

"IF JESUS WAS A PRESENT DAY PREACHER"

Jesus went about calling disciples. He came to James and John who were with their fisherman father. "Come follow me," said Jesus. The two responded, "We have a lot to do right now. The family business is a heavy responsibility. Maybe we can spare a few hours every once in a while."

And Jesus said to them, "That would be great! I understand how busy things can get. I hope to see you soon."

Jesus was walking along and he came upon Matthew's tax collection office. He called to Matthew, "Come follow me!" The tax collector said to him, "I can't just up and leave at the spur of the moment. Rome expects me to forward the quarterly tax revenues and I need to be able to pay the muscle who strong-arm those who don't want to pay what I demand of them. And I'm renovating and expanding my office. I have a growing enterprise here, you know. But, Jesus, I can probably break away and spend an hour or two with you every few weeks."

And Jesus said, "That's wonderful, Matthew. I'd love to see you whenever you can be with me."

A rich young ruler came to Jesus and said to him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What have you done so far?" The man answered him, "I've kept all the Ten Commandments." Jesus exclaimed, "Wow! That's great! Most people can't keep even seven out of ten. Tell you what, give some spare change to the poor and come follow me." And the rich young ruler answered him, "I have to pay my country club dues this week and I'm about to close on a vacation home so things are a little tight right now. But in the future I'll shake loose a few dollars for the poor from time to time and I'll drop by to see you when I have extra time."

And Jesus said, "Fantastic! Anything you can do will really be appreciated! Thank you for your generosity!"

If you are at all familiar with the Gospels, you know that Jesus would not have responded as we find above. He called for radical commitment. Never do we find him happy with halfway measures. He was not concerned about whether he inconvenienced his disciples or made people uncomfortable with his teachings. He straightforwardly told them that following him was the most important thing in the world. Every other priority is secondary. Jesus wasn't at all tactful.

I'm just an ordinary preacher who tries to file down the sharp corners of the call to discipleship. I try to be gracious and inoffensive, like the revised Jesus above. But I have a feeling it would be a lot wiser to pay attention to the Jesus of the Gospel.