

Sermon Title: A Fish Tale

Text: Psalm 27:1-9 (UMH #758) ; Matthew 4:12-23; emphasis Matt 4:17-22

By: Rev. Terry Carty

Date: 01-23-11

Place: Kingston Springs UMC

Season: Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Main Point: Discipleship is not inspired by fear or glamour. It is inspired because it attracts people and its reward is desired.

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Several years ago the New York Times carried an interesting article that began something like, "Scientists say they have discovered a shape-changing fish that can detect the presence of hungry predators and then turn itself from easy pickings into something much more difficult to swallow."

I am sure that you have heard a lot of tales about fish and fishing that are not easy to swallow – thus the term "fish tales" refers to greatly exaggerated stories. But there is apparently enough conclusive data to give this story about a species of fish that can alter their body shape credibility.

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Our scripture reading this morning includes a story about fishing and people who fish. In fact, at first glance this could sound like a "fish tale" – perhaps greatly exaggerated to make a point. Would you believe that you would quit your job and follow a traveling preacher who simply stopped by and said, "leave that job and come go with me." I don't think so. And it would even be less likely that your father would give up two workers or two children to follow such a flimsy direction without an argument.

And yet, three of the four gospels report this story. I feel that one of the clues to what made these men put down their nets, leave their boats, and follow Jesus is found in the verse that precedes this fish tale. The 17<sup>th</sup> verse tells us that from the time Jesus heard that John the Baptizer had been arrested, he began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This was the same message that John had been proclaiming.

Jesus picked up John's message of being prepared, repent, change. Here we are on the fourth Sunday of the new year. If you have made a new year's resolution, you are probably finding it most difficult to keep the changes right about now. Change is really difficult.

Some of the primary motivations for change are fear, discomfort, desire, and attractiveness. Fear, discomfort, desire, attractiveness. I wonder which of these inspired those four fishermen to leave their jobs and follow Jesus.

