

Follow Me

The Word in Song IV: Part 4 “Follow Me”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – August 1, 2021

10th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Luke 5:1-11,27-32

Reflection: Psalm 36

Greeting: O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day! Praise the Lord! (*Psalm 96*)

Prayer: God our protector, you are with us wherever we go. You know our hearts and our innermost thoughts. Help us to see your presence everywhere we go. Give to us a right heart so that we may love as you love and give as you give. Help us to share your peace with the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 36

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O LORD. How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. O continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your salvation to the upright of heart! (Psalm 36:5-10 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 36 and we hear of God’s salvation. That God’s love is there for us always. We hear that God is our strength and our refuge. How do you find shelter in God? How do you share God’s steadfast love with those around you? Where do you see the light of God in your life? How do you share in the hope that Christ gives you?

Prayer: O God, help us to seek you in unexpected places. Help us to follow you and to offer your salvation to those in need. May we be blessed to see you wherever we are. Strengthen us in our faith and put hope in our hearts. Hear our prayers and have mercy on us Lord. Let your spirit guide us in your righteous peace. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading for today comes from Luke chapter 5 verses 1 through 11 and 27 through 32.

One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch." Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets." So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink. When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too. Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus. Afterward, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi got up, left everything behind, and followed him. Then Levi threw a great banquet for Jesus in his home. A large number of tax collectors and others sat down to eat with them. The Pharisees and their legal experts grumbled against his disciples. They said, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to call righteous people but sinners to change their hearts and lives." (Luke 5:1-11,27-32 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We continue in "The Word in Song" series. Today's message is "Follow Me" and is inspired by a song of the same title by Muse. It was actually a little hard to pin down exactly where I wanted to go with this because there were many different directions. But the scripture reading that they brought me to is this reading from Luke. In it we have Jesus calling some of his early follower. First, Jesus gets into a boat with fishermen. He's in Simon Peter's boat and they are out on the water and Jesus teaches the crowd from the boat. Then they go fishing. They don't think they're going to catch anything, which is a bad thing for people who make a living off of fishing. They hadn't caught anything, which had to be worrying for the men. But he tells them to cast their nets and they draw in fish, so many they were amazed. They see the catch for the miracle it is, and Simon Peter falls down. It's interesting what he says. Not praise. Not thanks. He says, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" But Jesus doesn't leave him behind. He doesn't go "I made a mistake, you're a sinner." Instead, he says, "Don't be afraid. From now on you'll be fishing for people." As soon as they brought the boat ashore, they leave everything to follow Jesus. Simon Peter, James and John, all suddenly leaves their work behind, and they follow. The same thing happens when Jesus finds Levi, the tax collector. Somebody who would not be viewed upon well at all. And Jesus looked to him and says "Follow me" and Levi does.

It reminded me of the lyrics for today's music selection. When you fall down, when you're scared, and you're lost, be brave. I'm coming to hold you now. When all your strength has gone and you feel wrong, like your wife has slipped away. Follow me. You can follow me and I, I will not desert you now. You can follow me. I will keep you safe. You can follow me. I will protect you." And I find this to be interesting because the words are all about trusting. And that's what the early disciples do. They trust that this man has come and will lead them to where they need to be. And they follow. One of the interesting things is that when they all get up and leave, they leave their world behind. They don't follow because they're being made rich. They leave their catch behind; they leave their station behind, their jobs and careers, and they follow Christ. It reminded me of exactly what that call is. A call that says "I'm here to save you and teach you to call others. Follow me." Thinking about this, it struck me that one of the other main things that we get is a reminder that Jesus didn't come and pick his disciples from the religious elite. He didn't come and find people who are already out preaching about God. They weren't talking about Moses. They weren't talking about the prophets and the law. They were the lowly. Simon Peter, he straight up says Jesus should leave him behind because he's a sinner and unworthy. When he goes to collect Levi, his job in itself has made him an outcast. And it's then that we get the Pharisees and the legal experts. The religious leaders of their day, registering their complaint. Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?

And you know, no matter how much we would love to say that we can see the problem with their statement, what the Pharisees are asking is something that often comes to the forefront for us today. Because it's often that people are turned away and shunned because of who they are and how they live. Now what I mean by this is that Jesus doesn't seek out Levi because Levi has abandoned being a tax collector. Jesus seeks out Levi and tells him to follow him, even though he's a tax collector. Levi's response is to hold a great banquet. It is then the religious authorities registered their complaints. Shouldn't this man have been doing better for you to want to sit down and eat with him? Shouldn't you reserve yourself to those who are already trying to live a life of righteousness? And Jesus' response is one that we don't always take the heart. "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to call righteous people but sinners to change their hearts and lives." It reminded me of our music for today. "When your fires died out, no one's there, they have left you for dead. Follow me. You can follow me, I will keep you safe." We have the realization that Jesus is calling people that have already been abandoned by those in charge. The people who seem to need the most help are the ones being cast away. Not being given a chance to change their lives, not being given a chance to show that they can lead a life of righteousness but turned away because it's thought that because of who they are, they never can. Jesus notes that it is the sinners that need saved, and that's who he's here to love. That's who he's here to care for and who he's here to protect. And he tells them, follow me.

I think no matter how much we always want to be able to relate to Simon Peter, to James, to John, to Levi, to relate to Christ even. Sometimes, we end up in the headspace of the

Pharisees. With a suspicious eye toward those that we deem not worthy. And it is troubling. Because one of the big things is that if we are to emulate Christ, then it means we reach out to those that we think are failing. It means we reach out to those who are stumbling. We reach out to those who are leading a life that is not in Christ. It is those who have hit rock bottom that need the most help. I can't help but read this and think that Jesus was calling out to those who were looking for someone to care. Jesus is calling out to people who needed love, who needed to know they weren't alone, who were looking to be able to trust someone to help them. Too often we are ourselves too fast to condemn. It's easy to find religious leaders too eager to look out and say these are the people that we have to avoid! these are the people who are ruining things! These are the people that we have to shun!" And yet, those are the same people that Jesus thought would be his disciples, his followers, his closest companions. Tax collectors and sinners, the dregs of society. And I started to wonder how often we turn our backs on others because we think they're too far gone. How often do we look away because we think this person is lost and will never see the light, not realizing that we can be the light they see? How often do we walk away instead of reaching out our hand to let them know that Christ is there for them? Too often, like the Pharisees, we're blinded by our own judgements to say, "You are worthy of God's love. You are worthy of being saved. You can follow Christ." Christ is there for you, as he's there for me as he's there for all of us saying, "Follow me. Trust in Me." Christ will protect you. Christ will heal you. Christ will love you. Because Christ already does love you. We need to be fishing for people, not throwing them back disappointed but saying "follow me to Christ."

So, my main message for today's that we need to learn to look past our own suspicions, to look past our own judgments, to look past the ideals that we set for who we think is a follower of Christ. We need to open ourselves up to being disciples of Christ, to make disciples of Christ. Not looking for those already on the path but looking for those who have fallen and feel that there is nothing left. Because it was for the lost sinners that Christ came. It was to save a sinner like me. Christ is the hope that we have. Christ is the hope that we give. It is in that saving grace we are washed clean of our sins. We enter into Christ, not because of our perfection, but because of our desperate need from our failings. So let us not look to the failings of others as a reason to walk away, but as a reason to reach out, knowing that when Christ saw someone fall in front of him and say "leave me here, I'm a sinner" He said, "Follow me." That as we answer that call, we make that call to others, so that we may all join together in the grace and the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God of grace and glory, we thank you that you judge us not by the perfection of our actions, but by our readiness to live boldly by faith. Help us, as individuals and as a congregation, to trust you and follow where you lead, that in Christ your name may be glorified in all the earth. May we find forgiveness in your love. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Take Care

Our series is *Take Care* and each week we will look at different aspects of self-care and the ways God helps us to take care of ourselves.

July 11th – *Doctor My Eyes* – Isaiah 38:1-20

July 18th – *On the Turning Away* – Ezekiel 18:21-32

July 25th – *Hold My Hand* – Matthew 14:22-36

August 1st – *Follow Me* – Luke 5:1-11,27-32

August 8th – *Turn, Turn, Turn* – Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds	Ronnie Winstead
Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Lauren Stewart	Charlie Henderson
Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland
Terri Kemper	Darrell Quick	Shelley Murphy	Jeff Davidson
Ruth Ann Finley	Sandy Starwalt	Family of Harold Moss	Allen Goebel & Family
Jodie Bunch	Diane Waggle	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks
Nora Werner & Family	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith
Bonnie Hite	Donna Graham	Kevin Drum	Kristen & Zack Morecraft
Lavada Markwell	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte		

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