



ALL SAINTS

Sermon Discussion Guide

Practices of a Missionary People for a Secular Age: Introduction

JANUARY 18, 2016

INTRO Questions:

Do you focus more on knowledge than on practice when it comes to your Christian faith? What's the outcome of overemphasizing theological knowledge/teaching and underemphasizing obedient, active faith?

Background: Tim argued that we now live in the age of late modern secularism, the dominant "religion" of Western society, which either ridicules, demonizes, or simply dismissively tolerates any religion that claims to reveal truth. Science has displaced God's Word as the arbiter of truth, even though science constantly disproves its own "facts," and cynicism has displaced faith among most of our most influential figures (media, scholars, entrepreneurs, etc). The goal of this series is to gain a more biblical understanding of sanctification, the process of maturing into Christlikeness, so we can better know how to live as a missionary people in a truly secular age.

READ the text aloud

DISCUSS:

1) vv. 1-3: Jesus invades Peter's boat and life without invitation. And he begins giving instructions; he takes charge. How does this portrait of Peter's encounter with Jesus contrast with common depictions of how and why Jesus enters our lives?

2) vv. 4-5: Jesus calls Peter to an action that Peter deems futile, yet Peter obeys. What does this reveal to us about the nature of faith...what faith *is* and what faith *does*?

3) v. 6-10: The reaction to Jesus' power and work is astonishment, fear and ultimately worshipful obedience. Jesus calls the disciples and they follow him. How does this story help us rethink the purpose of the Christian life?

4) v. 11: "...they left everything and followed him." Tim underscored that this story, and especially this final line, demonstrate that when Jesus enters our lives he takes over. And he wants control over everything. Discuss.

5) Jesus seeks to change Peter out in the deep, in the unknown and uncontrollable. He doesn't change Peter on the shore, a place of safety and security and potential escape. In what ways or areas of your life are you clinging to safety and security and resisting Christ's intention to change you?

6) James K.A. Smith tried to help his students grasp that you can't think your way into the kingdom of God, that there's a difference between intellectual assent and true belief. True belief shapes and is shaped by action. We know what we believe by examining our practices. How does this help us understand the purpose and importance of spiritual practices?

Conclusion/Application:

Flannery O'Connor said we can hide from Jesus by always learning more about him and never practicing what we've learned. Refining our theology is spiritually dangerous when it becomes an excuse for not acting out our faith in love. Love is the greatest apologetic for the Christian faith, and love is first and foremost action.

Luke 5:1-11

English Standard Version (ESV)

^{ESV} **Luke 5:1** On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.