

Change Your Philosophy of Life Luke 5:1-11

Today's scripture reading is a scene of Jesus' calling his first disciples at the Sea of Galilee. There, Jesus called fishermen who failed to catch any fish all night long to be his disciples. There, the fishermen were advised by the unusual guidance of Jesus, experienced something astonishing, and were called to follow him.

People in all walks of life live by some philosophy, if even only unconsciously. There are three philosophies of life illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. There is the philosophy of the robbers: "What's yours is mine and I'll take it." There is the philosophy of the priest and Levite who passed by on the other side of the road: "What's mine is mine and I'll keep it." Finally, there is the philosophy of the Samaritan: "What's mine is ours and we'll share it." Jesus may ask us a similar question, "Which one of these philosophies is yours?"

After prayerful reading and reflecting on this scripture, I found three philosophies of life that brings change of life in this story of the calling of the disciples.

First, Jesus taught us to change our philosophy of life from shallow to a deeper level in life.

Jesus said to Simon Peter, who failed to catch fish all night long, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." The shallow water is a place for walking and wading, as it is an easy and safe level of water. The deeper level of water is not a place for walking or wading, and reflects a difficult, dangerous and challenging level of water. Here, you cannot go further without swimming.

A ship sails only in deep water. There is a rule of dynamics in the deep water. Water and wind are dangerous if they are deep or strong. But in danger, there is also a power of dynamics. How does an airplane float and travel through the sky? An airplane flies according to a power of dynamics; we call this, aerodynamics.

Eagle is the symbol of American spirit. We see a eagle flying. The bird doesn't move its wings much, but it is able to soar through the air because it bird knows the principle of aerodynamics and uses it. If there is no air, a bird cannot fly. Flying is not dependent on the power of moving wings, but on the use of the air flowing through the wings. Likewise, is the grace of God in our life. Without God's grace, we cannot exist. Where there is depth, there is danger, but also the grace of God.

Without trust in the water, swimming is not possible. It looks difficult and dangerous for a poor swimmer. To swim, you must not be afraid of deep water. The deep water supports the swimmer's body so that we may float, making swimming possible. The lesson is: Don't escape from the deeper level of life, rather take the opportunity to risk the depth of life. Where there is danger in the deeper level of life, there is God's grace

also. Don't look for your life's meaning limited to your safety zone, only at the shallow level of life.

Secondly, Jesus called us to leave ordinary life to follow his call toward the extraordinary, big dream.

Here is a dialogue between a guest and a waitress at a restaurant. As the waitress came to take an order, the guest asked her a very careful and serious questions.

“Are you doing what you've always wished you could be doing?” She looked at him questioningly.

“What do you mean?” She asked.

He said, “Well, maybe you are doing your dream, and that would be terrific. But I wonder, do you have a Big Dream inside of your heart that hasn't come true yet?”

Sonja thought for a moment. Then she said, “My mother is a nurse. My sister is nurse. And I always dreamed of becoming a nurse.”

“Would you have been a good nurse?” He asked.

Sonja became emotional. “I would have been a really good nurse,” she said softly.

“Would you like to be a nurse at this very moment?” He asked.

“Yes,” She said.

“Do you happen to believe that God wants you to be nurse?” He asked.

She looked away for a minute, Then she said, “I think so.”

“If God wants you to be a nurse, then there must be a way for you to be one, and I believe so.” He said.

“Who are you?” She asked. While she spoke, her eyes brimmed with tears.

This is a part of dialogue between Sonja and Bruce Wilkinson, who wrote the book, “The Dream Giver.” Once I introduced you to this book through the church news letter in January. Wilkinson said, “No matter where I travel in the world –among hard-charging Manhattan urbanites or villagers in South Africa – I have yet to find a person who didn't have a dream.”

Peter and his friends pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. They left ordinary life for the extraordinary dream. What dreams did they follow? Peter might fall his knee at Jesus and, said, “Lord, you are the greatest man I have ever met!” I have a great idea for a business for us. We will set our nets wherever you say to do and

we can catch tremendous amounts of fish and make the biggest fishery company in the world.” Is this the kind of dream we are looking for?

“The Dream Giver,” is a story, in the form of a modern-day-parable, about who dares to leave the ordinary life to pursue a big dream.

One day someone named Nobody dreamed a dream and woke up to his big dream echoing in his mind, “What you’re missing, you already have.” And, he found a long white feather that landed on the window flown in by the wind. His dream was what he did best and what he most loved to do. How could he have missed it for so long? The next morning, the ordinary man woke up at the usual time. He packed his suitcase with the usual stuff and a long white feather that he found as a dream. Then, he left home looking for the Land of Dream.

In the process Nobody had to meet three obstacles to reach the Land of Dream. At first, it was hard for him to leave his Comfort Zone. But it would have been even harder to leave behind his dream. When he got out the boundary of the Comfort Zone, he realized his dream was on the other side of that invisible Wall of Fear. He had to step through it. And the Waste Land was waiting for him. To get rid of the Waste Land, he had to cross the Big River. He was disappointed when he saw a deep river which he couldn’t cross, but he found a small boat at the seashore. He untied the rope which held the boat to the rock. He used the boat and crossed the River. In the Waste Land, he prepared his faith in the Dream. The Dream Giver sent a helper to Nobody to prepare his faith in the Waste Land.

Departing the Waste Land, the Nobody reached the Land of Promise finally and there, Nobody met the Dream Giver. The Dream Giver welcomed Nobody to the Land of Promise. And then the Dream Giver asked the Nobody Dreamer, “Give me your Dream.”

“What do you mean?” He asked. “It’s my Dream. A long white feather. You’re the one who gave it to me.”

“Yes. And now I’m asking you to give it back.”

Ordinary was shocked, he didn’t think he could. But, after he met the Dream Giver Nobody wanted the Dream Giver more than his Dream, so he did. He took a long white feather from his suitcase and handed it to the Dream Giver.

The Dream Giver received his Dream, a long white feather and held it in his hand for a while and then The Dream Giver gave the Dream back to him. Now it became his Big Dream – and that means his Dream was a lot bigger than before.

The means of life cannot be the purpose of life. We often confuse these two subjects. Money, job, clothes, car are the means of life, not the purpose of life. Clothes are for the body; if the body dies, clothes have no meaning for a dead body. Nets, boat and catching fish are a means of life not the purpose of life. Don’t concentrate on the means of life. Our dream should be changed in the hands of God to an even bigger dream.

Lastly, Jesus taught us to change our life from being material-focused to being person-focused.

The Dream Giver leads Nobody to a place called Anybodies' City. And the Dream Giver showed Nobody the people in the city. And the Dream Giver said, "Your big dream lies here among the people." The Big Needs of these Anybodies matched perfectly the Big Dream in his heart. The Ordinary man, Nobody was so excited that he let go with a whoop of joy, much to the delight of the Anybody children. He spent what he had. He did what he could. He used what he knew. Every day, he asked the Dream Giver to help and guide him.

Christian faith assures us that life finds its deepest meaning through relationships –with the good earth, with other persons and most profoundly, with God. Our greatest joys and our greatest sorrows so often come through human relationships. When things are right in our human relationships, there is a sense of well-being and of fulfillment. When things are wrong in our human relationships, there is frustration, emptiness, and loneliness.

A material-focused life is centered on having, owning life and is a self-centered life. Its purpose of life is success, and ruling other people by owning things. This is a limited life in this world. But, the person-focused life is a life of loving, sharing and a life center on God's word, the teaching of Jesus, and open to life eternal.

There was a Korean congregation which decided to build a new church building. The congregation was less than one hundred members, but they decided to build a church and started a capital building campaign. Most of members did not have settled jobs, nor secure finances. But, after much prayer, many members pledged their portions. When the finance committee met and collected the pledges, they found an unusual pledge card. It read, "two hours a day." There was not any amount written on the pledge card. They were so curious about that pledge.

But the pledge-giver was a couple, newly come from Korea. They did not have solid jobs, no skills, and no ability to speak English. They held jobs which brought in barely enough to get-by in a modest way of living. But, the couple decided to participate in the capital campaign of the church. They didn't know how much they could pledge for the church. They just decided to offer two hours a day to the church. They were looking for a second job in the evening for two more hours a day. They found a janitorial job for two hours a day. They were supposed to clean the building of a bank after six, anytime in the evening. After supper, the couple started their second job for two hours each day for the church. These two hours a day were designated hours for them. These two hours each day were dedicated totally to the church and God. During the vacuuming, sweeping the floor, cleaning waste, dusting and mopping, they sang hymns with a prayerful heart.

Ten dollars a day for the wage of two hours; work is a small amount of money for many. But, for this couple, its sum was incalculable. The couple gave fifty dollars a week, with thanksgiving, and full of pleasure every Sunday for their pledge. They were excited to make this offering to God. In these fifty dollars was their sweat, the songs in their hearts,

and their tearful prayers. They worked eight hours during the day for their bread, and in the evening they worked two hours for their soul. God blessed them in their work, and in their family, and in their children. They later became the owners of a janitorial company which hires more than one hundred workers.

Washington Park United Methodist Church in Denver, of which my daughter Esther is a member, has a women's group. This group consists of older members, mostly. They meet two hours a week at church every Wednesday evening. They work together to knit items, dishcloths, hats and blankets for babies, and sell these items to send the money for Aids-relief work with orphans in South Africa. Their two hours a week are totally set aside to work for other people. Actually, they are making nets and setting their nets in deep water to catch the souls of people.

Catching fish is work for food. Catching people is work for God. You are called to be a fisher for people. A French Philosopher, Descartes, once said, "I think, therefore I am." It is a famous phrase. But if you can say, "I work for God, therefore I am," it would be your philosophy of life.