



gracefellowship

Series: In His Steps
Date: March 12, 2023

Title: Follow Me
Passage: Mark 1:16-20

Scripture Reading: John 1:29-51

We are starting a new series today called, “In His Steps,” and over the next 5 weeks we are going to look at some of the locations and events in the life of Jesus that help us understand how to follow Him and why we should follow Him.

The question on everyone’s mind: How was your trip to Israel? It was unbelievable! We toured the Holy Land for 9 days and I figure I would need about an hour to discuss the events of each day- so if you have 9 hours some time I’d be happy to sit down and discuss it with you! Or...you can go yourself! We are working to put a trip together next year to visit Israel and I would love for you to be part of that! It is an incredible experience and will forever change how you read and think about the Bible!

As we get started today, I want to show you a video from my trip that sets up the location and the context of what we are talking about today. Here’s a brief clip from my time at the Sea of Galilee:

[Video from the Sea of Galilee- Called to Follow Jesus](#)

This morning let’s look together at Mark 1:16-20. This is when Jesus first calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him.

:: Mark 1:16-20

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

17 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.

20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

I want you to get a sense of the area we are talking about, so I'm going to put a map on the screen for you.

Map of the Sea of Galilee

On the Northeast side of the Sea of Galilee you will see Bethsaida. That's the village where 5 of Jesus' disciples grew up and lived: Peter, Andrew, James, John and Philip. Five of the twelve disciples Jesus chose lived in this village, which name means "fish ton, or fisher town or fish village."

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, which is not shown on this map, but is southwest of Tiberias. But when Jesus began His ministry he based everything out of Capernaum. Then he walked along the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida to call his first disciples. Mark tells us that when Jesus walked on the shore of the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon (Peter) and his brother, Andrew, casting a net into the lake because they were fishermen. Then when he went a little farther he saw James and his brother, John, preparing their nets. They were fishermen as well. Not a huge surprise to find fishermen in a village called Fish Town! But here's what we need to know and understand- there is a reason they are fishing.

In Jewish life most all children would go to school and learn the Torah- the writings of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. By the age of 12 most Jewish people could quote the first five books of the Jewish Scriptures! From there, the best students would go on to deeper studies and then after that, the best of the best would be chosen by a Rabbi to become his Talmid, or disciple. A group of followers/disciples were known as Talmidim. It was such an incredible honor to be chosen by a Rabbi that you left everything to follow them. Their life became your life. Their teachings became your teachings. You were meant, as a student, to stay on the hip of your Rabbi and absorb everything you could from them.

However, if you didn't make the cut for the upper level education or were not chosen to follow a Rabbi you went back to your family and helped in your father's trade of choice. So, here's what we know of Peter, Andrew, James, John and Philip- they were not chosen! They had washed out of school. No one wanted them as a Talmid. So, they are fishing and taking on the family trade. They have settled into the idea they would fish for their rest of their lives.

But then Jesus walks by and their whole story changes. Jesus does something no one expects- he calls fishermen to be His disciples!

Jesus sees value in the things this world tosses to the side.

Very often, the ways of Jesus and His Kingdom run contrary to the way the world functions.

- What looks like weakness to the world is powerful in the hands of Jesus.

This is one of the amazing things about the group of people Jesus calls to be His disciples- they aren't the most impressive, or the best in their class, or changing the world in some way. Jesus called fishermen and tax collectors and zealots and those no one else believed in and then He invested in them for 3 years to demonstrate what His Kingdom is about and then He left them in charge of building His Church with the help and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And here's the most amazing thing: Jesus has called you and is calling you to follow Him as well! Think about that invitation Jesus used to call Peter, Andrew, James and John:

Come and follow me and I will send you out to fish for people.

What would make someone leave their career, drop everything their family has built and follow a Rabbi? I mean, Mark tells us that when Jesus called James and John they were with their Dad, Zebedee, and just dropped the nets, went ashore and never looked back. Why?

Luke gives us some more detail around the story and the reality is this isn't the first time they have ever encountered Jesus. He's already been living in Capernaum and has been teaching and garnering some attention. Now look at Luke 4 and check out what it says.

:: Luke 4:38-44

38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

40 At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

42 At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

43 But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Before Jesus calls Peter to follow Him, there is a demonstration of power to heal Peter's Mother-in-Law. There is some type of early relationship where Jesus is hanging out with Peter and even goes to his house (or more likely, his MIL's house for lunch after speaking in the synagogue on Shabbat) But Jesus isn't done yet. As we keep reading in Luke 5 we see some new details that help us understand how someone can walk away from their family and career to follow a Rabbi who calls them.

:: Luke 5:1-11

1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God.

2 He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.

3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,

10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people."

11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Again, when we ask ourselves why these men would just drop everything and follow Jesus, we start to see that Jesus is giving them demonstrations that He is not your typical rabbi! The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah for thousands of years. They longed for the day He would show up. So when Jesus comes to town and starts doing miracles and healing people and teaching with authority the other Rabbis didn't possess, people immediately started thinking maybe He was the Messiah they had been waiting for.

And this is helpful for us today as well. Why should we follow Jesus? The disciples are figuring things out in real time. They don't have the full picture of who Jesus is or what He had come to do until the very end. We get the benefit

of knowing the story. We know that Jesus didn't just come to heal people and cast out demons and teach with authority.

- We know that Jesus came to give up His life as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity.
- We've seen the extent of the love of God as Jesus hangs on the cross, taking the punishment you and I deserve so that we can be free to embrace God's love and enjoy His grace.
- We have seen the power of God to raise Jesus from the dead and proclaim victory over death, hell and the grave!

So, when Jesus calls us to follow Him we can look at all He has done and say it's totally worth it to lay down my plans, my hopes, my directions, my ambitions and pursue Him with everything that's in me. There is so much more to Christianity than attending church services on Sunday! Jesus didn't call people to show up for weekly gatherings; He called them to follow Him everywhere He went and do everything He did!

That's costly! Walking in the steps of Jesus will always lead to a cross. Along the way in this journey of discipleship Jesus told those He chose...

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

:: Matthew 16:24

You need to know on the front end that it will cost you to follow Jesus and be on mission with Him. When we go back and look at Mark's gospel we see Jesus call James and John and Mark tells us they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed Jesus. This wasn't just a father and son operation, this was a growing business, they had multiple boats and hired men who were operating the fishing charter. This was about as sure a thing as you could hope for. James and John had a good career in front of them that was stable and profitable. But they left all that to follow Jesus. Why? They believed He was more than an ordinary Rabbi- He was the Messiah! Zebedee lost something too- it cost him the future of his enterprise. What he had built and was prepared to pass down to his kids and grandkids was now going to be in the hands of hired workers. The future wasn't as clear as he once thought. But you don't see Zebedee chasing his sons down and trying to convince them to stay. Zebedee releases his sons because He also believes Jesus is the Messiah and there is nothing better for his sons than following Jesus!

- Parents, it's the great responsibility in the world to help your kids find the truth about Jesus and release them to follow Him.
- It's okay to have hopes and dreams for your kids, but following Jesus wherever He calls them trumps all your plans!
- Your kids are a gift on loan to you from God anyway, so hold them in open hands and be ready to give them back to Him for His Kingdom purposes.

For just a minute let's talk about some obstacles you may face today in following Jesus- this may not cover everything that's out there, but some of you struggle with the idea of being wanted by Jesus.

Obstacles to following Jesus:

1 Failure: "You don't know what I've done. My past disqualifies me from being called to follow."

Nothing could be farther from the truth! There is no sin the grace of God can't cover. There is nothing in your past Jesus hasn't already dealt with on the cross. If you look at the disciples on the night Jesus is arrested and taken to trial, they all run away and hide. Peter and John are the only two who even remotely stay with Jesus, but while Jesus is on trial with the Sanhedrin Peter denies him three times. Then after Jesus is crucified and comes back to life, He seeks Peter out, forgives him and puts Peter in the lead seat for the disciples and the Church. Your past does not disqualify you from following Jesus!

In fact, in John 3 Jesus has a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus and tells him that if anyone wants to see the Kingdom of God they have to be born again. The past you have experienced dies and you begin fresh. There are things you have been held captive to in your life and you've said, "Well, I was just born with this propensity to this sin." And Jesus says, then be born again! Be born into a new reality with His forgiveness and holiness at the center and then follow Him.

2 Expectations: "I'm not good enough. There are other, more qualified people out there that Jesus will call...but it's not me."

Let me tell you a secret- Jesus isn't building His Church on your goodness! There is never a time that any of the disciples, after Jesus leaves earth, says, "Okay, now come follow me!" It never happens. The Church isn't built on how great the disciples were. Every one of them keeps saying, "Come follow Jesus!" Jesus doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called. The idea is that we, in our brokenness, would point people to how good Jesus is, not how good we are! The only good thing in me is Jesus! Without Him I'm a lost, broken, hopeless wreck. So I don't call people to follow me; that would be a huge mistake! But I will call people to follow Jesus all day long!

The only thing that disqualifies you from serving in the Kingdom of God and following Jesus is the rejection of the invitation of the Holy Spirit. It's not about how good you are.

3 Unwillingness: "I just don't want to."

Do you remember the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and excitedly asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life? He was so excited about following Jesus and being part of the Kingdom. Then Jesus told him the answer: Go sale everything you have and give the money to the poor, then come

follow me. When the man heard what it would cost him, he went away sad because he was very wealthy.
Some of you will not follow Jesus because you can't give up your way of life. Following Jesus comes down to you being in control or Him being in control and you can't lay down the reigns and submit to Him.

This is where I want to end today:

Jesus calls those the world rejects: anyone and everyone who will bow their knee and admit He is God.

When we go back to the story of Jesus calling Peter in Luke's gospel we see a demonstration of His sovereign power to let the disciples bring in a huge catch of fish. Then we see Peter's response:

:: Luke 5:8

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

Maybe right now you don't have a complete understanding of who Jesus is or what He wants to do in your life; Peter didn't either! But he recognized enough to say, "I'm a sinner and you're God!" And that's the starting point of following Jesus. Initially, Jesus doesn't say

- believe
- obey
- trust

He just says "follow!" This is an invitation to just hang out near Jesus and see what He is about. Here's what I love about that- you can do this even if you aren't sure about Jesus yet. In the process of following Jesus he begins to change you and then as you're being changed by Him you join His mission.

So, today the invitation is simple: Follow Me!

Pray and response

Closing Song: Center