

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Call to Follow - Mark 1:14-20
Pastor Dave Scherrer - October 26, 2014

Receiving a “call” and following it well. These are not overwhelmingly familiar concepts for the 21st century.

Maybe receiving a call makes sense. If you apply to a college or make application for employment, you might wait for a call back from them and then depending on the news you would either say “I got the call!” excitedly or you might say the same only dejected. But following well isn’t so much a western 21st century ideal. We’re more the rugged individuals who set out on our own, setting our own agenda and thinking fondly of ourselves as non-compliant. We tend to value leaders not followers. So when we read the passage for this morning about the call of the disciples to *follow* Jesus it actually stirs more questions than it answers. In fact today we are more used to *following* a movie star or sports figure on twitter and that is not the kind of following were talking about today. That is more the practice of gossip than it is the practice of discipleship even though it is the same word.

But in the gospels, the idea of following Christ is all over the place, dozens and dozens of time. But today if we ask “What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?” we might get all kinds of answers. Pastor Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian in NYC:

“We live in a culture where there is a great deal of interest in Jesus but everyone wants to connect with Jesus on their own terms. The problem with that is that a ‘Jesus’ that is your own creation, that is your own projection of your own desires is really just you and therefore is not a ‘Jesus’ who can challenge you or contradict you or change you and therefore cannot transform you. Can’t really help you. If you’re going to have a Jesus that can help you, He has to have his own reality.” *Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church*

So let’s let Jesus be Jesus just for the sake of the argument and we see Him begin his ministry calling out some to follow him:

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

¹⁶ Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” ¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Now to fill out this story just a bit we can read the account of Jesus’ first meeting of Peter and Andrew in John’s account of their introduction:

John 1:32-42

And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵ The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s

brother.⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Based on reading these passages together many scholars believe that based on the introduction of John the Baptist, Simon invited Jesus to come and stay with him in Capernaum and it is seemingly certain by a careful reading of the Gospels that Capernaum became the home base for Jesus’ ministries.

If you go to Capernaum today you will see a large church that looks a bit like a flying saucer built over the site archeologists believe to be the home of Peter and the place of residence and home base of ministry for Jesus during his years of public ministry.



It makes sense to me that Peter, Andrew, James and John knew who Jesus was and were simply waiting for his call to follow him. Remember at this time Jesus had yet to start his public ministry beyond teaching in the synagogue. There hadn’t been miracles yet. These disciples were responding to the call of Christ by faith. Right here is an important point to consider.

ILLUSTRATION. Jesus calls the disciples out to follow vs the traditional pursuit of a Rabbi by a potential follower - by tipping upside down this tradition of how a disciple finds a Rabbi, Jesus is making it clear that none of us follow Him except that He bid us come. He bids us and we have the chance to respond by faith.

In Mark 3 we read of the calling of all the disciples, “The Twelve” as Mark will call the group from this point forward. They take off for a mountain experience in a bit of a staff retreat:

Mark 3:13-20

And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons.¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.

Mark 1:17

“Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.”

They follow knowing or at least hoping that this is the Messiah as John the Baptist had said. And so they dropped everything. I am going to come back to that because the question of the day is ***‘So in this year, what does it mean to follow well?’*** Does it mean to drop everything as they did or is it more symbolic? I want to come back to that but there is evidence that in the first century following well had to do with ***dust***.

The “dust of the Rabbi” was to be on the follower:

Avot 1:4 from the Mishnah states, ***‘Let the dust of the feet of the Sages, as they walk, cover you.’*** In other words ‘follow them closely,’ as close as you can get.

So to follow Jesus is to know Jesus, his every move and habit, his priorities and the things that set his teeth on edge. It is to live so close to Christ that he would rub off on us heart, soul, mind and strength. It is also interesting to me that imbedded in this call is a sense of purpose. We don't just follow kind of numbly like groupies chasing a rock band. These are disciples who hope to know the Savior and to serve the Savior. And to serve the Savior is to be who you are (fishermen) for the purposes of God *and* persuading our fellow humans to believe and follow Christ are at the top of that list.

So from there as we read on there is lots of following, crowds following everywhere! Crowds looking for miracles of food, healings, spiritual wonders and signs of deity. Really it is a bit of a circus with all the following Jesus is stirring up. And then just to mix it up Jesus said once, "Right now, you can't follow me." Do you remember that time?

John 13:36

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

Jesus was going to His death on the cross and that was to be a solitary walk. The disciples would abandon Him and ultimately even His Father would turn His head from Jesus who was made sin on our behalf. So the disciples could not go, just yet. But Jesus also knew that the road for Peter was to be a road of hardship and death for the Truth as well.

John 21:18-19

¹⁸ "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it this way in his classic book *Cost of Discipleship*, when speaking of the call of God:

*"The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with His death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call."—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship**

I summarize like this: ***1 follow . . . Regardless of the cost, Because of the prize*** (book mark)

So I ask you. Is the dust of the Rabbi on you? Are you following regardless of the cost? Or perhaps do you compare your walk to how others are walking and use this measurement to judge the faithfulness of your walk? This is a bad habit it turns out.

John 21:20-22

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? ***You . . . follow me!***"

Each of us must follow, putting to death the old self according to the power of the Holy Spirit who labors for us. Each of us must decide what it means to be called as a fisherman or teacher or student or doctor or pastor or carpet layer and how we are to use who we are to be about the purposes of the rabbi's heart.

Philippians 3

One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

A band of brave souls became known as one-way missionaries a century ago. They bought tickets to the mission field without the return half. Instead of suitcases, they packed their few earthly belongings into coffins. As they sailed away, they waved goodbye to everyone they loved and all they knew, knowing they'd never return home.

A.W. Milne was one of those missionaries.



He set sail for the New Hebrides in the South Pacific, aware that the headhunters there had martyred every missionary before him. Milne didn't fear for his life because he had already died to himself. His coffin was packed. For 35 years he lived among that tribe. When he died, they buried him in the middle of the village and inscribed this on his tombstone:

"When he came there was no light. When he left there was no darkness."

When did we start believing God wants to send us to safe places to do easy things? That playing it safe is safe? That radical is anything but normal? Jesus didn't die to keep us safe. He died to make us dangerous. Faithfulness is not holding the fort. It's storming the gates of hell. The will of God is not an insurance plan. It's a daring plan. And the complete surrender of your life to the cause of Christ isn't radical. It's normal. It's time to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death.

In this effort to know how to follow well perhaps it is not so much about how we start but how we finish.

This is John Stephen Akhwari:



While competing in the 1968 marathon in the Mexico City Olympics, at the 10 mile mark during the 26 mile race, there was jockeying for position between some runners and he was hit. He fell badly and dislocated his knee joint plus his shoulder hit hard against the pavement. He continued running however, finishing last among the 57 competitors who completed the race (75 had started). Akhwari finished hours after the last place runner when there were only a few hundred people left in the stadium, and the sun had set. A television crew was sent out from the medal ceremony when word was received that there was one more runner about to finish. As he finally crossed the finish line a cheer came from the small crowd. When interviewed later and asked why he continued running, he said,

"My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race; they sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race."

My Jesus did not leave His throne on High to call me to start a race but to finish the race.

I Follow . . . Regardless of the cost, Because of the prize

Discussion Questions

The discussion this week is about the disciples' call to follow. Have you ever experienced a call or know someone who had? What was it like, how did that come about?

What is the difference between "a call" and simply a fond desire to do something?

'The Twelve' as Mark calls the disciples were not perfect at the time of the call. What do you think Jesus was looking for or thought He found in the disciples before he called them? Do you think he is looking for these same traits in you?

Do you think you could have been one of the one way missionaries that Dave talked about who shipped off with their belongings in a casket? Why so, why not?

What do you think is more important, 'starting the race' or 'finishing the race?' What do you suppose 'finishing the spiritual race' well looks like?

How do you know that you are following Christ well? How can we, here in this community group, help encourage each other in our following Christ?