

Sermon ~ Bible Reading: Mark 1:16-20

If you're anything like me, you'll find it hard to imagine what it was about Jesus that would have made Peter drop everything and follow him especially since, according to Mark, Peter and Jesus were strangers when Jesus called him. People don't do that kind of thing! At this point we breathe a sigh of relief as John comes to rescue. From the gospel that he wrote we learn that Peter's brother Andrew was one of John the Baptist's disciples. He had heard what John had said about the Messiah: he had heard John say, 'Here is the Lamb of God!' when Jesus walked by, and consequently Andrew left John to follow Jesus. Soon afterwards he found his brother, Simon, and told him that in Jesus they had found the Messiah. Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, who gave him the name 'Peter'. It is likely that Peter and his friends were the disciples who accompanied Jesus to the wedding at Cana. So Jesus was far from 'cold-calling' when he stepped onto the shore at Galilee. For Peter and Jesus weren't strangers after all, but had met previously. And now we can imagine what it was about Jesus that would have made Peter drop everything and follow him – in Jesus they had found the Messiah.

The trouble is twofold:

1. the first readers of the Gospel Mark wrote wouldn't have known anything about this – perhaps Mark himself didn't know anything about it; for more than likely, when the first readers began to read the Gospel Mark wrote, none of the other Gospels had been written, and certainly not the one John wrote;
2. and to spell it out the way we did at the start today is to miss the whole point of the story as Mark tells it – Mark's point is to bring home to his first readers and to us 21st century disciples the absolute authority of Jesus – his word lays hold on our lives, his word asserts his right to our whole-hearted and total allegiance, his word disturbs our world, and what's more, his appeal and personality are irresistible – no wonder Jesus' call was an offer they couldn't refuse, no wonder they didn't ask questions, no wonder they didn't hang about, no wonder they dropped everything, no wonder they left everyone. And no wonder Jesus' call was an offer we couldn't refuse, no wonder we didn't ask questions, no wonder we didn't hang about, no wonder we dropped everything, no wonder we left everyone. Wow!