

May 7th, 2023
Pinecrest Baptist Church
p.m.

Sermon Title: ***Following Through***
Sermon Text: (Matthew 4:18-22)

S. I. McMillen, in his book *None of These Diseases*, tells a story of a young woman who wanted to go to college, but her heart sank when she read the question on the application blank that asked, "Are you a leader?" Being both honest and conscientious, she wrote, "No," and returned the application, expecting the worst. To her surprise, she received this letter from the college: "Dear Applicant: A study of the application forms reveals that this year our college will have 1,452 new leaders. We are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower."

- Every Christian has been called in some sense to be a leader – we are to lead people to Jesus. But No one can be a leader, until they are a follower, and no one can be a follower, until they understand exactly what that means.

Very often this passage of scripture is used to express the Christian's call to evangelism, and in the broad sense it is. Specifically, however, this passage of scripture is not Christ's command to become fishers of men, but rather it is the time when Christ began calling these believers to leave their livelihood, abandon their business, and come into what we call 'Full-time' ministry.

- Now it is true that He does not call every Christian into "vocational" ministry – but He does call some. - And He does call every Christian into the lifelong business of evangelizing the lost, and being one who testifies of the Lord Jesus.

(Like Paul, every believer is to believe and behave like him when he said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also the Greek." – Roman 1:16)

What does it mean to "Follow Jesus" – if you understand everything else, but do not understand that . . . you don't really understand anything! - When you do understand what it means to follow Jesus, but you don't understand everything else . . . you understand what really matters.

- on seven different occasions Jesus said to various people in various circumstances with various meanings to "**Follow me**".

- sometimes the Greek words that are used mean
 - to accompany, or to go with
- sometimes, as in our text today the Greek text means to "come behind me, or get behind me"

There is probably no clearer explanation of what it means to "get behind Jesus" than Luke 9:23 – "**And he said to *them* all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.**"

- 3 steps to following Jesus, as Jesus explained it.

1.) Denial of Self – that speaks to the issue of resigning your own will. – Jesus prayed, “**Not my will, but thine be done.**”

2.) Death to your Pride - Take up your cross - - Carrying your own cross was a symbol of shame. It was intended to be an act of humiliation. – It identified you as one the world does not want. – No man can follow Christ, and be welcomed in the world at the same time.

3.) Devotion to the Lord – accompany me.

- where Jesus wants to be, you want to be.

- what Jesus wants to do, you want to do.

- what Jesus wants to say, you want to hear.

Now there is much, much more. – But here is the moment that the Lord told 4 fishermen to Leave their Livelihood, abandon their business, forfeit their desired futures, and serve Him in the ministry.

This passage must be put into Chronological order. Long before we get to this moment and these people, we have to put together all that had transpired before this.

Never get the idea that Jesus just blindly, and blankly walked up to these four men and said, “quit what you’re doing, and come go with me, and they just blindly did.”

- The Bible has never called for **Blind Devotion**, it has always called for **Biblical discernment**. There were many false messiahs, and if they followed everyone who said they were one, they would have never followed the Right One. There are two necessary truths that we see when we look at what it means to follow the Jesus of the Bible.

1.) Know Who Jesus Is (John 1:35-43; Luke 5:1-11)

- the very first time that these men met Jesus was in the gospel of John. – Matthew 4 takes place roughly six to eight months after they met Jesus.

- How did they know who Jesus is?

A. They had Listened to God’s Prophet

1.) John 1:34-37 – “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”

- Andrew was there, and another unnamed disciple who were students of John the Baptist. When you read the rest of the passage, the indications are that Simon Peter, and Philip and Nathanael were also already listeners to the Lord’s preacher.

Since the days of Enoch, the Lord has used prophets and preachers to announce His messages, and give His light. These men had become acquainted with, and interested in what John the Baptist had to say. – Why?

B. They had Looked for God’s Promise

1.) John 1:40-41 – “One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”

2.) John 1:44-45 – “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

These men had believed the Bible. They had believed that 1) There is a God. 2.) These Old Testament scriptures they had were His Word. 3) And that All would be, as God said it would be.

(Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God – Romans 10:17 – the fact is that God gave His Word, and through faith they believed He would keep His Word, and through faith would be able to discern who God’s preachers were, and who God’s Messiah would be.)

C. They had Lived with God’s Power

- 1) Then you can turn over to Luke 4 and 5
 - a) Jesus had already healed in Capernaum (where these men lived)
 - b) Jesus had cast out devils
 - c) Jesus had preached in the Synagogues
 - d) What Matthew summarizes here, Luke expounds.

In Luke 5:1-8 Jesus had been standing by the Sea of Galilee, and the crowd got so big He could not preach. – So He saw Simon’s boat – Simon was mending his nets. – Jesus then got into Simon’s boat and told him to push out a little from the shore so he can preach, and Simon did it.

(But then – when the preaching was over – Jesus said in verse 4, “**Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.**”

- Simon was ready to end the day – this wasn’t his idea, it was Jesus.

- Simon was a professional fisherman

- Jesus was a carpenter

- Simon was Tired

- Jesus was Lord

- Simon said, “Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.”

- When Jesus told Simon to Launch out into the deep in the day time and let down his nets, He told him to do everything a professional fisherman would not do, in order to catch the kind of fish in the Sea of Galilee.

- They fished at night – this was the day

- they fished in shallow water – Jesus said the deep

- they caught nothing – Jesus said, you’ll have a catch.

- When Simon said, regardless of all I know, regardless of all I see, and in spite of how I feel, - Lord I’ll do what you say.

- He was ready to be called into the Ministry!

- Listen to what happened- Luke 5:6-8 – “And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

- It is at this moment, that Matthew records, Jesus saying – **“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

#1 – Know Who Jesus Is.

2.) Do What Jesus Says – “Follow me”

- Once you know Who Jesus is, you are face to face with the decision of your Life: You either say Yes to His Call on you, or you say No, and there is no other answer – and there is no greater Danger than saying no, and there is no greater Blessing than saying Yes!

- make no mistake about it, on this particular occasion, Jesus was calling these men specifically to leave their livelihoods, abandon their business and come into full life consuming ministry.

- Their faith had been proclaimed, and now it would be proved!

- The Test of Faith – “Follow me”

- Language doctors tell us that this is in the imperative mood.

- in other words it is spoken as a command –
The test would be two fold:

- 1) Would they recognize Jesus had the authority to command their lives?
- 2) Would they do it?

(Jesus routinely tested the faith that people said they had by telling them then drop what you're doing and go with me.)

- Matthew 8:19-22 – a man said to him, “I'll go with you, but let me first go bury my father . . . – Jesus said, huh uh – **“Follow me and let the dead bury their dead.”** – You say you are with me, then come on now . . .

- Matthew 19:18-22 – the rich young ruler said essentially to Jesus, “I am already in obedience to God.” – Jesus said, “Oh okay . . . **“go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”**

- This is the same principle that Jesus uttered in Luke 6:46 – **“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”**

- The Test of faith is obedience to Jesus, not just in what we might call “spiritual things”, but also in all “secular things.”

- Christ has not called every specific person to leave their livelihood, and abandon their business . . . but He has called everyone “to be willing to.”

- Write these verses down:

Luke 9:23 – **“And he said to *them all*, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”**

- In Matthew 4 – He told Simon and Andrew, James and John TO do it.

- In Luke 9 – He told us we must be WILLING to Do it.

A very wealthy man stood up one time in a testimony service and to tell his story. – He said I came to a point of poverty and brokenness. My business was failing, my bank accounts were drying up, and all I had was \$20 left to my name. I gave the LORD that \$20. I gave Him every penny I had. The Lord blessed me for it. My business turned around, and now I have millions. All I did was trust Him and give Him every penny I had. A little boy in the back stood up and said, “that’s great . . . do it again!

- Total Willingness is the Call and Command of the Lord to those who say they trust Him.

John 10:26-27 – “**But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**”

John 12:25-26 – “**He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.**”

- The Trust of Faith “Follow me”

Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace. - *Oswald Chambers in Run Today's Race.*

- Christ’s call was to come under and behind HIM.

- John 14:6 – “**I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**”

- What does it mean to follow HIM?

- Many people try to follow the Bible, without Following Jesus, and many people try to follow Jesus without obeying the Bible

- we obey Him through His Word

- these Words are from a Person, not a Publisher.

- This Word is His Will, His Wisdom and His Way on the printed page. – Any man who sees the scripture but not the Savior has not seen the scripture. Any man who sees the Savior, without regard for the scripture, hasn’t seen the Savior.

- The Word of God is no good, apart from the God of the Word. – The only reason that we can trust the Bible, the only reason that we can trust the Word, is because of the One Who gave it!

- we obey Him through the prompting of His Holy Spirit.

- as He still moves in the hearts of discerning men today.

- The Trophy of Faith – “I will make you”

- when we follow Jesus – He makes us into what He wants us to be.

- We will BECOME a work of His divine
Grace!

1st John 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

Conclusion – “Fishers of men”

All saints are to be ambassadors for Christ. All are to be witnesses of Christ. All are to be evangelizing the lost. – And the world does not want us to.

I read where a Dr. giving a lecture one time said, ““The sick soul needs more than a lecture on medicine. He needs a personal prescription.” – I would add that the sick soul needs to use that prescription.