Or ... or what if John had a pet back home? How could he leave this pet hedgehog, Mr. Peepers? Will Zebedee remember to feed Mr. Peepers? And if not, what will happen to Mr. Peepers? Does anyone take into account what would happen to Mr. Peepers?

How would my dad feel about me leaving? Would he be mad at me? Would he tell the rest of the family I had abandoned him and that I was a big disappointment, and that now he regrets ever buying me that Popeil's Pocket Fisherman for my 11th birthday, thinking that that I would one day be a wealthy deep sea pocket fisherman?

What about the "hired men"? Would they be angry? What about the cool fisherman in the leather jacket with the live-by-his-own-rules attitude who I wish I could be more like? I don't want the cool guy thinking I'm a nerd because I left them to do all the work! Would I be the Potsie to his Fonzie? There's nothing worse than having the cool guy think you're a nerd.

Having said this, I admit that I probably would have followed Jesus, if not just because my brother had, and I'm not gonna let my brother one-up me!

Once I join Jesus, other issues arise. For example, I tend to have a bit of OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). For instance, I have to check to see that my doors are locked about a dozen times before I go to bed. I've made it all the way down the stairs from my attic office only to wonder if I absolutely definitely turned off all the lights and unplugged my heater. OCD is great for physical fitness.

"Jesus, I gotta go back ... just for a minute," I can see myself telling the Lord after walking a mile or two. "I'm thinking I didn't tie down the mast properly."

"You've already gone back four times," Jesus replies kindly. "The mast is fine. Seriously. I'm God-Made-Man. I know these things."

"Yeahhhhh, I appreciate that ... but it's just *really* bugging me," I answer pleadingly.

"Okay," he says with a sigh. "Go check the mast. We'll wait."

I can almost hear the other apostles mumbling as I go.

See, I would be really irritating. That's why I don't join things. Eventually the apostles would decide to ditch me, then they'd get in trouble for ditching me, and then I'd be the guy who made them get into trouble for ditching me, which would be really awkward.

And all this would amount to one big hill of worry. I've never handled worry well, considering I'm so practiced at it. This is why my cardiologist and I are on a first name basis. And why the lady at the pharmacy counter knows me well enough to ask how my cat's acne is doing. And why my stomach thinks I'm an evil dictator and always tries to overthrow me.

Pretty soon the worry would cause my belly to start to ache, and with a desperate request, I'd be holding up the apostles once again.

And while indisposed, I'd hear an apostle mutter, "I didn't think it was scientifically possible for one person to hold that much," to which the others (except for Jesus) would giggle. And I would walk back pretending like I hadn't heard.

Would I follow Jesus?

Well, most of us aren't asked to leave the boat. Some are, of course. Some are called to give their lives to Christ in a special way through the priesthood and by becoming Sisters and Brothers.

But for the vast majority of us, we don't have to go anywhere.

But it's still a calling. And we are still asked to answer. And to follow!

For most of us, we are called to follow Jesus from where we are, whether you're on a boat, in construction, teaching school, at home taking care of the kids, at a senior home, or even at a newspaper office.

Speaking of which, did I just hear somebody call my name? Or maybe it was *your* name?