

# The Tap on the Shoulder

by Russell DeLong

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to the call of Jesus, who sees beyond our flaws and desires to use us for His purposes.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 4:18, Matthew 9:9, John 11:28, Acts 16:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Calling", "Missions Work"

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## Description

Russell DeLong preaches about the spiritual call from Jesus, likening it to a tap on the shoulder that demands a response of turning around and following Him. He emphasizes that the tap on the shoulder is a call that cannot be ignored, leading to a life-changing decision to either follow Christ or walk away. DeLong shares stories of individuals like Peter, William Carey, Robert Morrison, and David Livingstone who answered the call and made a significant impact through missions work. He challenges the congregation to heed the tap on the shoulder, listen to Jesus' voice, and offer themselves and their talents to Him for a purposeful life.

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## Transcript

Scripture: And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him (Matt. 4: 18-20).

The late Peter Marshall, for years the young, dynamic pastor of the New York Avenue

Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C., and, until his untimely death at forty-six, chaplain of the United States Senate, asked a question which gets at the very heart of my message today:

"If you were walking down the street, and someone came up behind you and tapped you on the shoulder -- what would you do?"

Naturally, you would turn around.

Well, that is exactly what happens in the spiritual world.

A man walks through life, with the eternal call ringing in his ears but with no response

stirring in his heart; and then suddenly, without any warning, the Spirit taps him on the shoulder.

What happens? He turns around. The word repentance means "turning around."

"The tap on the shoulder is the call that brooks no refusal, the call we cannot ignore, the call that brings us to fall adoringly and wonderingly at the feet of Christ."

All of us hear many calls -- calls of money, calls of position, calls of education, calls of

lodges, service clubs, fraternities, and sororities. Many voices hail us, bidding for our attention and selection. Some calls are loud and noisy, others soft and sweet.

But the supreme call, the one that penetrates deepest -- down beneath the physical, the

material, the monetary, the mental, and the social -- to the very center of our innermost being, the quick of our soul -- is the spiritual call from the voice of Christ. It is life's supreme moment.

When Jesus taps you on the shoulder in the midst of life's noise and rush and says, "The

Master is come, and calleth for thee," your great hour of decision has arrived.

The tap on the shoulder stops you, His voice calls you, His love draws you, His kingdom challenges you. Now you must make a decision. You cannot be neutral. You must turn around and follow Him, or you deliberately walk on away from Him. Life is never the same after He taps you on the shoulder and speaks to your soul.

Jesus frequently visited Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at Bethany. On the occasion of Lazarus' death, Martha went to meet Him and upon returning to the house called Mary and said, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

The greatest moment in life is when Jesus sees something in you that He wants, taps you on the shoulder, and says, "Come, follow Me."

Peter, a rough, uncouth, uneducated fisherman, had his great moment when Jesus said,

"Come, follow Me, and I'll make you a fisher of men." He answered the call, and Jesus made him.

In 1775 a boy of fourteen living in England, the son of very poor parents, was working as

an apprentice to a shoemaker. Jesus tapped him on the shoulder and said, "William, I see

something in you I can use in India." In June of 1793 William Carey began his glorious work which gave birth to modern missions.

Another English lad felt the tap on the shoulder and heard the Spirit say, "Robert, I can use you in China." In 1807 Robert Morrison began to write the great story of Christian missions in that dark nation.

A boy named David was working in a factory in England from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. when he felt the tap on the shoulder and heard the voice saying, "David Livingstone, I have need of thee in Africa" In 1840 he placed his feet on that black continent and for thirty-three years poured out his life, dying on his knees, May 1, 1873, in the heart of that pagan land.

The tap on the shoulder comes to all of us. The voice may not say, "India," or, "China," or, "Africa"; but it always says, "Come, follow Me, and I'll make thee."

If we heed this supreme call, we have peace here and heaven hereafter. But if we walk away, we head into unhappiness here and eternal remorse hereafter.

One is never the same after the tap on the shoulder.

The call comes to every one of us.

It is coming to many today.

Jesus tapped my shoulder when I was a high school sophomore, and the voice said, "Son, I see something in you that I need. I want you to preach the gospel."

Have you felt the tap on the shoulder?

Have you heard His voice?

Yes, He has called often. He will first forgive your sins and then He will cleanse your heart and finally empower your will to do His bidding.

He needs you.

He sees something in you that He can use.

Are you willing to turn around, answer His call, and give yourself and your talents to Him?

If you will, He'll make you -- yes, make something worth-while out of your life.

An artist had his studio on the second floor of a downtown building. From his window he could see the speeding traffic and rushing multitudes. Every morning a beggar would appear and seek alms from passers-by. His clothes were tattered, torn, and dirty. His beard was grown and his hair disheveled. With beseeching eyes and pleading voice he would beg for coins. The artist would stand by the window morning after morning and sketch the beggar as he solicited on the sidewalk in front of the studio.

One day the artist opened his window, attracted the attention of the beggar, and invited him to come up to the studio. When he came in, the artist showed him his canvas and the beautiful sketch on it.

The beggar asked, "Who is it?"

The artist said, "That is you."

"Me!" cried the astonished beggar. "Me?"

"Yes," said the artist, "that is what I see in you."

The beggar looked at the master and said, "If that's the kind of man you see in me, that's the kind of man I'm going to be."

What a story and what a truth!

Jesus sees beneath our filthy, unrighteous rags. He sees our hearts, our aspirations, our desires, our talents, our abilities. His gaze penetrates beneath the surface. He sees us -- ourselves. There is something in all of us He can use.

So He taps us on the shoulder. He speaks to our souls and says, "Come, follow Me, and I'll make you."

God grant that, as the beggar said to the artist, we may pray,

"O Thou Christ, if You see in me the kind of man You can see, that's the kind of man I'll be."

I am requesting the choir to sing that beautiful hymn

Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult

Of our life's wild, restless sea,

Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,

Saying, "Christian, follow Me."

While they sing, be sensitive to the tap on the shoulder and listen to His voice. Turn around and follow Him.

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