

Hey God, It's me Zebedee

This sermon is based on the calling of James and John the sons of Zebedee in the Gospel of Matthew. Imagine you are walking down the beach at the Sea of Galilee and there is old Zebedee sitting in his boat having a conversation with God. This is the result of meditating on the passage using one of the Ignatian meditation techniques.

God, it's me Zebedee again. Just what are you doing to me. What did I do to deserve this honor of having my sons run off and follow some prophet? Do you know how many of these messiahs have wandered throughout this region in the last few years? They all claim to have talked with you. Well I've been talking to you for quite awhile and I'm not getting anywhere.

The last one was this John character. They called him the baptizer. My James and John talked to several of his followers who came through just a few months ago. I didn't like what I saw or heard. They were just troublemakers. Constantly talking about a messiah that was going to save us. Save us from what, the Romans? Yeah I have to pay more taxes than I want, but those soldiers stationed around here have to eat and I have one of the biggest fishing businesses along the Sea of Galilee. So why ruin a good thing? As long as we behave ourselves they do not give us any trouble. I just do not see the problem.

Well my two seemed to be much too interested in his message. That had me worried. I was afraid they might run off to the river Jordan and let him do his thing with them. They're good boys really, they don't need to be baptized. We keep a good kosher house, follow all the commandments, what do they need to be purified of? Then I heard that Herod arrested John a couple weeks ago and I gave a sigh of relief. I figured that in prison he couldn't cause me any more trouble. And now this!

Well Zebedee my friend what are you going to do now?

It's been almost a week since that Jesus came by talking about the kingdom of God drawing near. There we all were just sitting in my boat getting ready to go out for another day of fishing and this Jesus fellow comes up to our boat. Peter and Andrew were with him. He walks up to the boat looks at my two boys James and John and says 'Come become one of my followers' and they looked at each other than at Peter and Andrew who standing there on the shore nodding their heads and jump out of the boat and walk off with him.

For the last week they have been at Peter's house in Capernaum. Some nights they do come back to my house, it's not that far, but once they were gone for several days.

I must admit this Jesus did create quite a stir in the synagogue this past Sabbath. His message and knowledge of the Torah is impressive to say the least. And he spoke with such authority. Why now even my wife is interested in what he is saying. But we just can't all just jump up and walk away from our responsibilities. I mean somebody has to feed this family!

There is the rub. It's just that this is so darned inconvenient. I don't understand. Here I sit with my hired hands in a boat that I bought so that the boys and I could all go out and fish. Now they are over at Peter's house everyday and I'm left to make a living for the whole crew all by myself. My father started our family fishing business I've grown it into one of the biggest on the Sea of Galilee. I have a large boat and we do enough business that I even have hired help. I'm an important man in town. I always assumed that James and John would take over from me. After all I'm getting old and a little worn out. These boys aren't boys they are young men, well respected in town and it is time for them to take over. That is their responsibility as my sons.

I suppose this isn't the first time this type of thing has happened. After all Elisha was plowing his field when he was called to replace Elijah. But those are stories of the great prophets. Plain ordinary folk like us, well what does God want with us. I always thought it was enough to live a righteous life. Follow the laws of Moses, go to synagogue, say your daily prayers, and go to the temple in Jerusalem if you can for the high Holy Days. That obligation is understood. I don't have a problem with that.

So why this disruption to my life? Do be honest with you God, this whole thing scares me. I thought I had everything planned all set. The boys would take over the fishing business, I'd be able to relax a little, play with the grandkids when the boys got married, you know just a normal family life. Now this Jesus arrives and everything is unsettled.

Yet when they come home from Peter's house they are so excited. I have a hard time staying angry with them. What is this all about? What is it about this Jesus that commands such power over people like my sons? I must admit he is different, not like some of the other people who have claimed to be the Messiah.

His message is so different. There is no military leader in him. All the others talked about overthrowing Roman rule, but not Jesus. His whole message is about caring for the poor, the sick, the widow, and the orphan. He talks as if he is a servant rather than a leader. How is that supposed to work? And then there is all this talk about the kingdom of God. What is that about?

Hey God, it's me Zebedee again. Have you been listening? I really do want you to fill me in on what's going on down here. I really do want what's best for all of us, but would you mind clueing me in on the master plan. I mean I wouldn't mind helping this kingdom thing, it sounds pretty great when Jesus talks about it, but how am I supposed to help if you do not talk to me.

Hmm, silence again. Ok have it your way. I hope you know what your doing.

Well it's about time to get in the boat and go out for the day. Come on guys somebody has to make a living around here. Let's load up the nets and get going.