

How long does it take to trust someone?

That question alone can unsettle us, because most of us know from experience that trust usually takes time. It grows slowly. It's shaped by shared history, by consistency, by reliability. Trust is often earned, sometimes broken, and rarely given freely. And yet, whenever I read this gospel text—whether today, or remembering it from when I first heard it as a little boy—I'm struck by how *quickly* trust seems to happen.

Whenever I read this story, I find myself closing my eyes and imagining the scene. I picture the calling of the first disciples as if I were standing there myself. And every time, my imagination paints a vivid, almost cinematic picture.

A new day is breaking along the Sea of Galilee. The early morning haze is beginning to lift as the sun slowly rises over the mountains to the east. That first red light spills across the water, not only illuminating the land but gently pushing back the darkness that clung to the night. Gulls cry overhead. The water laps rhythmically against the shore. The air is cool and still—the kind of stillness that exists before the world fully wakes up.

Most people are still asleep or just beginning to stir. But not the fishermen.

They're already at work, casting their nets while the day is still bearable, before the heat settles in. Fishing isn't romantic work—it's demanding, repetitive, and necessary. It's how food gets on the table.

And then there's Jesus.

Walking along the shoreline. Maybe stretching his legs. Maybe taking a moment for prayer. Maybe gathering himself for what lies ahead. Or maybe—just maybe—he's searching. Because the kingdom of God has drawn near, and something new is about to begin.

He sees Simon and Andrew first. "Follow me," he says, "and I will make you fish for people." A little farther down the shore, he sees James and John mending their nets. He calls them too.

And without a word—without protest, negotiation, or delay—all four follow him.

They trust him.

And that's the part that really unsettles us.

Because they leave everything. Their boats. Their nets. Their livelihoods. Their families. Their sense of security. Their predictable future. They say “yes” to a stranger with no visible credentials, no guarantees, no explanation of what comes next.

Most of us would at least ask a few questions. *Where are we going? How long will this take? What happens if all this doesn't work out?*

But they follow.

Maybe this scene is idealized. I'll admit, I haven't yet stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee myself. But I've seen the photos. I've listened to friends return from pilgrimage, struggling to find words for what they experienced. Over and over again, I hear the same thing: *We were silenced by the beauty. We felt something holy.*

That sense of awe mirrors my awe at the disciples' response. Because if we pause for just a moment, their decision feels reckless. Unreasonable. Even irresponsible.

If my parent, child, or sibling walked away from everything they knew to follow someone they'd just met, I know how I'd react: *This is a terrible idea. What about your responsibilities? What about your family? How are you going to survive?*

Only knowing who Jesus becomes makes this decision seem acceptable.

Without that hindsight, we would likely question not just the disciples' judgment—but Jesus' as well. Who calls people away from their families and livelihoods?

And yet, for centuries, this moment has been lifted up as the model of faith: radical trust, immediate obedience, God first—no matter the cost.

But maybe this picture is still too calm. Too peaceful and clean.

Because the world these disciples lived in was anything but serene. Scripture makes that clear. John the Baptist has just been arrested by Herod for publicly criticizing his behavior. This was not a society that tolerated dissent. This was not a culture that valued free speech. The consequences for speaking truth to power were severe—and often deadly. Maybe these days this resonates a little more...

The people lived under Roman occupation, under the constant threat of violence. Scripture says they lived “in darkness” and “in the shadow of death.” This wasn't

poetic exaggeration. Rome maintained order through fear. Crucifixions were public. Punishments were brutal. Resistance was crushed.

That context matters.

It helps explain why Jesus begins his ministry by relocating to Galilee, making his home in Capernaum by the sea. This wasn't accidental. Galilee was far enough from the political and religious centers of power to allow something new to grow. It was economically active, agriculturally rich, and culturally mixed.

Jerusalem elites looked down on Galileans. They saw them as less serious, less faithful, more willing to compromise. But that distance from rigid control created space—space for imagination, for questions, and for hope.

You might say Galilee was full of people who thought outside the box.

Jesus wasn't the only boundary-pusher there either. But what set him apart was his way. His way of love. His way of healing. His way of teaching truth without violence. His Word—God-inspired, God-willed, God-made flesh—became the great light Isaiah promised. A light not meant to overpower the darkness, but to undo it.

“Repent,” Jesus says. “Turn around. Reorient your life. The kingdom of God has come near.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” Jesus wasn’t calling people to take up arms. He was calling them to become light in a world shaped by fear.

And as scripture tells us these people longed for liberation. They expected a messiah—but one who looked like a warrior. Someone like King David. Someone like Judah Maccabee. Someone who would fight Rome on Rome’s terms.

But what God intended was far more radical: the end of death and domination—not through a response of further death and domination— but through love, sacrifice, and a shared life.

That kind of redemption required trust.

The disciples trusted not just *Jesus*, but the kind of kingdom he proclaimed—a kingdom not for a few, but for everyone. Jew and Gentile. Insider and outsider. People of every stripe you can imagine. The whole world.

And if we're honest, that kind of trust feels overwhelming. Maybe even impossible. And yes, I know—that's a risky thing for a pastor to admit. But maybe the disciples weren't meant to be carbon copies for us to imitate. Maybe they were pioneers—clearing a path so future generations could follow in ways shaped by new contexts and new challenges.

Because our challenges are real. Connecting people in an age of isolation. Offering comfort in an age of fear. Responding to injustice without becoming consumed by bitterness. Facing a world where every day seems to offer nothing but a bleak outlook, not with hopelessness, but with a tenacious spirit.

And Dr. King understood this tension well. You might remember that he said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Friends that arc doesn't bend on its own. It bends because people—ordinary people—choose to trust that love is stronger than hate, that justice is possible, and that God is still at work.

Too often, Christians reduce faith to personal salvation alone—believing the right things so we can go to heaven someday. But Jesus wasn't just trying to get people *into* heaven. He was trying to bring heaven *into* the world.

Those first disciples understood that. After Pentecost, what did they do? They shared what they had. They cared for the sick. They fed the hungry. They refused to let anyone be invisible or forgotten. Through water and Spirit, they became the hands of Christ in the world, they began to forge a New Jerusalem that we can only dream of.

That became the defining mark of Christian faith.

A deep belief in the power of Christ's resurrection, yes. But that belief in Christ is love lived out for the neighbor. And today as walls and fortresses are (As Prime Minister Carney said), we are invited into that same discipleship as those Jesus first entrusted—not as perfect followers, but as trusting ones.

This is how darkness is undone with light.

This is how we step out of the shadow of death and into life.

This is how we glimpse heaven.

This is how we learn to fish for people.

Amen.