

Theme: The Gospel in Film
"Field of Dreams"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber – Memorial Day Weekend
May 26-27, 2012 at First United Methodist Church, Durango

Matthew 4:18-22

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" And they left their nets at once and followed him. A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

VIDEO Field of Dreams Sermon Starter

SLIDE Field of Dreams

I want to invite you to take out of your bulletin your message notes and your meditation moments. Your message notes are chance for you to follow along and write something down that you might like to try and remember from today's message. The meditation moments are chance for you to build on what we are going to talk about each day this week by readings from Scripture and reflecting on some questions. I hope you will take them home because I think you will find them a blessing to your week and as you begin the summer.

Today we continue in a series of sermons that we are doing on the gospel in film. Last week we began by looking at the classic movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, and this week we will turn our attention to a film that came out in 1989 which is the last year that I lived in Iowa, serving as a campus pastor at Iowa State University in Ames. It was the end of my two-year internship when this movie came out and that summer I was preparing to make a decision on what I would do next with my life. There were two great lines from this film that became well-known nationally but especially in Iowa since this is where the film was set. The first line was:

SLIDE "If you build it, he will come."

The second line was:

SLIDE "Is this heaven? No, it's Iowa."

Do you remember those two lines from this film? I certainly do and not long

after I saw this film I was traveling through a field with a farmer in his truck. He asked me if I have learned anything in my two years in Iowa and I said I learned a few things. He had me look out over his crop and said to me, "Well then, tell me, what crop is growing out here?"

I looked out over the fields of green and I knew it wasn't corn but I wasn't really sure to tell you the truth and so I guessed with confidence, "Beans!"

A look at me and said, "That is impressive for a city boy."

After a few moments of silence he then turned to me and said, "What kind of beans?"

I quickly replied with the only kind of beans I could think of, "Green beans."

He simply shook his head and said, "You really are a city boy. Those are soybeans."

It sure didn't feel like heaven in that moment but we continued to talk and I learned a great deal from the farmer about listening for God and paying attention to God's voice. There was a connection that he had to the land and that was a gift to me as I was trying to discern what to do next with my life as I left that position at Iowa State University and looked towards seminary and a possible career in ministry as a pastor.

Field of Dreams is a movie about a man by the name of Ray Kinsella who lives a wild lifestyle between the ages of 14 and 35. He attended many different schools and traveled from one coast to the other. He has many different jobs in his life has been adventurous. We meet Ray when he is 36 years old right after he and his wife decide to purchase some land in Iowa and become farmers. He decides he will spend the rest of his life as a corn farmer. As we meet Ray in this moment he says in the film that even though he lived a wild and adventurous life he hasn't really done anything crazy, that is until he heard the voice. Let's take a look at Ray's first encounter with this voice.

VIDEO Field of Dreams – The voice

SLIDE Filed of Dreams

In this scene Ray, played by Kevin Costner, is in his cornfield and he hears, "If you build it, he will come." Ray goes on to see the vision of a baseball field in his cornfield.

Have any of you ever had anything like that happen to you? Have you ever been in the middle of a hard day's work or been in in the middle of your daily

routine and been interrupted dramatically by a voice? Maybe you were driving to or from work or school and you heard a song on the radio which had words that seemed to be intended just for you. Maybe you saw a billboard on the side of a road or street sign which had a message that seemed destined for you. Maybe you met a stranger or saw an event and you felt like God was speaking to you through that moment. Or maybe you have actually heard a voice and the message was so powerful that you couldn't shake it. That voice followed you wherever you went.

Has anything like that ever happened to you? Have you ever felt called into action? Have you ever felt inspired or led to do something that you wouldn't otherwise do?

My guess is that something like this has happened to each of us in this room at some point, even if we were a bit hesitant to tell people about it because we are afraid they will think we are crazy. That may be how you ended up here in church because at one point a friend or somebody prompted you to come and to worship. Maybe that is why you are here right now, worshipping in this space, because a voice spoke to you and invited your heart to do something that you would already have been doing. Now you are here and maybe you're not even sure why. Has something like that ever happened to you?

I was visiting recently with one of our members who went on one of our recent trips to Africa and they said they were sitting in worship last year that I was preaching a sermon series on my journey to Africa, when they heard a voice tell them they should go to Africa. I asked them when they heard that voice and they told me it was during my sermon on dung! If you are here, do you remember that I preached a sermon called, "Dung Happens"? We talked about different kinds of animal dung and we saw a tribe who had houses made of dung. This person told me that during this sermon they heard a voice tell them, "Your life has too much dung in it...you need to get some perspective!"

This person told me they had not shared with anyone that they had heard the voice because they were afraid people would think they are crazy. Have you ever tried to explain to anyone why you have spent your hard-earned money and given up your vacation time to go serve people halfway across the world? Many people will look at you like you're crazy. Have you ever explained to someone why you go down and work at Manna soup kitchen or why you give up your resources to sponsor a child half a world away through Compassion International? Have you ever tried to explain to someone why you give money to God or the church or

why you come to this place week after week? My guess is that if you have shared this with someone and you told them that God has led you to do these things or the voice of God has called you to these things that you may have been greeted by a similar perplexing look on people's faces.

Ray Kinsella had this voice calling him and he didn't understand the message or what it meant but he knew that he was being called and drawn into something bigger than himself. As he was trying to figure out what this meant he turned to some of the other farmers that he had met after he had purchased his field. Let's see what happens to Ray when he shares the news of this voice with farmers in Iowa.

VIDEO Field of Dreams – Sharing with others

SLIDE Field of Dreams

In this clip, Ray is at the local feed store purchasing farming supplies. He asks an old farmer if he has ever heard voices while working in his field. A lady interrupts him and says, "Who is hearing voices?" The old farmer says, "Ray is." Everyone stares at Ray and he leaves, embarrassed by confessing hearing the voice.

It can be difficult sharing with others when you have heard a voice, commanding you to do something. When you try and tell people why you are doing something that you feel called to do it can be difficult. I remember trying to share with my father, who isn't really a churchgoing person, that I was being called to be a pastor and he just looked at me like I was crazy.

God has been calling ordinary people like you and me to do extraordinary and astonishing things throughout all of history. It has always been difficult to share news of this voice with other people. In the gospel of Matthew we read today about the calling of the first disciples and how the voice of God penetrates their hearts.

Peter and Andrew are in their fishing boat in the middle of a hard day's work. They weren't in a cornfield but instead were in a boat, farming for fish. They had not been catching anything and so most people were probably ignoring them. You don't really pay attention to anyone who is fishing unless they are actually catching something, right? The two of them were having a frustrating day and I imagine they were not expecting to hear the voice of God or even have anyone take notice of them since their nets were empty.

Imagine their surprise when somebody, a stranger, called them by name.

Jesus is walking along the shoreline and he notices them and he called them by name. The voice of God comes to them through Jesus on the shore. Jesus walked past all of the others who were on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and he clasps his hands around his mouth and shouts to them, "Andrew and Peter, why don't you put down your nets and come and follow me!"

Here is someone that they don't know who is calling them to give up their livelihood and in a sense the entire life that they know and follow a stranger. I love this scene because Peter and Andrew have no clue that Jesus is the son of God. It doesn't seem to matter because they hear a call and they hear something in the voice that makes them want to follow. They responded to the call without hesitating. They didn't screen the call like we do on our answering machines. They didn't look at the number on the caller ID. They didn't see and even hesitate, maybe because they were having a bad day fishing. They simply set down their nets and followed Jesus because something inside of them was stirring. Something inside of them wants to become fishers of people, whatever that means. They heard the voice and they knew that something much bigger was at work, calling them to do something big.

They follow Jesus down the shoreline until they come across another boat with fishermen James and John. They are with their father Zebedee and this is the family business. The Zebedee Family Fishing Company is not catching anything either and so they shout out, "James and John, why don't you give that up and come and follow us. We are going to start fishing for people."

James and John have no clue who this Jesus character is and they may not even know Andrew and Peter, but they hear the voice. They hear the call and forget their father and the family business. They hop the boat and set aside their nets and they also choose to follow. They feel called to become fishers of people, whatever it means and where ever it takes them.

Those first four disciples had a voice calling out to them. They heard that voice and they listened and they responded. They didn't know what they were doing but it didn't matter because there was something in the voice that captured their hearts. Something stirred inside them.

Can you imagine the questions those first four disciples must've had? They gave up their family business and their livelihood. They left their friends to walk and to follow and to listen to this Jesus character. I imagined when they saw their friends at the fish store that their friends looked at them in disbelief, much like Ray's friends looked at him at the feed store. These four men had no training to

follow a Rabbi and they probably had not even finished first grade before they became fishermen. I get the sense whenever I read their story that they are not bothered by the questions or by the laughter of others, because they knew something about the call and as they followed they found meaning and purpose. Once you hear that voice, you realize that call will keep on coming. It will pursue us and it gives us life.

Do you ever picture what those disciples must've been like as they followed behind Jesus? I picture them laughing and joking with one another and asking one other questions about what Jesus said and what he meant by that. I picture them saying to each other, "I can't believe we are really doing this. Isn't this crazy? Can you believe that we are really doing this?"

What I find really fascinating about the disciples that they were willing to follow and yet many times when Jesus talks he has to keep repeating himself because the disciples just don't get it. Jesus tells him the same things over and over again because they are the "duh-sciples"!

In *Field of Dreams* Ray Kinsella keeps hearing the voice over and over again saying, "If you build it, he will come." The voice keeps repeating because Ray doesn't believe it the first time and it takes a while for that voice to sink in. He finally can't get away from it and he begins to build a baseball diamond in the middle of his cornfield. What is interesting about this film is that even though Ray is building it he still really doesn't know why.

This is a great gospel truth. There are times that we are called to do something and sometimes we don't know why we are called to do it and we certainly don't know what the end product will be. When my wife and I felt called to adopt children from Ukraine we had no idea what we were getting in to or where it would lead. There were no guarantees because the reality is there are no guarantees when you become a parent. You just have to trust and follow the voice of God and this is exactly what happens to Ray in this movie.

What is really powerful is that in the middle of building this field Ray begins to find joy. He smiles as he plows under his cornfield and as he turns on the lights for the first time on his baseball diamond. Let's see his face and his interaction with his wife once he is done with the ballpark.

VIDEO Field of Dreams – The Ballpark

SLIDE The Ballpark

In this scene from the movie, Ray and his wife Annie are sitting on a blanket

in the middle of the baseball field. Ray reflects on some of his father's baseball stories and this brings a smile to his face. Ray looks out to his field and he can't believe what he has just done to his cornfield.

"I have just created something completely illogical." Did you see the smile on his face? I said the same thing when I stepped out of my car after traveling from Colorado to Iowa to serve as a campus pastor. I said the same thing when I travel to Mexico City during spring break while in college to serve with a small group of Christians trying to help the city recover after a massive earthquake had destroyed more than half of the dwellings. I said the same thing the first time I took a group of youth into the deserts of Nevada to serve on a Native American reservation, rebuilding homes and replacing roofs when it was 110° during the day.

We lived that week with no telephones and no television and no connection to the outside world really. We went up into the desert mountains of Nevada and worked with an older woman who had never met white Christians before, and certainly not young people. I have told you before about this woman who was in her late 80s and lived by herself with her goats and her chickens. We worked all week to replace a wall on the side of her house and her roof which leaked whenever it rained. Over the course of the week she invited us into her home and told us her story. She had been taught her whole life not to trust white people and especially Christians. But by the end of the week she had used some of her only resources to make us homemade tacos and tortillas.

Every day she would feed her chickens and her goats and they would all come and gather around her. The leathery skin on her hands would reach out with grain and barley to give them sustenance. She invited the youth who were working on the house to help her feed them each day and she told us their names. She named them because they were her only companions living out in the wild as she did.

On our last day, after we had eaten the food she had prepared for us, we packed up our Van with our tools and our supplies and she told us she wanted to give us one last gift. She went into the house and came out with her hands filled and then she opened them there was grain in them and all of the chickens and the goats came running around her. As they all began to eat myself and the youth who were with me watched as she fed each of the chickens and each of the goats and called them by name.

Then, in one swift motion, she grabbed one of the chickens and broke his

neck. She said a prayer over the chicken and she handed it to us as we stared in disbelief and in a bit of shock. One of the girls in our group began crying and I could tell by the look on her face that the old woman wasn't sure why she was crying. I told her that she was happy for the gift and they were tears of joy! We placed the chicken in a grocery bag and set it in the back of the van, not sure how we were going to cook it because most of us got our chicken from the grocery store in packages!

We held hands with the woman and we prayed and in the middle of the prayer I realized that she had given us one of her most valuable possessions. This woman had absolutely nothing and was living alone. The only thing she had were her goats and her chickens and I found myself grateful that we were just leaving with a chicken. In that one small act she showed us what it was like to live a life of unbridled faith.

Following the voice of God means giving everything that you have so that other people might come to know the love of God. There are moments in our lives where God longs to speak into our very souls. God calls us to crazy adventures if we are willing to listen and being a follower of Jesus Christ means being willing to go to places that seem wild. It is in doing that that others can come to see and know the love of God through us.

Ray Kinsella follows the voice and builds the ballpark. He then goes to Boston and to Minnesota and picks up people along the way and he is not really sure why. In the process of doing this he forgets about the others and he comes to believe that this journey is all about him. It becomes his journey and his story and at one point he becomes fed up with the voice and he shouts out, "What is this all about? Why don't you show me what is going on? Show me what I am looking for? Why can't I have what I am looking for?"

It's in that moment of frustration and inward focus that he realizes what the voice is all about and where this journey in life is taking him.

VIDEO Field of Dreams – Final Clip

SLIDE Field of Dreams

In this final clip, we find the baseball legend Shoeless Joe Jackson telling Ray that he can't come out to see what is beyond the baseball field. Ray becomes impatient and says, "What's in it for me?" Shoeless Joe tells him, "You need to stay. If you build it, he will come." The "he" that Shoeless Joe is referring to turned out to be Ray's father.

In John 6 Jesus says to Ray Kinsella and to the disciples and to all of us today, that to be a disciple is to listen and believe in the one whom God has sent. To be a disciple is to believe in the word of God and to listen to his voice. To be a disciple is to respond to that voice. You might not always know how to respond and you might not always know why you are doing the things that you were called to do, but whenever the voice of God penetrates your life; whenever the voice of God calls you by name, you will never be disappointed. Every time God calls us, he calls us with a promise that he will always be with us. Jesus said:

SLIDE *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

Jesus calls us to be the bread of life and to bring meaning in to the world and the only way that can happen is if we listen to the voice of the one who came to say, "Come and follow me." Jesus calls us to be the light of the world and to salt that brings flavor. Jesus calls us to be like the old woman who was willing to give everything that she had in order to show love and care for someone else. Jesus calls us to be like the disciples who left everything that they knew to follow and to become fishers of people. Jesus calls us to be like Ray Kinsella who plows into his cash crop in order to build a ballpark so that others might be able to come and to experience and to know the kingdom of heaven.

The voice of God is calling to us on this Memorial Day weekend to remember all of those who have gone on before and who have given and sacrificed so that we could be sitting here worshipping. We are called not to waste the resources that we have a to listen to the voice of God and to follow, even when it means sacrifice and even when it means doing something we don't always understand.

I've seen the voice of God calling you to Guatemala and Africa and Romania and New Mexico and all around Durango. We are called to be Jesus Christ to the world and so in two weeks you are being called to go out and worship by serving others in ways that you may not understand that what you will be doing will make a difference in the lives of people. You will be fishing for people as you do projects all over this community. Will you listen to the voice?

The voice of God is calling each one of us today to give thanks and praise for those who have touched our lives. The voice of God is calling us today to not simply enjoy and remember what they have done for us, but to respond by listening for his call in our lives. The voice of God is calling us to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world so we might all become fishers of people, on a crazy

adventure.

God is speaking to us today. He is speaking to you right now. He is tugging on your heart. He is whispering in your year. He is calling you and we must be willing to listen and to follow. Are you? Will you?

Let's pray...

SLIDE Prayer

Oh God, giver of all of the blessings of this life, we pause this morning to give you thanks. Lord, we thank you for everything that you have given us. We thank you for the gift of this building, this church and this opportunity to gather in it today. We thank you for the gift of our families and our friends, the voices in our lives who call us when we don't even realize it. Lord we give you thanks for the voices of those in our past we remember today, especially those who sacrificed and given of themselves so we might have life. Lord, we thank you for your voice which pursues after us and chases us and calls us always.

This morning Lord we pray that you would fill us with your spirit. Help us to be ; to that voice, to that call, that you would strengthen us to become crazy enough to follow you wherever you would have us go—to follow you wherever you would lead us. Help us to be fishers of people who might truly go the distance for the sake of the call. Help us and shape us to become your disciples so that we might be Jesus Christ to the world. We pray all of this knowing that Jesus Christ is the one who leads us, making all things possible. We pray in his name this day. Amen.

Sermon Series: The Gospel in Film

Sermon Title: "Field of Dreams"

Matthew 4:18-22

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" And they left their nets at once and followed him. A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their

father behind.

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

Meditation Moments

Monday, May 28 – Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10. Young Samuel heard a voice, and it was vital to his spiritual calling that he learn to listen. Would you want to tell your co-workers or your spouse that you had heard a voice? Probably no more than Ray Kinsella did in *Field of Dreams*. At one point, he murmured sheepishly, “It’s okay, honey—I was just talking to the cornfield.”

- “Hearing” involves more than just sound waves striking our eardrums. If our mind is inattentive, we may miss even rather loud sounds—we just don’t “hear” them. When you read the Bible, worship, sing hymns, or talk with friends, have you learned to be attentive? Has God ever “spoken” to you in any of those settings?
- When he realized what must be happening, Eli told Samuel to say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” Have you ever felt as though someone was hearing you, but not “listening”? How important is it to your spiritual “listening” that you be ready to position yourself as God’s servant?

Tuesday, May 29 – Read Mark 1:9-14; 3:1-30. “Until I heard the voice,” Ray said, “I’d never done a crazy thing in my whole life.” Jesus’ family must have seen him a bit like that. How, they must have asked, did this dutiful young man get so

obsessed with caring for large crowds that he didn't even have time to eat? How could he upset the religious leaders so badly that they were plotting to kill him?

- We're tempted to "tame" Jesus, to show him as just a simple rural preacher who loved children and animals and told a few moving stories about God's love. What does it tell you about Jesus that at one point his own family feared he was out of his mind? How do you feel about following a radical, upsetting Lord?*
- In the film, Ray plows under some corn to build the ball field. His neighbors watch stonily. "He's going to lose his farm," says one. Another chimes in, "Damn fool!" What made the religious leaders accuse Jesus of being devil-possessed? How does Jesus' answer warn us about labeling anything that makes us uncomfortable, as evil?*

Wednesday, May 30 – Read Hebrews 3:7, 4:11. This passage is not easy reading. The writer quotes Psalm 95:7-11, and the word "today" grips him. This is urgent, the verses say—God is in the present, calling us today. In the film, Doc Graham recalled his one major-league game (he never got to bat) and told Ray, "Back then I thought, well, there'll be other days. I didn't realize that was the only day."

- The writer's main concern is that we enter into "God's rest." This is defined as "resting from their own work" (4:10). In a congregation that urges you to "paint the school" or "take a mission trip," do you ever forget that we work in response to God's love, and not to earn it? Are you spiritually at rest, trusting in Jesus as your Savior?*
- "You know," Doc tells Ray, "we just don't recognize the most significant moments of our lives while they're happening." What are the key things happening in your life today that tomorrow you may wish you'd paid more mind to? By what values can you discern what are the most significant moments in your life—today?*

Thursday, May 31 – Read 1 Timothy 6:6-12. Paul says you can't gauge your wealth by what's in your checkbook or your driveway. Verse 6 in the New Century Version says, "Serving God does make us very rich, if we are satisfied with what we have." As Terence Mann told Ray in *Field of Dreams*, "They'll pass over the money without even thinking, for it is money they have, and peace they lack."

- *How rich are you, by the measure these verses suggest? If your “contentment quotient” is strong, reflect on how it got that way. What changes might disrupt your contentment, and for what reasons? If your quotient is lower, ask God to help you raise it. Ask the most contented person you know what values and choices led to it.*
- *After describing the spiritual dangers that go with a lust for money, Paul tells Timothy, “Run for your life from all this” (verse 11, The Message). In a culture flooded with messages meant to make you want “more,” how do you run for your life from all this? How can you avoid pride or shame related to your material “success”?*

Friday, June 1 – Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. When the players asked Terry to “go out” with them, Ray was upset. “I listened to the voices, I did what they told me, and not once did I ask what’s in it for me.” Paul surely could have felt that way. Ray got to know his dad and play catch. Our reward is that God inwardly renews us daily, and gives us “an eternal glory” that far outweighs our present troubles.

- *Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in part because some (now unknown) “super-apostles” had turned many of the Corinthian Christians against him. Still, “We do not lose heart,” he wrote, and as far as we can tell, he never did. What disheartening trials are you facing? How can you draw on God’s presence and promise to keep you going?*
- *“Fixing our eyes on what is unseen” is a big message in Field of Dreams, and in today’s reading. What unseen dreams do you have? What might God do with them?*

Saturday, June 2 – **Personal Application:** After a week thinking about Field of Dreams, this would be a good time to dream with God. Set aside as much time as you can. Find a comfortable spot. Ask God to guide you. Then ponder what crazy, seemingly impossible thing(s) God might be whispering to you about. Take any ideas that come seriously, and review them with Christian friends you trust. If the idea just won’t let go, be prepared to pursue it.

Family Activity: Create a family dream catcher. Cut a large circle out of the center of a paper plate. Punch several holes around the rim, two inches apart. Weave yarn back and forth forming a web inside the paper ring. On the bottom side of your dream catcher, tie several long pieces of yarn, letting them hang down. Glue

feathers and string beads on those pieces of yarn. Tie one long piece of yarn on the top to use as a hanger. Pray about and discuss what dreams God has for your family. Write these dreams along the rim of your dream catcher. Talk about how you can help others with their God-given dreams. Display your dream catcher and pray regularly for God's guidance as you dream.

Prayer: *Dear God, forgive me when I try to put limits on you, or when I place my own cautious limits around the plans you have for my life. Help me recognize that your plans for my life may be very different from what I've imagined. Grant me a willingness to listen and to follow wherever you lead, through the radical love of Christ, Amen.*