

## **“The Interview”**

**Pastor Dave Carlson  
First Presbyterian Church  
October 4, 2015**

**New Testament Lesson:** Matthew 5:14-16

**Old Testament Lesson:** Jonah 1:1-3

Nanette and John Carney are the founders of a recruitment and placement firm that started out helping people age 50 and older find jobs. They had a knack for placing people in “the hidden job market – jobs that never get advertised in the newspaper, posted on the Internet, or even talked about in the “good-old-boy network.”<sup>1</sup>

Most people struggle when it comes to finding the job or role that is tailor-made them. We struggle – not because it is hidden from our view – but rather because of the tendency to hide your true self from the world.

There’s something about letting your true self shine that is scary for people. So most of us hide behind such things as modesty – O, I don’t want to talk about myself – or fear – they’d never want me – or past experiences – I’ve never been able to make anything of myself. The problem with all these reasons is they allow people to hide behind the past rather than step boldly into the future.

Today we continue our sermon series on work, looking at how to discover your God-given role or job in life, how to have that open up for you. Discovering what you are called to be is a give-and-take proposition. We have to give what we have and take what we get. If we hold back on our gifts and talents or refuse to use them where God has placed us, we’ll never step into the fullness of life that God desires for us.

In today’s New Testament Lesson, Jesus looks upon those with the most difficult life experiences – those beaten down by Roman oppression – and says, “You are the light of the world.” What!?! No, Rome was the global empire – all bright and shiny – not these common people. But where we see common, ordinary lives, Jesus sees greatness.

In beginning his ministry – his earthly work – Jesus looked upon the lives of 12 common people and saw greatness. The first of the 12 disciples were Andrew, John, Peter and James. Andrew and Peter were brothers, and so were John and James.

Being a good family member is a great thing in Jesus’ book. It shows loyalty, compassion, and teamwork.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry J. Holcomb, "Couple says mature workers get job done," Akron Beacon Journal, June 7, 1999, [www.ohio.com/bj/business/docs/028667.htm](http://www.ohio.com/bj/business/docs/028667.htm)

These four were also business partners – they owned their own boats and worked together as fishermen. They did what they could with what they had. A can-do attitude, that's a quality Jesus can use.

That's all that God asks of us – do what you can with what you have – “you are the light of the world,” let your light shine. The world is your workplace and every encounter is a chance to interview for a new job or role or experience in life. If we let our true selves shine through, new and exciting opportunities will present themselves.

You are just as qualified as the next person when it comes to the basic qualities that Jesus sought in forming his work-team. The most important qualities that Jesus looked for were loyalty, compassion, teamwork, and a can-do attitude. These are the qualities that serve us all in accomplishing what we, as individuals, have been put here to do.

And if you're still trying to figure out what your greatest role in life is, these qualities will help you discover that. Without loyalty, there is no follow through. And without follow through, nothing gets done.

Without compassion, there's no purpose, no outward focus to pull us from the safety and comfort of our solitary lives. I mean, having a job or a cause or a person that you care about is risky – it's unpredictable - but that's what pulls us out of the tendency to isolate and hide.

Without an outward focus and teamwork, and a can-do attitude, nothing moves forward. And the truth is, we all have these qualities, whether we exhibit them or not.

Andrew, John, Peter and James were just going about their work when Jesus invited them to take on a new and exciting role. Even in their role as fishermen, these four displayed those inner qualities that the world so desperately needs.

They could have stayed fishermen and God still would have used them to make a difference in this world. But as it is, they stepped out in faith. Stepping out in faith is not easy, for anyone. We all have things we risk in trying something new. For some, it's a matter of putting food on the table. For others, it's the risk of losing their status in the community. For everyone, it's the risk of not succeeding – of going in the wrong direction and having to start all over again.

Each of these represents a big risk. But none of them is too big that it can't be overcome. It just takes faith. Whether you choose to take a risk and try something new or decide to play it safe and stay just where you are depends on what is at risk, and what it is at stake. It depends on what you have to lose compared to what there is to gain.

When it comes to what we have to lose, Jesus sets the bar pretty high. After all, he said things like why worry about “what you will eat or what you will drink. Is not life more than food.... Look at the birds of the air.... Your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

In other words, God will take care of your basic needs. You don't have to worry about that.

What we do have to do is step out in faith, because that's what frees us up to make any gains in life. When it comes to living a full and joyous life, the hardest part is having faith that God has a special role for you. I like what Dorothy Sayers writes about finding what we're really called to do.

She says work "is not primarily a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or it should be, the full expression of the worker's faculties, the thing in which (we find) spiritual, mental and bodily satisfaction, and the medium in which (we offer ourselves) to God."<sup>2</sup> Offering yourself to God – this can be done through anything you do! Once you realize that what you're doing isn't half as important as how you're doing it, a whole world of opportunities will come to you, you won't have to go looking for them!

But this doesn't happen if we don't let our true selves shine through. That is our real job in life – finding the courage to step out in faith and let your real self shine through.

"... Let your light shine before others," says Jesus, "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Our best work is done when we are being true to who God calls us to be – no matter what role or job we have at the time.

As you go through this week, look for those times when you're hiding or holding back. And then consider what would it take to let a little bit more of yourself shine through. When we do that – allow our inner light to shine forth – God is there with us, and God will put us to work in a new and exciting way. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Leland Ryken, *Approach to Work and Leisure*, cited in *Context*, June 1, 1998.

## Pastoral Prayer

We come as many people, O God, yet gather as one people in this place of prayer. Some of us come with joyful hearts.

Some of us come in the delight of having gathered with family members in summertime reunions, while others of us mourn the loss of loved ones.

We come concerned about the results of medical tests – or anxious as we wait for news.

We come to you thankful for the blessings of life, even as we anticipate the day or week that awaits us.

However we come, gracious God, and wherever we are: You are there. All of our moments are your moments.

Help us to remember this, as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we  
forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,  
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever.**

**Amen.**