



Strange Invitations

Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 3

Title: Strange Invitations
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Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 4: 12-23
Theme: Jesus calls the first four disciples

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what the disciples asked Jesus about fishing for people.
- I wonder what you would do, if Jesus invited you to fish for people.
- I wonder what it would be like if your parents decided to move and serve Jesus in another place.
- I wonder what surprising or strange thing Jesus invites each of us to do.

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for children's time, and welcome them to that part of the worship where we make sure children can understand and connect with the worship theme of the morning. Ask them to do something that is slightly strange, like sit in a different place, sit in a boy/girl order, or stay standing to hear the story. Ask them if they feel a little strange because of the changes in the children's time routine. Explain that you did this because the story in Matthew 4 (show them the text) is about some strange instructions that Jesus gave his first followers. That strange invitation by Jesus will be part of the children's story this morning. Invite children to relax by remembering that Jesus is there with them and they can all imagine themselves right onto his lap. Relax into a thankful awareness of the Holy along with the children and introduce the story.

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Story:

Today we will hear four little stories about strange invitations.

1) A new girl came to church and quickly made many new friends. This made her very happy. Her birthday had passed a few weeks ago, but she wanted to have a party with her new friends, so she invited people to an unbirthday party. At the party, there was a cake, balloons and games, but the children were still confused about this unbirthday party. Some even brought presents. It was fun but strange.

2) Julie has a late December birthday. She doesn't like getting all her presents in one week and then waiting a year. So she celebrates her half birthdays instead and has a party in June. One time, her family invited people to bring half presents. Some people were so confused, but others got the idea and brought a half a box of cookies or Lego. Others brought regular gifts. It was fun to be creative with her birthday celebrations but it was also confusing for her friends until they got used to it.

3) Janet, the grown up who wrote this story, received an invitation to a "Moving and Shaking Party." The invitation said that people who came should wear comfortable clothes. She thought the party might be a dance. She was surprised. Instead of dancing, they helped move her friends out of their apartment into a house. They spent time shaking out their rugs and cleaning the apartment. Even though it wasn't what Janet expected, she still had a good time talking and working with friends. Everyone had a good laugh as they talked about how they had been tricked into helping her friends.

4) In today's Bible story, Jesus gives an interesting invitation to some fishermen, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. Jesus

says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." I can imagine what went on in their minds, a big net full of people being caught. (You may want to have a cartoon drawing of this to show the children.) We do not know what questions they asked Jesus about this interesting but strange invitation, but the Bible says they immediately left their nets and followed him. The same thing happened with James and John, who also left their boat, nets and father to follow Jesus. This wasn't what they expected to hear, but they had a good time getting to know the other disciples and working with Jesus. I'm sure they did not regret saying yes to Jesus' invitation.

Jesus still invites us to be his followers in surprising ways. People still follow Jesus' invitations. Sometimes that means sharing Jesus' love with others through our words and deeds. Sometimes, when adults accept Jesus' invitation, it can mean changing jobs and moving to do what Jesus has invited you to do. Sometimes, it can include moving overseas and getting used to many foods and habits that seem strange at first. Some of the money we give in our offerings helps to support missionaries who followed Jesus' invitation to serve God in places where everything seems strange at first. Thank goodness, Jesus is always with them, helping them get used to new ways.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that you stay with us when we are asked to do strange things. Thank you for the adventure of following you and learning new and surprising things. Please help us listen so we can hear with our hearts what you are asking us to do. Amen.