

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B) 01/25/2015

Mark Twain, novelist and author, spends three pleasant weeks in the woods of Maine. He is making himself comfortable on the train that will take him home, when a man sits next to him. The two strike up a conversation. Twain, still exuberant with his experience, shares with the stranger, *'Let me tell you something. The fishing season may be closed in Maine, but I have a couple of hundred pounds of the finest rock bass you ever saw iced down in the baggage car.'*

The man smiles and introduces himself, *'I'm Ralph Anderson, the state game warden. Who are you?'*

Twain returns his smile and responds, *'Pleased to meet you, sir. I'm Mark Twain, the biggest liar in these United States.'* (Ralph Anderson is a made up name.)

Have you ever wondered what **causes Simon, Andrew, James, and John** to respond as they do? What would make them **immediately** leave their fishing business and **follow Jesus**? Many Scripture scholars suggest that all four are **followers** of **John the Baptist**. They have **experienced something** in the **Baptist** which leads them to **search** for **something** more, and they **sense** that they might find **something more** in **Jesus**.

I suspect that most of us have had moments when we find ourselves in a situation that **requires more than we are willing to give**. Maybe it is the 2:00am feeding of our newborn child. Maybe it is listening to an elderly person repeating the same story or asking the same question that was told or asked fifteen minutes ago. Maybe it is our being accused of a crime. Maybe it is our

being told that our (financial) identity has been stolen and our savings are lost.

Power, prestige, and possessions are critically important when we operate **primarily** with the energy and perspective of our **small-selves**. The **limitations** of the **small-self** require us to be **protective, secretive, and anxious**. This is the reason that **Jonah** - in our first reading from the **Book of Jonah** - is so **reluctant** to respond **positively** to **God** who directs him to go and deliver a message to **Nineveh...** a city in which non-**Jews** live. So, he runs away.

We do something similar whenever we - usually **unconsciously** - feel that something more than we can handle is asked of us. It is the main reason, for example, that we are always encouraged by **advertisements** to run away from any **pain** or **suffering**, and **escape** into the newest and evermore **distracting** toy, car, or drug.

Simon, Andrew, James, and John - in our gospel reading from **Mark** - have, by their **willingness** to be attracted by the **lifestyle** of **John the Baptist**, discover - somehow - that **they are more than themselves**. They are **connected** to something bigger. The **dimension** that **Jesus** adds is that they are also **relational**.

Knowing that we are **relational**, that we are created - **objectively** - in the **image of God**, frees us from the **limitations** imposed by our **small-selves**; **frees** us to **consistently** respond **positively...** even though our **reluctance** and **resistance** also continues; **frees** us to **love eagerly** as God loves us.