

## **FOLLOWED**

Luke 5:4-11, 27-32

Jesus started out getting others involved in the ministry He had. He walked by some men working in their boats and said “Follow Me.”

Does it seem strange that Peter, James, and John would just drop what they were doing and take off to follow this Preacher? Many times, the scene is presented that way and we get the impression that it was almost magical – like the Pied Piper that people would just follow Him because he said to do it.

Early in the ministry of Jesus, He involved others and sought their cooperation. One day, as He was near the Sea of Galilee and the crowd was large, He found reason to involve others in the work of the Kingdom of God. We see immediately that Jesus had a ministry. He came to accomplish a purpose which was to make a way of salvation for all people who would put trust in Him. The method of getting the good news of salvation communicated to everyone and then implemented in their lives was by making disciples who would then make other disciples.

We are part of this process and are to be making disciples who will become involved. If we are to get others involved in the work of the Kingdom, then we need to have a ministry. What kinds of things would we tell others that our ministry was if we were to ask them to join us in the work of the Kingdom of God? Examples might be visiting the sick, helping the poor, prayer, encouragement, teaching, helping others, etc. Jesus said, “Follow Me.” The apostle Paul said “Follow me as I follow Jesus.” We will be more effective in making disciples if we will say, follow me as I follow Christ.

This incident associated with the call of Peter, James, and John was in the same area where many people had come to Him to have Jesus lay His hands on them for healing and deliverance. People wanted to know what this Man had to say and many followed Him. According to Luke, the crowds were large and Jesus found it difficult for all to hear His teaching. There were two idle boats in the water nearby and Jesus was about to make these vessels useful for something more than fishing. We can see in this that God can use whatever is available for the purposes of the Kingdom of God. So many times, people think that the only things that are useful for the Kingdom are the church building and professionally trained staff. Jesus turned a fishing boat into a pulpit and then called on an uneducated fisherman by the name of Simon to help him. Notice that Jesus did not tell Simon to do much, but He did instruct him to do something, to be involved. We could learn from this example in the way we make people feel a part of the work of the church. Involvement is an important aspect to having committed members.

### Peter, James, and John – 5:4-11

<sup>4</sup> When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” <sup>5</sup> Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” <sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; <sup>7</sup> so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!” <sup>9</sup> For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” <sup>11</sup> When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. Luke 5:4–11 (NASB95)

Even a good sermon needs to come to an end and when Jesus had taught the people, He stopped speaking. He was a master teacher and knew that people can absorb only so much at a

given time. We see from this incident that God's work is not done just because the preaching service is over. Jesus was not only a teacher; He was also a disciple maker and He needed to choose disciples who would faithfully follow Him. He said to Simon, who had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, to take the boat out to the deep part of the lake and give it one more try. There is a message here for us in our learning and study of the word of God. Jesus' instruction to Peter was to "launch out into the deep and let down your net." So often in our preaching services and Bible study we are very careful to not stray too far away from the shallow water near the shore. It is as if we are afraid to explore the depths of God's word. We can all name some of the subjects we avoid as Baptists. (Demon possession, miracles, healing, acts of faith, election, what the Bible says about the end time. Many of the ideas we have about such topics have come from popular novels, but those do not address the real issues.)

Another aspect of "launch out into the deep" is that we are not very comfortable in sharing the gospel message with people who are not "similar to us" because their background and understanding may be so different that we think that we would not know where to begin. Part of the problem is that we use a lot of "churchy" words that someone who is from another culture would not understand.

Simon was not really interested in trying this little experiment; however, because this Teacher had asked him to do so, he agreed. The very fact that Peter did as Jesus told him is thought by some commentators to be good evidence that Peter and some of his associates had already begun a "pseudo-discipleship" relation with Jesus. This is not a case of great faith, it is more like the person today who does what the Bible says even though he is pretty much a skeptic about how much God is involved in human affairs. When Simon obeyed, the results were amazing. There were so many fish in the nets that he had to call for help from his partners. If Jesus intended to make a "step change" in the relationship with Simon and his business partners, James and John, then we could say "mission accomplished."

Simon was already convinced that Jesus had unusual abilities and he thought that he could learn from this great teacher. We have probably known and even admired a person who seemed to have a better than average understanding of spiritual things and may have even experienced benefits from the prayers of such a person. This high esteem does not rise to the level of "awe" and being uneasy in the presence of this person. However, when Peter experienced his own miracle with the fish nets, then he recognized that he was in the presence of someone Who was divinely extraordinary. He apparently sensed the enormity of the difference. The only response that he could think of was to ask Jesus to leave. This feeling that Simon had may have been close to what Adam and Eve felt as they hid from God after sinning against Him. The world's concept of God and gods was that such divine personages are standoffish and unapproachable, harsh and stern. Jesus did not leave nor did He chase them away, but instead invited them to join Him in His mission. He showed these fishermen what successful fishing is all about when people are in tune with God's leading in their lives. After showing them how to fish, he then offered them a new calling in life to be "fishers of men."

After the two boats got back to the shore, Simon, James and John took Jesus up on his invitation to follow Him. They left their boats and went with Jesus. This seems quite amazing that they would do this knowing only what Luke tells us about the incident. However, these men had met Jesus before. This was not the first encounter. The Gospel of John has some interesting facts about these men. Simon had a brother named Andrew. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and he (and an unnamed disciple – likely John the son of Zebedee) was there the day that John the Baptist looked up and seeing Jesus walking toward him said, "Behold the Lamb of

God!” Andrew and the other man then followed Jesus and talked with Him.

What does this tell us about getting people to follow us as we follow Jesus and becoming a disciple maker? Jesus had a good reputation. There was someone who gave Him a good recommendation. How is our reputation in the community in which we live? Would people be surprised to learn that we are Christians?

Andrew then went to find Simon and told him that he had found the Messiah. He then brought his brother to meet Jesus. That is not all. According to John’s account, Jesus also met Phillip and Nathaniel who were from the same area as Andrew and Peter and they were immediately convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. It is unclear whether this happened before or after the wilderness temptation of Christ since John does not include that event in his narrative. Apparently, these five (Andrew, Simon, John, Phillip and Nathaniel) were “more or less” or “somewhat disciples” or followers of Jesus. It was probably this group mentioned in John 2:2 as the disciples (along with Jesus) who were invited to the wedding in Cana where the first recorded miracle of Jesus was done. As we saw in the account of the catch of fish, they had not left all and had not yet committed to following Jesus wherever He went.

So many times, we find that the power of God is all around us and many things are happening and we see them but just don’t respond with a surrendering commitment to follow Jesus. I think this is what happened to Simon. He had been introduced to Jesus as the Messiah, he had seen or (at least) heard of the healing miracles that were happening in the Capernaum area and then he had witnessed the great catch of fish. It took all these things to get through to him that Jesus was someone worth following with total commitment. Jesus did not just walk by and say, “Follow Me,” and have people drop everything they were doing to go with Him. He cultivated the situation over a period of time and then when the person was ready, He issued the invitation.

We in the church today could learn from the methodology that Jesus used. We think that we can just invite someone to come to church and that they will immediately respond. It usually does not happen that way. Jesus had established a relationship with Simon and had even been a guest in his house. He had involved Simon in His ministry by borrowing his boat for a pulpit and then He let Simon experience a personal miracle. Only then was Simon ready to make a real commitment to follow this Man. If Jesus saw the need to do all of this, do you think that we can do less and be successful in bringing people into the Kingdom of God? Our mission in life, as members of the Church (Christ’s Body) is to be fishers of men. God has chosen this method to bring the Good News to a lost world and He has chosen us to be part of the process. Let’s remember this as we encounter various people each day.

#### Levi – 5:27-28

<sup>27</sup> After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” <sup>28</sup> And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him. Luke 5:27–28 (NASB95)

When Jesus was carrying out His earthly ministry, He made it a point to go where He was needed and where the people realized they had a need. Jesus was often in the company of publicans (tax collectors) and other outcasts of society. Apparently, He did not choose to be around the Pharisees who thought they were “the elite” of the religious world and needed nothing.

If Jesus were in our hometown on Sunday morning, where would we expect to find Him? Hopefully, it would be in our church. Hopefully, we realize our needs. If our answer is anywhere except in our church, then we might be thinking as the Pharisees thought.

One of the outcasts with whom Jesus associated was Levi (or Matthew) who was a tax

collector. Sometime we might think that Jesus had such a magnetic personality that all He needed to do was to walk by and say “Follow Me” and people would jump up and go with Him. When Jesus called people to follow Him, it was in the power of the Holy Spirit and likely the Holy Spirit had already been preparing the person to make such a decision. When Peter, James and John left their fishing boats full of fish it was because Jesus had gotten to know them and had witnessed the demonstration of His power and were convinced that He was divine.

When Jesus called Levi, what had just happened? Do you remember the story of when Jesus was in a house and people were coming to be healed and a paralytic was carried to the roof and let down through the roof? Immediately after this Jesus (and apparently a crowd of people) went to the sea side which was very close to where He had been. There was a nearby tax-collection point and the man sitting in the tax office was Levi. Perhaps Levi had heard about the miracles and maybe even what had just happened when the paralytic was healed. Whatever the situation was, Levi left it all and followed Jesus.

### Sinners – 5:29-32

<sup>29</sup> And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. <sup>30</sup> The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup> “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:29–32 (NASB95)

Tax Collectors were Jews who worked for the Romans. They were despised by their fellow countrymen. In Jesus, Matthew found acceptance and, in his joy, he immediately left everything. He wanted to share his joy and sensed a need to tell his friends (other tax collectors). This joy is contrasted by the envy and indignation of the Pharisees. They were so caught up in their religious activities that they had totally missed the point of what God wanted to do through the descendants of Abraham and the nation of Israel. We need to be careful that we too do not get caught up in man-made traditions or be playing church and then miss out on the Kingdom of God and what He is doing. If we major on the minors, then we will always be minor league.

Jesus tried to put the question of our spiritual lostness in terms of physical sickness so they (and we) can understand the dynamics of what happens in the process of coming to God through Jesus Christ for salvation. A person may be mortally ill, but unless he realizes his illness, he will not seek help from physicians. In the same way, each person is infected with a spiritually fatal disease (born of the seed of Adam) and unless we recognize our lost spiritual conditions, then we will not come to God for salvation. There is a difference in those who want to be righteous and those who are just self-righteous.