

FOLLOW ME

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Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

Today's passage of scripture might kind of piggyback on last week's sermon, although I felt the Spirit of God moving me in a different direction. So let's just see.

Mark 1:14-20

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

Shall we pray?

Our heavenly Father, we ask that You would touch our hearts, touch our minds, touch our wills in ways that we will be able to understand this Word, Lord, as it happened and what it means for each one of us. Lord, we have seen from past experience, how You can take Your word and distribute it in different ways into each one of our hearts and we invite You to do the same at this time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Well, as I looked at this particular episode of Jesus as He meets with Peter (Simon as he was called then before Jesus changed his name) and Andrew, and then the meeting of James and John, the sons of Zebedee (or as we learned later, the sons of thunder). All four of them were doing what they were supposed to be doing – fishing or mending nets when they were not fishing. Then Jesus comes along. He sees Simon and Andrew and He tells them, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." Then a little later, He sees James and John and He says to them as well, "Follow Me," and they leave what they are doing. They leave their father with the other helpers who are working with them and they follow Jesus as well.

I looked at this whole passage and felt drawn to that one line that Jesus speaks; not the one of the "time being fulfilled," because we see that the time is fulfilled soon after He hears about John being taken into custody. John's ministry is now over and then Jesus feels that this is the time. It's interesting because the word time here is 'kairos' time, or divine time. It is now the time according to God's plan for Him to fulfill His ministry. This is the line from Jesus: "Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

I want us to look at four areas in this line that I think God would have us spend some time in. Making fishers of men was something very specific to Simon and Andrew because they were fishermen, and Jesus was kind of playing on their vocation. But I want us to see these four areas: For us to follow Him, we need to come to Him. We come, we follow, and then it says, Jesus said, "I will make you."

So these four areas are:

1. Come,
2. Follow Me – which is up to us,
3. I will – what God will do,
4. Make.

I will, and I will make are the two areas which belong to Him.

1. COME!

Question: Have you heard Him call? Have you come to Him?

Let's look at the whole idea of come and follow. I wonder whether you heard the invitation.

There's an old song that says:

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."

Or the other hymn that says:

God calling yet; shall I not hear?
Earth's pleasures shall I still hold dear?
Shall life's swift passing years all fly,
And still my soul in slumber lie?

Each one of us is invited to come to Jesus. The reason why God gave Jesus to us is so that we could come to Him. If you remember Jesus Himself said, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

There's another song that Sheila and I used to sing many years ago, and it says:

Come to the water
Stand by my side
I know you are thirsty
You won't be denied
I saw every teardrop
When in darkness you've cried
And I strove to remind you
That for those tears I died.

We are called to come first to God. We hear Him calling us, and we hear that through different ways – whether it's through a testimony, or a sermon, or a message shared, or on the radio or TV or the internet, wherever. God uses everything to call His children to Him. "Come!" He says.

2 Timothy 1:9 says, "... who had saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." So all of us are called to come to God as a holy calling, not because of anything that we have done but according to His purpose and His grace which is unmerited favor as we know.

1 Corinthians 7:17 "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him, or her. This is my rule in all the churches."

And so God calls us. He says, “Come to Me.” The question for you and me today is: Have we come? have we come to Him? Have we heard Him calling, and said, “I’m coming to You, Lord? I don’t know anything else. All I know is that there’s an unrest, a disquiet in my spirit that says that I have need to engage with You.” Nothing else at this moment – just God is calling and I am responding to Him.

The question for you is: Have you heard Him say to you “Come”? I mentioned that I’m not talking about a calling here; just an invitation to come and follow Him. If you have, then the other question that we must ask is: Have you heeded His invitation or are you still saying that you can live your life without Him? Are you missing out on the most glorious journey of your life, beloved? We often think that in responding to His invitation, it’s going to mean a life that is dull and boring – a mundane existence.

Many years ago, when I was in bible college, the professor was teaching and she had such an excitement about her in all that she was doing and the way she was teaching. She told us a little chorus that she used to sing, and it ended like this.

When you’re doing the Lord’s work,
you don’t get bored.
Sing Hallelujah, Amen.”

When you do what God wants you to do, you’re actually fulfilling everything that you were intended to do. In fact, the psalmist says, “Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Delight in the Lord! God is not in the business of taking away your desires, the things you love to do. God will give them to you even as you come to Him. He will help you to fulfill all that He meant you to be.

2. FOLLOW ME!

What does it mean to follow Him? Sometimes we think it must have been very easy for the disciples to follow Jesus. There He was, in physical form and all they had to do was go behind Him. But it was more than that, isn’t it? Just following Him wherever He went in terms of places isn’t following. There’s much more to following Him, and what Jesus meant is following Him involves a whole lot of other things that I’d like for us to unpack.

It means to trust God implicitly.

This is the most important thing. When we come and follow Him, we are trusting Him implicitly with our lives, and saying, “Lord, I’m putting my life in Your hands. I trust You however, whatever. I believe that You know what is best.” That’s an extremely difficult place to be in, but one that entails following.

Following God, because we know that God has the best plan for our lives. He does! He made you. He’s your creator. Just as an investor knows exactly what his or her creation has the potential to do, God too knows exactly what your potential is. He knows because He crafted you. Every part of you He has put together, and He says, “This person can fulfill this blueprint.” Long before the foundations of this earth, He put that into place for you. He is our creator and He knows exactly what we need to do and what we are capable of doing. So we trust Him.

There are a couple of things that are involved in trusting God.

- There is an aligning of wills; our will and His must always be together. Remember Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, caught between the whole agony and the tension of what these next hours were going to be, He cries out to His Father. Then finally He says, “Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.” That is what we need to be saying every moment of every day as we face situations, as we face conflicts, as we try to get our attitudes in place, we

always need to be saying – Not my will, not my response, not my reaction, not my attitude, but Yours. May Your will be entirely in place in my life.

Often we find that it's difficult to do that. Jonah was a classic case. He heard God's call and God said, "I want you to go to Nineveh." That was God's will, but Jonah's will was to head off for Tarshish. It didn't pan out too good for him, because he got on the ship to Tarshish. There was a storm, he was thrown overboard, the fish came and swallowed him. He was there for three days and I don't think it was a very good experience for him. Finally when he repented, the fish vomited him out, and finally he went to Nineveh. What a great turnaround that was! The city that was steeped in sin repented and God forgave them.

So, an aligning of wills is what comes when we trust Him or what must come when we trust Him.

- Trust God's agenda. I remember when we had just finished at Houghton School of Music and we were looking at seminary. Sheila and I came to Asbury Theological Seminary and we were sitting in the chapel, and just felt so clearly that this was the place that we needed to be. so, we only applied to Asbury Theological Seminary. I remember a good friend of mine who was from Africa saying, "You're a fool. Don't put all your eggs in one basket." The logical thing to do my agenda) would have been to apply to five or six schools and then see which one was the best. But God's agenda was: This one is enough. So we applied only to Asbury saying that if we didn't get into Asbury, we were headed back home. But we did!

It means being able to put down your agenda and say, "Lord, may Your agenda be my agenda."

- Trust is at the very heart of following Him, and trust is directly proportionate to getting to know God through His Word, through worship, through prayer and meditation, having conversations with Him. That's the only way you will submit to His will, His agenda, His timing and His leading.

These two areas "Come" and then "Follow" are up to us. The next two areas, "I will" and "Make you" belong to God.

3. I WILL.

When God says "I will", He will. God doesn't lie.

Numbers 23:19 (NLT) says, "God is not a man, so He does not lie. He is not human, so He does not change His mind. Has He ever spoken and failed to act? Has He ever promised and not carried it through?"

So beloved, when God says "I will" to you and me, it will happen.

Titus 1:2 "This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life which God – who does not lie – promised them before the world began."

Hebrews 6:18 "So God has given both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us."

When God says, "Come to Me, come and follow Me and I will make you," you can take His word as done. "I will," He says.

So, what is God saying that He will in your life? To Andrew and Simon, He said, “I will make you fishers of men. I will prepare you for what I want you to do as I hand over to you the reins to take the gospel message as far as you can. For that, I will change your vocation from fishermen to fishers of men.” He was using that as an analogy.

But what was He doing to you? “I will make you – what?” For Peter and Andrew, it was to make them fishers of men. For Moses it was to make him a leader. For Samuel it was to make him a seer, a priest, a judge, a prophet and a military leader. God makes us into the kind of people who will fulfill our reason for being here on this earth. But it isn’t easy because often it means breaking, remolding, pulling back, realigning – things that are not easy.

I wonder whether you’re yielding to Him, you’re trusting Him to do what He said He will do. This part of our journey isn’t easy, but it’s something that is required. As we continue to grow in our trust of God, we continue to yield to Him and say, “Nevertheless! Not my will but Yours.” And we allow Him to shape us and mold us and sometimes break those hardened places in our lives and then remold us. For after all, He is the Potter. He is the creator. He is our God. He knows us. He knows what we can say. Even when there are things that are happening in our lives that we think are going to break us, God knows that it won’t, because He knows what He has put into each one of us.

So, the question for us, as we look at this passage is twofold:

- Are we following Him?
- Are we submitting to Him so that He can do what He needs to do to prepare us for what He has placed us on this earth to do?

I love the hymn that we sing quite often –
Have Thine own way Lord
Have Thine own way.
Thou art the potter; I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

That’s the position that we need to take. We’re waiting, yielded completely to Him saying, “Lord, here I am. I want Your will done in my life. I give You permission to shape and mold me, however You need to do so. I make myself available to You.”

The song goes on actually to say, “Search me and try me, wash me.” Then it talks about wounds and being weary and then finally saying, “Over me will You hold absolute sway.” There may be many reasons why we don’t allow God to do all that He wants to do. Maybe we are tired and weary. Maybe there’s some lurking sin. The psalmist says, “Search me and try me.” Maybe that’s what God is saying: I have the best for you if you will hand over the reins to me.

Another beautiful song that we sing:

Beautiful Lord, wonderful Savior
I know for sure all of my days are held in Your hands,
Crafted into Your perfect plan.

You gently call me into Your presence
Guiding me by Your Holy Spirit
Teach me dear Lord, to live all my life
Through your eyes, and soul.

I'm captured by Your holy calling
Set me apart, I know You're drawing me to Yourself,
Lead me Lord, I pray.

Take me, mold me, use me, fill me
I give my life to the potter's hands.

Are you hearing Him beloved? Is He knocking on your heart's door and saying, "I'm calling you? I've called out to you and said come." You've heard it but you're not heeding it. Maybe today is the day to take the invitation. Maybe you've turned, you've come to Him but you're not following Him. You're saying, "I'm not ready for that." and maybe today God is saying: Will you follow Me? There's no point coming to Him if we want to do our own will. Or maybe you've come to Him, you're following Him, but there are some things that He's saying to you that you would find very difficult and very hard for you? Maybe God is saying to you "I'll take you through, trust Me. Maybe there's a direction that He is shaping you and you're saying, "Lord, I can't." Or maybe you're doubting and saying: I don't know. I've come to Him. Will He do it? And the wonderful reminders for us from the Word – God doesn't lie. "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," He told Simon and Andrew. What's He saying to you? Will you respond?

Our closing song is a beautiful one that I think is the place that we need to land in response to this sermon.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of this earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

Let everything that has held you till now become dim as you turn your eyes upon Him and may His will be done in your life, and mine. Amen.

Turn your eyes to the hillside
Where justice and mercy embrace
Where the Son of God gave His life for us
And our measureless debt was erased.

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our pride
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to you.

Turn your eyes to the morning
And see Christ the lion awake
What a glorious dawn, fear of death is gone
For we carry His life in our veins.

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our pride
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to you.

Turn your eyes to the heavens
Our King will return for His own
Every knee will bow, every tongue will shout
All glory to Jesus alone.

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our pride
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to you.
