

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
BECOME A FOLLOWER
MARK 1:14-20

Good Morning

Prayer Needs

Mark 1:14-20 - TPT

The Title that I have given the message today is ***Become A Follower***

Today the Good News we proclaim is this - Jesus choose you to become a follower Him, not perform a code of conduct or agree to a set of 'truths' - He choose you because He believes you can be like Him and see what we could never see on our own; eternal Love in the present!

I was a Sophomore in Bible College when I first met Jimmy (not his real name) he arrived with very little support from anyone but with a passion and enthusiasm that was tangible. He connected with me quickly and our relationship was bonded over my willingness to encourage and pray for him as he attempted to navigate the demands of his course work. He did not grow up around in the Church he was a recent convert and so just the stories of the bible were foreign to him and he was in college where we were studying at a level far far past his depth. Later I realized that I had become the older brother and perhaps even the father he did not have. Jimmy had a radical encounter with Jesus at a Christian music concert so often our conversation would be him attempting to interpret the challenges of his life through the lyrics of his now favorite artist Keith Green and particularly through his song about the sheep and the goats! Jimmy when frustrated and unable to process the weakness of others whom he felt failed him and even the entire bible college experience would often conclude that the problem was not his lack of maturity or formation but the weakness's of others that he concluded must be the 'goats' that Jesus described - dismissing and doing everything to diminish their value in his eyes so that he could excuse both the pain of rejection he felt but also the obvious need he had for formation.

His formation did not keep pace with the demand's of his course work and he eventually left school. We kept in touch but oh how he struggled. You see at the core of his challenge was his need for spiritual formation at a very basic level, something that I was not capable to help him with at the time. The unfortunate thing for me and for I would say most of those at our Bible College was that we began our exchange with Jimmy with unspoken assumptions - for instance that he had a basic understanding of the story of the Gospel - so most of the 'help' offered him was in the form of antidotes and advice to 'try this or stop that' but not really addressing the foundations of how he understood life. The result left him most often repeating the same things over and over.

After Denise and I were married I got a call from Jimmy from the bus station asking if I could pick him up - he was on leave from basic training and coming home to meet his wife. When I picked him up he did not look like he just fell out of bed, he sat differently, he spoke differently - he words were filled with gratitude and he expressed a hope for his future that was not filled with words of blame for not being treated well but that he could have a future. Later he called and asked for my forgiveness for how he had not listened to my basic attempts to help him take ownership of his own failures. We did not stay in touch but I will not forget the difference that 6 weeks of basic had on this young man over a weekend conference. At the conference he had experienced a real encounter where he saw Jesus touch his lack but at basic he was taught to a different way of inhabiting the world.

Now let me be really clear - I believe in the validity of an encounter with Jesus yet when Jesus begins His ministry He invited a handful of friends to 'become followers' of Him. To something more than an

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Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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encounter on a road but to embracing a way of inhabiting their life - to become followers of Jesus - not just a convert but a disciple.

To become a disciple was far more than going to a conference or a meeting it was giving your life to become like the Rabbi...

- Young men who by their choice would not for days but for months and years become a follower - life was shaped by the Rabbi - it was something that people had come to expect if you were to **'follow'** a teacher. In fact you might become like them.
- To **follow** your teacher meant far more than agreeing to a set of truths and living by a code of conduct - it changed everything about that person's life.
- To **'follow'** someone was to give all of your life to follow in their footsteps and sit at their feet - to be Covered In Dust was a literal picture of what happened to a disciple who had chosen to follow a teacher.
- To **follow** their teacher reshaped everything about their life.

The Jewish Sages of the day urged disciples to be covered with the dust of their Rabbi - and there was not mistaking where they had been, who they had been with or what they had been up to...to be Covered in Dust was never the goal..... **be become like their teacher** - was always the goal.

Last week we saw how Jesus called Phillip and Nathaniel – now his cousin who said behold the lamb of God is arrested – and it bears noting that He does not lead an action but proclaims in the real atmosphere of injustice – the time has come – another Kingdom has arrived. Its time to change to repent in how you inhabit the world.

- Lay down your nets (you hope for a good market and interest rates...prosperity and all that comes with it) and follow me...

Beloved most of us have lived with enough religious knowledge and cultural freedom that we have a real challenge to understand fully what it means to become 'follower' of Jesus.

- Following Jesus is not about an agreed upon set of truths - a code of conduct we choose to keep while living 'our' life.
- It is not about what 'group' we choose to associate with a couple of times a week....to follow Jesus is to lay down my previous understanding of the world and inhabit a new one.
- Not as some kind of item that we have added to our already busy lives but to be shaped and to **become a the kind of Person that Jesus would be if He were you....**because that is exactly who He believes you can be!
- You did not choose me but I choose you that would bear fruit that would remain!

So what does it mean in our setting to be **'become a follower of Jesus'**?

Beloved it is far more than a transaction of the right information and our kindest behavior. Jesus said it would involve a cross. The Cross, in Jesus day was not pop art like it is today - in fact just the visual thought could make someone ill because on a cross nothing ends the way it started - the cross was about death. Then Jesus embraced the cross not as a means to an end or to satisfy an angry judge but rather for the Joy of opening the flood gate of life and love for all of humanity. His life brought life!

To become a Follower - means losing our life so we actually find life - we are given life as it was intended to be - a life of knowing and loving God and representing Him upon the earth.

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Church Camp or Boot Camp? Yes – come and follow me... the first stage of following was to serve.

1. To serve meant personal agenda's had to go.

- Part of the difficulty of living in a Nation that has 'under God' in its allegiance and 'in God we trust' on its monetary bills is that we begin to seek to see a governmental or political system as not just aligned but endorsed by God and almost a reflection of God.
- Wait this is not a new challenge - even after Jesus has risen from the dead His followers are asking...*Lord is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom of Israel....*
- **Wait what?** Jesus you kept saying Kingdom and all I heard was my kingdom....
- Remember what Jesus said first to Phillip, Nathaniel and now to Andrew and Simon and James and John....repent and follow Me...that means your agenda is gonna have to go.
- Beloved to become a follower of Jesus at its basic level is to recognize we have been following something or someone else. And to follow Jesus means a change – Jesus who NOT ONE TIME
 - gave a railing commentary about the political decadence of the day or the moral decay of the culture or the materialism of the day (have you seen the temples that the Greeks built?) not even the corruption of the Jewish puppet leaders consume Jesus vision.
 - *I only say and do what I see the Father doing.*
 - And by the way you will have new vision - but you have to abandon what you are looking for to find belonging, security and significance and follow me....repent.

Follow Me -...lay down your agenda and trust that my highest commandment Love is enough to reveal another Kingdom.

To become a follower is about serving but its about Allegiance...

2. I pledge Allegiance...to be a follower is to follow the leader beloved.

- **Repent and believe** - has been reduced to a 60 second prayer we lead people through and declare them saved. Beloved repent and believe is far more than say sorry for your failures and agree that Jesus is real.
- **Repent and believe....**for a Follower was to lay down their nets - This is not a few brothers having a guys night and going on with their lives - **its a dramatic turn that shaped the rest of their life and their identity.**
- Beloved to repent and believe - was not just a biblical term - it was a 1st century term used by Jewish historians like Josephus who invited a Jewish general to stop his revolt against Rome. To change his mind and join Josephus.
- What if we actually began to invite this idea deep into our thinking - to become a Follower of Jesus means a **deep abiding life Loyalty 'I pledge allegiance' to the Love of the Father revealed in Christ.**
- **That I live both in word and deed with an abiding allegiance in all of my life to the truth of His love for me and my neighbor.**

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- That would mean that we would have to abandon Independence, Individualism, Consumerism and Materialism as our highest goals. Living with an abiding Loyalty to the Love of the Father revealed in Christ means - **my first impulse is not me vs you, us vs them,** (take that on lots of levels) but my first impulse is actually loving people and forsake anything that diminishes the value of my neighbor.
 - *'Here are the atheists.' They turned first from Christ crucified because He was a poor worker, buffeted and spat upon and beaten. And now — strange thought — the devil has so maneuvered that the -people turn from Him because those who profess Him are clothed in soft raiment and sit at well-spread tables and deny the poor.'* Dorothy Day

Jesus which one...is the greatest commandment?

- To become a Follower - is to give my life in Allegiance and Loyalty to Him....by the way Allegiance and Loyalty are a lot better way to describe the word **Faith.**
- **Saved by Faith** - has been reduced to agreement on truths about Jesus and asking forgiveness....
- Salvation by Allegiance is about loyalty of my life to Jesus in all things and frankly a much better way to understand what it means to follow Jesus.
- No we are NOT saved by works....but Loyalty to my wife must include works....!

To be Covered in Dust - a Follower of Jesus is abandoning agendas, choosing Allegiance....

3. About Adoration - worship.

- NT Wright's definition of sin - we have had a failed understanding about what sin is.
- Sin = missing the mark - typically by what we have done or not done...places we messed up! Got angry, said some words I regret, lied, cheated etc.....
- **Sin is NOT about our failures and mistakes....Sin is our Failure to Worship!**
- Failure to Worship is Failure to live in how God created us to live!
Even this word Worship has baggage....worship is not 20-40 minutes when we sing songs together....its not if we sing hymns....

Want a bible verse that defines worship?

1 Peter 2:9 - *that you might declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light...*

- Worship is not a 'spectator sport' driven by consumers....that's a concert.
- Worship is participation - it is me agreeing with what God has said about Himself.
- It is declaring....yes you really are good!
- Worship is joining in the Mission of God to allow His Glory to be known upon the earth!
- True worship always leads to a cross!
- Remember last weeks text – Jesus said you will See....the Heavens opened...not just an idea - for these Jewish men it was a direct reference to **Jacob.**
 - Who awakens from a dream and says....*surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it...How awesome is this place! This is none other that the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven. (Gen 28:17).*
- God you are here...and I am stunned...because I thought I was alone and You were absent.

The Time has come – its not just a date on our calendar its a Moment of surrender Kairos to surrender to a new way of inhabiting life!

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Come and Follow Me – I believe you can look like Me...so how did that go?

- Watch this - Philip after walking with Jesus for 3 years and seeing signs wonders and miracles.... hears His rabbi say...I am going away....
- John 14:8...remember Jesus said what do you seek....follow me and you will see...
- ‘Lord show us the Father and it is enough for us’
- even after 3 years....I submit to you this is not that Philip needs to be convinced of Jesus...
- Jesus you are real....
but this ole world around me...and its forces and obstacles....well **they look a lot bigger!**

He is sure there must be a law that needs to be passed, a policy enforced, a lottery to win....**whatever he has experienced is paling in his mind**

- **Before we get to judgy on Phillip or Nathaniel in John 14...consider how often we have interpreted our relationship with Jesus it terms of filling what we feel lacking...**
- **Not so much about changing how we inhabit the world...that message of lack is never far away.**

Jesus reply vs 9 ch 14

‘If you have seen Me...you have seen the Father’

And by the way...John 15:15...to these insecure former fisherman, tax collector, farmer....

You did not choose me....I choose you...

In the Rabbinic system no teacher would allow a disciple to follow them unless they felt they could actually become LIKE them....Philip....you did not choose me - ***I choose you because I am convinced you can be like me!***

That will bear fruit that will remain - vs 17

So this is my parting command Love one another!

Today the Good News we proclaim is this - Jesus choose you to become a follower Him, not perform a code of conduct or agree to a set of ‘truths’ - He choose you because He believes you can be like Him and see what we could never see on our own; eternal Love in the present!

Closing Prayer

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Communion

BENEDICTION

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.
Oh God write a new story in our City in our life – Your Kingdom is here! Amen

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