

Jesus said to them, 'Come after Me and I will make you fishers of men,' and at once they left their nets and followed Him.

These days, we would like to go into psychological detail about the emotional needs of Peter and Andrew and their inner journey of searching for something, reaching out for more. We love to think about the dynamics of conversion. That is often our problem in answering Jesus' call.

If the call came to us, we would probably want discussions, some counseling, some research on decision-making as we weigh the options to ensure that we are responding to a genuine call. While we are doing all that, Jesus would move on to another town and we would miss the chance. That is what has been called "the paralysis of analysis."

Discussion is easy. But, decision takes courage and strength. Our life is shaped not by our discussions but by our decisions. Analysis is no substitute for decision which is the point this Gospel account is making to us. We follow Jesus by making a choice, not by launching a discussion. Jesus said, "Come after Me." At once, they left their nets and followed. A key detail of this scene is found in the nets.

The message of Jesus was that the kingdom of God is at hand and He calls us to reform our lives to enter that kingdom. The trouble is that we want the kingdom but not the reforming. It's like those who want the meal but not the cooking; who want the grades but not the study; who want the salary but not the work.

We want to know the rule of God in our life, forgiveness and growth in grace, the sense of belonging to a spiritual community, the peace of being united to God's will — but we don't want to give up the nets, the entanglements that trap us, that hold us back. These entanglements are not the responsibilities we have in our life because those can be ways of serving the Lord. Rather, these entanglements are the people and relationships that distance us and separate us from Christ.

We don't want to give up gossiping, wrong relationships, immoral behavior, habits of arrogance, rash judgment or addictions. So, we try to find ways of having it both ways and we can't. Those nets weigh us down and hold us tight. To know the kingdom of God in our life we have to be willing to leave behind the nets, the distorting entanglements of soul and heart and mind.

The Gospel shows us the ones who left their nets and followed as Jesus gave them a new mission, new seas to sail, deeper purpose for their lives. For us, to follow Jesus is not a matter of leaving family, jobs, or residence. It's a matter of leaving behind a way of living, and that is far more difficult.

In the past, when people had troubles in their life or wanted opportunity, they were told "Go in another place" So often they took their problems with them because the real problem was not in the place they lived but in the heart.

So for us, the problem is not where we live, but how we live; not how much we have, but what we do with it; not in finding the truth, but in embracing it.

The reign of God is open to all of us, if we are willing to risk a new way of living, to abandon the "paralysis of analysis" and make the commitment to Jesus Christ. We will experience the kingdom to the extent that we are willing to let some of those nets go. It's hard to follow the Lord if we are dragging all kinds of tangled webs woven from bad memories, angers and sins.

They left their nets and followed. We can tell what is really important in our life not by what we get out of it but by what we are willing to give up for it. What nets, entanglements do we still need to leave behind at the shore in order to push out to sea and follow the Lord?

They left their nets and followed the Lord. So can we!