

## Can You Disappoint?

*Matthew 4:12-23; January 29, 2017*

I'm going to talk about disappointment this morning, a common human experience. The word "disappointment" appears only once in Scripture, in a passage in Romans where Paul says that hope based on the love of God poured into our hearts "does not disappoint." That's true. But that place of peace and grace with God comes more at the end of our story. You and I are more at the beginning. We are much more like the fishermen along the shores of the Sea of Galilee; we've heard Scripture, we've heard its promises. But we have lives, responsibilities and stuff to do. Dropping *our* plans is *not* on the agenda as we understand it. Along comes Jesus saying, *Come, follow me {snap fingers}*, and the first thing we want to say is, *Who me? You mean now, Jesus, like right this moment?*

Yes. Right this moment. We, too, are disciples-in-waiting. The call comes to every one of us. Some hear now, some later. But we will all hear eventually. Something deep in us *knows* that there is *more than our plans*. Something in us *wants* to drop our nets and leave behind our cooking fires. Something whispers in us: *I will show you life and love that does not disappoint!*

And even though you may not be quite ready to test the assumptions on which your life plans are built, something in you wants to listen: *Come, follow me, and I will have you fish for what is real!*

As we listen and begin to follow, we learn to handle a lot of disappointment. In fact, disappointment is necessary. Instead of dreading disappointment, we begin to see disappointment as signaling that something new is arriving in our lives and it's time to make room.

There is, however, the reality that we do disappoint others; we are not perfect and we do fall short. I vividly remember as a child one summer's afternoon when my grandmother asked me to look out for my next oldest brother Tim while she looked after my two youngest brothers who were quite small. Well, I would rather play baseball with cousins, so I told Tim to sit on the sideline which, of course, he did not. To make a long story short, Tim got thirsty, wandered off back into the house, found a can of white paint and thinking it was milk, he drank it. Thank God, my grandmother found him, we all rushed to the doctor where he got his stomach pumped out, and the story ended well. Except that my grandmother, as we sat in the doctors' office, told me how disappointed she was in me for the choice I made. Not a very helpful thing to say to an eight-year old kid as I look back on it, but I felt absolutely terrible. For years afterwards, when I heard somebody say we will all face our Maker one day and the book of our lives will be opened for judgment, the God I saw in my mind's eye was about five feet tall and not much more, and she had steely gray hair and China blue eyes!

We all screw up and fall short of what we are asked to do. If we're lucky, we do learn along the way about making choices and about self-forgiveness.

But the invitation to handle disappointment doesn't stop there. At some point in our lives, we don't disappoint because of a "wrong" choice, but because of a choice that is a deep "yes" for us. How many of you can remember making a choice that disappointed people you loved and respected? The choice of a job – a spouse – a career change – a change in faith – a new way of living – and you had to face disappointing someone whose opinion mattered to you?

How do you think Zebedee felt when his sons John and James told him they were quitting the family fishing business to follow Jesus and fish for women and men? Disappointed may not begin to describe how he felt!

And you -- how have you felt when you have had to do the same as James and John, to disappoint because of your truth?

Here's the thing about our world! Comfort sells! Security sells! Loyalty sells! Sameness sells. Meeting expectations sells! Coloring in the lines....sells. Staying on the map.....sells. Not disappointing.....is an easy way out, but it sells.

But what of *your* truth? What are you waiting for? Can you disappoint? And come alive?

At the end of the day, the journey that takes you into what is real, will bring some busted illusions. And the biggest illusion of all is that the Past can teach us what we most need to know. Jeff Foster writes these words that seem so often true to me, not necessarily in words, but in what we unconsciously learn and believe:

*They taught you that you were small.....incomplete, limited.....They sold you a lie. That love was conditional. That you had to work for it. Earn it. Be "good enough" for it. That the source of your self-worth was outside of you. And was outside of your control. And was dependent on doing better. Being faster. Smarter. Louder. Quieter. Being taller, prettier, more accomplished. Achieving better grades. Climbing high. Descending when told. Making more. Having more. Money. Certificates. Titles. Praise. Applause. Building a better image. Constructing a better you. A better version. An upgrade.*

*It was a lie. You were lovable exactly as you were. In your original form. From the beginning you were whole. And complete. And worthy. Worthy of love. Worthy of good quality attention.....safety.....dignity....respect.*

*They were mistaken, always. Yet forgive them, Father, for they knew not what they were doing. For they were taught the same. {The Way of Rest, pp. 215-216}*

To see the lie which makes us “small” and forgive it, is what we are called to come and follow and find out.

For Jesus disappointed, too. He was not a king anyone was looking for. He declared that his brothers and sisters and mother and father were not family, but all who do the word of God are family. He told them, “Let the dead bury the dead.” He danced with tax collectors and prayed with prostitutes. His church seems to have had only twelve active, signed on, pledging members willing to serve on committees, and they, too, were disappointed when he led them to a cross.

But the cross was not the end of the story, as they expected. That, too, was a lie, told by fear. Beyond the cross was life that could not be taken away and love that never left them. Come, follow me, said Jesus, and I will show you.

Here’s news. You don’t have to wait for the end of your story to find what you’re looking for. It’s already here. You are worthy of the kind of love that shapes you with courage and sustains you with tenderness. You can find it as you go, wherever you go.

First you must be disappointing. Can you disappoint?

Amen