

It is madness. No one does that sort of thing. They must have gone crazy; lost it totally. His wife and their father will be furious. Who is this guy anyway? Why would they want to leave a profitable family business and a pleasant middle class life style for the uncertainties of life with a wandering preacher, for goodness sake. It is madness.

Luke at least see the problem. Jesus calls Peter and the others only after they have got to know him a bit, and after the miraculous catch of fish which leaves Peter with a sense of his own worthlessness and gives a motive for his wanting to follow 'the Lord'. But Mark isn't interested in preparing the ground psychologically so that such objections as 'people don't do things like that' are avoided. For Mark Jesus' voice is a Word of Authority. When Jesus speaks it is God's command that is heard. There can be no refusal.

In this section of the Gospel Jesus' authority in word and in action is emphasised. The people are in awe that he speaks with such power. In contrast at the end of the Gospel Jesus will speak hardly at all. When he does speak it will be words that emphasise his complete alone-ness. He will be completely powerless. Yet he will achieve what he has come to do: "to serve, and give [his] life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10,45).

In summoning the four fishermen to follow him, Jesus assures them that they will become "Fishers of men". This is an important prediction. What Jesus says comes about; so we know from the outset that these men will spread the Good News and haul in to the Kingdom people who will hear and respond. This is important because the unfolding story will be a catalogue of discipleship-failure. Jesus will explain parables to the disciples in private and they will not comprehend. He will work signs and they will not see any deeper meaning. In the second half of the Gospel Jesus will three times announce his coming suffering and death. Peter remonstrates with him and is rebuked. "Get behind me, Satan." There is no gentle way of saying such damning words.

On the second occasion, the disciples are caught arguing about who is the greatest among them; and the third time, James and John are immediately asking for the best places in the Kingdom, which leads Jesus to challenge the disciples to be great by being the slave of all.

The failure of the twelve reaches its nadir when Jesus is arrested, lead to Gethsemane by one of the intimate group.; and they all flee, the last one leaving his cloak in the hands of the aggressors and fleeing naked. They had left everything to follow him; now they leave everything to get away from him and from the danger he represents. Peter, the first to be called from his father's boat then disgraces himself further; denying he know his Lord three times, the final time with a curse.

Later the Romans would challenge those they thought were Christians to prove their innocence by cursing Jesus. That might save their lives but made them guilty of apostasy, denying their faith, an unforgivable sin in the eyes of many; Peter's sin.

But we shouldn't be too hard on Peter and the others. They followed; but like all who go in the footsteps of Jesus they did not know what they were doing and they could not know what they were doing until they had followed Jesus all the way, to the cross. Only there is his true identity revealed. When he has died, alone and in anguish, the veil of the Temple is torn from top to bottom|: fro the top so an act of God; and the centurion is the first human person to identify Jesus correctly: "Truly, this man was the Son of God."

Mark opened his Gospel announcing "The Good News of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God". He pointed the reader to the prophet Isaiah, who announces the Good News that God is coming to his people. The time of exile is finally ending. God is making his triumphal way to Jerusalem.

This has happened . Jesus has followed that way of the Father, in obedient service. Now the veil of the Temple is torn open; the way to the Father's Kingdom is open; and the disciples, after their repeated failures, will become "fishers of men". What appeared to be madness was God's way; God's foolishness being wiser than human wisdom.