Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
May 19, 2019  
Dr. Steven P. Eason

Think of the Life You Would Have Missed!  
Mark 1:16-20

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

You ever look back and wonder how different your life would be had you said, “Yes” to some things and, “No” to others? What if you could go back and get a “Do-Over?”

In the Rules of Golf there are no Do-Overs, but in a friendly round we have what is called a Mulligan. On the first tee you are allowed a second drive if you botch the first one. (It’s actually against the rules!) The origin of the Mulligan is said to come from David Bernard Mulligan. Back in the late 20’s to mid-30’s he was a member of the Winged Foot Golf Club in New York State.

As the story goes, Mr. Mulligan would help himself to a second tee shot if he miss-hit the first. Other golfers picked up the bad habit and it came to be known as a Mulligan! (pga.com, golf buzz, June 7,2018). And all you tennis players get a second serve!

Wouldn’t it be nice to have a Do-Over in life? There are times I said, “No” when I should have said, “Yes.” It would have been nice to have a Mulligan!

Think of the difference all that would have made. I know, “water under the bridge,” move on, and all of that, but in life there are rarely Do-overs, or Mulligans, or second serves. The decisions we make determine our paths.

Sometimes I wonder how different my life would have been had I just said, “No” to God’s call. Think about the life I would have missed.

I wouldn’t be here with you! We would have missed Knoxville…and Richmond, Charlotte and Mount Pleasant, Morganton and Norfolk, and even Moyock! I wouldn’t have met Catherine on my seminary summer internship in Kitty Hawk, and we wouldn’t have our family. Wow! We would have missed all that…and more, if only I had said, “No! I’m going to go do something else.”
Or what if Jay Howell had said “No” to your call to be the next pastor of this church? Well, you’d have to get a new Search Committee, but besides that, think of what Jay would have missed! And we don’t even know what that is because it hasn’t happened yet, but he would have missed it. All he had to do was say “No, I’m going to stay in my boat.” and he would have missed all that is about to happen. Imagine that!

Or what if the elders and deacons being ordained and installed today had said “No.” Think what they would have missed… besides a lot of meetings!

Deacons are committed to caring for others. They would have missed being with people in their time of greatest need. They would have missed the joy of knowing they touched someone’s life in the name of Christ. All they had to do is say “No, I’m too busy. Lots of nets to clean!”

And the elders are responsible for the total life of the church; worship, staff, outreach, children, youth, adults of all ages. They oversee the property, the finances, the spiritual formation of all our members; the growth and direction of this church. That’s not just the new preacher’s job, that’s the Session’s job, along with the clergy. What a privilege that is, but they would have missed all that, had they only said, “No! Can’t leave Daddy in the boat!”

*But not everybody has to “leave their nets” to follow Christ. If that happened, none of us would ever eat fish again! We need doctors, nurses, lawyers, business people, engineers, bankers and beauticians, teachers, artists, police officers, firemen, farmers, military, and even politicians! If everybody left their nets, so to speak, the world would collapse.

But here’s where it catches us. By virtue of our baptisms, we are all called to a life of following Christ. Wherever you are, whatever you do, you are baptized. You are an ambassador of Christ, everywhere, all the time. Christianity is not just something you do, it’s who you are. You don’t have to leave your job to follow Christ, you have to follow Christ into your job!

But you could have missed all that. All you had to do is say, “No. I don’t want to be baptized. I don’t want to belong to Christ. I want to be free to lead my own life. I’m going to say, “No” to following him.”

*This story of Christ calling Peter and Andrew, James and John sounds a bit spooky. Did Jesus really just walk by and call them and they left everything? I like to think he knew them and had cultivated a relationship with them. The Bible gives us this moment of call. The decision point. Will it be a “Yes,” or will it be a “No?” Peter, Andrew, James and John said, “Yes,” and they didn’t miss a thing. They lived all of it!

Jay Howell said, “Yes” and he and Francis and young Jack are not going to miss all the rich experiences of being here with you. You will forever be a part of their life story. They won’t miss any of it!
And these deacons and elders said, “Yes.” They aren’t going to miss the next three critical years in establishing a new era in the life of this church. There are some exciting days ahead!

And where will you say, “Yes” to Christ’s call upon your life? Where have you been saying, “No” over and over again, but now have the opportunity to say, “Yes?” I don’t know, but the life that follows that “Yes” will be the ride of your life! You don’t want to miss any of that!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Congregation: Amen.