

SERMON
Sunday of the Athonite Fathers
(2nd Sunday of Matthew), (Mt. 4:18-23).
(14 June 2026)

Today's Gospel reading takes us beside the Sea of Galilee, where we see the Lord, after His baptism and the temptations in the wilderness, calling His first disciples to follow Him—without giving them any promise and without offering them any security for the future. He addresses poor and uneducated people, who barely manage to provide the necessities of life for their families, and He tells them to leave everything behind and become His disciples. The only promise the Lord gives is this: "I will make you fishers of men." A promise that was probably incomprehensible to the first disciples at that moment, a proposal for life whose depth they perhaps could not yet perceive, but which their open hearts told them they must accept.

And indeed, the disciples, leaving behind "the boat and their father," immediately and without second thought became followers of Jesus. They did not ask Him for guarantees about their future with Him; they did not ask for explanations about who He was or what He taught, but were content with this one promise: "You will become fishers of men." The power of these words was enough for the disciples, who left everything behind them—"the boat and their father," as the sacred text says—that is, their whole world, all their possessions. They even sacrificed their biological relationships for this new life near Christ, a life of uncertainty, risk, and hardship. Indeed, let us remember that the holy Apostles and disciples of the Lord endured many dangers, imprisonments, tortures, and martyrdoms, and almost all of them were killed.

In our days, you may have heard of the so-called "Gospel of Prosperity," which in simple terms teaches that the Christian is someone to whom God grants health, wealth, and social success—that is, prosperity. In the end, according to this teaching, God becomes an instrument of the human person, ensuring them comfort and material abundance, while any difficulty is treated as a sign of weak faith on the part of the individual. This is a completely distorted view of the Gospel, one that does nothing but distract the human person from his eternal and eschatological destiny and traps him in the nets of this world—the very nets which the disciples, the most faithful followers of Jesus, so easily renounced, though their lives were characterised by anything but worldly prosperity and comfort.

Christ calls all of us today as well, just as He called the disciples then, preaching not the "Gospel of Prosperity," but the "Gospel of the Kingdom," as we heard—a Kingdom about which He says: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). A Kingdom that brings a different way of existence, not materialistic but spiritual; a Kingdom that begins here and now—by leaving behind "the boat and our father," that is, our passionate and material attachments to people and things—and is fulfilled in

the Eschaton. The life of the Christian is, or at least ought to be, the same as the life of Christ: the reality of the Cross and the Resurrection. Everything exists within the sea of life, and we must accept all things with thanksgiving to God, because in the end there is always the Resurrection, where pain, tears, and above all death itself will disappear.

Let us then, my beloved brethren, accept with open hearts and humility the Lord's call, "Come after Me," without expecting repayment or material rewards. Let us leave behind in the boat of our old self the net of selfishness, passion, and unbelief, and let us follow the Lord on the path to which He calls us, with faith and trust, without second thoughts or hidden motives.