

Follow Me!
Mark 1:14-20

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Follow Me (((I approach someone and ask them)))))))))

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(((I shall do this until I get a person or two to follow me, then I go down front and stand by the chancel steps)))))))))

Thank you for following me and taking part in this impromptu skit. They deserve our praise because they were bold enough to step up and follow. So why did the rest of you not follow me? Was it because you were wondering what the pastor is doing again? Was it because you would feel embarrassed if you got up and left your seat? Was it because you simply know its not what we do here?

What could I have done to get you to follow me. What would I have had to say to get you to leave your seat and follow me, right now in front of all these people? What if I begged and pleaded would you have followed me then? Or how about if I said it with urgency, like it was a matter of life or death, would you follow me then? What if I said it like you don't have a choice, I am bigger then you all, what if I threatened you would you follow me then? What would it take to make you follow me?

What did it take for Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John to follow Jesus. Our Gospel reading is a short one today, just within four verses, Jesus convinces four people to leave behind everything they knew to follow him. Mark states it short and simple, Jesus walks up to the fishermen and says follow me and immediately they followed him. Simple, no explanations required, no begging or pleading, no threatening, or deal making. Simply FOLLOW ME, and they followed.

They were not like our first people today, who just weren't ready to move yet. They could have scratched their heads and discussed the pros and cons with each other, figuring out the best course of action, perhaps takin a vote. They could have told Jesus, they would need time to think about it so they could consult with their families and their parents and other people whose opinions they valued. They could have made excuses like they really need to get to fishing, to tend their nets, or take care of their families. What would people

think, what would their friends say if they left everything and followed Jesus, what if they left their families, and their father, and their jobs and went following a country side preacher from some small village up North.

But when Jesus called these fishermen there was none of what I just said above. All Mark tells us is that they didn't hesitate, they didn't make excuses, they didn't wonder what friends or families might think, they left their nets and their boats and followed him.

Now to give you a little background on that, we have to understand that it was common for rabbi's to call disciples to follow them. To become a rabbi's disciple meant that you were picked out to learn from that rabbi, to be mentored by that rabbi in the ways of the faith. And Jesus was probably known well enough in the area. In fact John's Gospel tells us that Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist when Jesus came to be baptized and then went and found his brother Simon Peter so that he would also come to know Jesus. So Andrew and Peter, at least if not also James and John the sons of Zebedee, had a past understand of Jesus as a great teacher, or as Andrew declares the Messiah. So when Jesus now comes to them and calls out to follow him, he is practicing a tradition of picking disciples, disciples that probably had known him and seen him before. They had sought the one who could give them freedom, could bring salvation even over death. They had waited with their people for centuries for this one anointed one of God, that now stood before them calling them to follow him.

That is one of the very reasons we come here today. We are like those disciples that work in that day to day business of this world, but underneath it all we are looking for the one who can pull us out of the pain and suffering of this world. The one who can wash us clean from all our past mistakes and our guilt, things done and said wrong, past regrets of all kinds that separate us from true love. In the waters of baptism we are claimed and called by God to be brothers and sisters with Christ, to be disciples of Christ and witnesses of the Kingdom and glory of God.

So are we willing to do that, to follow! It is not easy. Most students or disciples when they followed a Rabbi or teacher were expected to study and listen to the teachings of the Rabbi. That means as Christians we are to be about studying the word of God, being in Bible study groups, reading the word frequently individually, as a couple as a family, discussing and interpreting the meaning for you today. We can not be good disciples if we are unwilling to be active in the Word of God.

Another action required of disciples is to be mentored and emulate the teacher. To be a disciple means to observe the way the teacher lives and works. Jesus went into the world

teaching, but he also went around praying, healing and caring for people of all walks of life, from the richest to the poorest. He cared for all people, eventually sacrificing his own body and blood so that all might have life through his taken on our punishment that we deserve. Now we may not all be called on to sacrifice our lives so that others may live, but it in so many ways we are missing out on how we can care for those in need, those who are hurt, or victims of injustice. To be the ones who clothe those who have no clothes. To be the ones who give food to those who have no food. To speak up for those who have no voice. To grant comfort and hope to those who experience only dismay or death. To pray as the Lord prayed, often and in true faith. This emulating of Jesus can be done in so many ways, but we have to be doing it, sacrificially giving of our time and our energy, supporting the ministry, the food banks, the blood drives, the victims of abuse and violence, caring for the forgotten and lost being in relationship with God and with all of God's creation through word and deed.

But that still isn't enough to say that you are a disciple of Christ. Jesus calls to his disciples beyond the normal calling of a Rabbi, because he tells them in verse 17, that if they follow him, he will make them fishers of men and women. Most disciples called by rabbis were expected to be just that students, but Jesus takes this one step further because he also wants us to be apostles. To be sent with a message, to be witnesses to all the world, converting and sharing the news of the Kingdom of God. To be a disciple of Christ isn't a private quiet little thing, it means to go out into the world reeling in others, casting the net of love and grace, of the word and of hope to those who need it and pulling them, inviting them, driving them, bringing them into the boat to meet Christ. We are to be apostles, people sent with a message to all the world, that Christ is alive, that Christ offers us joy and hope, not just on this world but in the world to come forever.

Are you ready to become that kind of disciple? Are you ready to follow Jesus? What is your answer? Now is the time, not next week, or not last week, but right now. Jesus says Follow me. I wonder if you are able to rise up and follow. I hope that this church may rise up and follow? I Pray that we together may answer that call and say Yes Lord, We come! May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.