“FOLLOW ME”

Scripture: John 1:35-51. Last week we heard the testimony of John the Baptist. Jesus steps onto the scene in John 1:29 and He walks toward John the Baptist. Upon seeing Jesus, John the Baptist, the last of the O.T. prophets announces: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” The Lamb is a clear messianic reference and is taken from one of Isaiah’s suffering servant passages, Isaiah 53:7. It is also a prophecy that Jesus would offer for all time a single sacrifice for sins (Heb 10:12). It will be Jesus’ death on the cross that will pay the price to redeem sinful humanity. In John 1:34 John the Baptist states clearly for the record, speaking of Jesus: “This is the Son of God.”

Today we are going to hear some more testimony about who Jesus is – this time from four of the first disciples that Jesus called. Before we get into our passage today let me remind you once again of the Apostle John’s purpose in writing this Gospel – READ John 20:31.

READ John 1:35-37

John the Baptist points to Jesus and he tells two of his own disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!” At that point John’s two disciples begin to follow after Jesus. We know from verse 40 that one of these two is Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The scriptures do not name the other disciple, but I believe that it is very likely the Apostle John himself. From this point forward John the Baptist slowly fades from the scene and the narrative focuses on the ministry of Jesus Christ.

READ John 1:38

When Jesus sees the two men following Him, He asks, “What are you seeking?" Jesus, knowing their hearts, turns to meet them. He knows they are honestly and diligently seeking after the Messiah. These men are following Jesus based solely on the testimony of John the Baptist. They believe Jesus to be the Messiah even though He hasn’t yet preached a sermon or performed a miracle. So Jesus meets them right where they are.

By the way, Jesus, being the Son of God, knows what is in people’s hearts. He can discern who is sincerely seeking Him and who isn’t. Case in point, John 2:23-25. That passage says that many believed in His name. They followed Him just like the two disciples in our passage here in John Chapter 1. And yet it says that Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them. Jesus reaction to that bunch of so-called followers is quite different from what we see here in this passage. Why? Jesus knows a person’s heart. Those folks over in Chapter 2 are impressed by Jesus’ miracles and so it says they believed in his name. They might have even acknowledged He was the Messiah. But the sad truth is that they were not ready to repent of their sins, commit themselves fully to Him and follow Him no matter the cost. He knows what was in a man. So Jesus didn't commit Himself to their insincere hearts. He didn't waste His time playing their hypocritical religious games.

But Jesus knows these disciples of John the Baptist have sincere hearts. Their hearts have been prepared by God through John’s preaching. And when a person seeks Christ honestly, without hypocrisy, without deceit, completely stripped of self, repentant of sin, ready for Jesus to make them what He wants them to be – like these two guys were – well, Jesus will commit Himself to them.

So, back to John 1:38, Jesus asks these two men, "What are you seeking?" What do you want out of Me? The disciples respond to Jesus question with a question of their own: “Rabbi, where are you staying?” They want to know where Jesus lives. The idea here is that they desire to come visit Him and talk to Him. They want to sit under His teaching and learn more. After all, Jesus is the Messiah! He has an important mission to undertake and they did not want to bother Him. And besides Andrew and John have a fishing business they need to go back to in Galilee. But while they are here they want to know more. Look how Jesus responds to them in verse 39. I love this.

READ John 1:39.

What does Jesus say? "Let Me look on my calendar and see when would be a good time to have you come over." No, He says, "Come and see." I have time for you right now. Today is the day of salvation. Jesus does not put people off when their hearts are ready – when they are truly seeking Him.

Remember Zacchaeus sitting up in that sycamore tree? What did Jesus say to Him? "Come down for I'm going to your house...today." Jesus Christ never puts anybody off; He’s never too busy, for any and for all who diligently and honestly seek Him, "Come and see." Listen, you can stand around and wonder all day long who the Messiah is, you can have a big theological discourse about Him. Or you can just go and see who He is. And how do we do that? We sit down with Him in His Word and we talk to Him in prayer. We spend quality time with Him. Do you have time for Him in your busy schedule? He has time for you.

I want to point out one last thing at the end of verse 39 (and this is one reason why I think the unnamed disciple is the Apostle John. "It was about the tenth hour." John, who is writing this account, bases his time reference off the Roman clock which starts at midnight. The other gospel writers base their times off the Jewish clock which begins at 6 AM. So the time of day is 10:00 AM. Why would the time be important to the writer? Because that is the very moment he came to Christ! The Apostle John is writing about something that happened 60 years before and he still remembers. The Bible says that he and Andrew stayed with Jesus the whole day. What a fantastic day that must have been for these two disciples! John never forgot it.

READ John 1:40.

Let me say something about the man Andrew. There is not a whole lot said about Andrew in scripture. His claim to fame is that he was Simon Peter's brother. But there is something fantastic about Andrew. Do you know what he was doing every time we meet him in the Bible? The three times he is mentioned he is always doing the same thing. What is that? He is bringing somebody to Jesus. In verse 41 he goes and gets Peter and brings him to Jesus. In John chapter 6 he goes and gets a boy with five barley loaves and two fish and he brings him to Jesus. Later on in John 12 he gets some Gentiles and brings them to Jesus. What a great testimony – Andrew, the man who brought people to meet Jesus.

READ John 1:41.

Andrew goes and gets his brother Simon Peter and he says to him..."Simon, we’ve found the Messiah. He’s here! God's anointed Son, the King of Israel, we've found Him. The search is over. From a human perspective it seems like sometimes we find God. But who really finds who? The Bible says that "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." But, you see, here in this passage John is presenting the human perspective of salvation – “We found Him!”

READ John 1:42

Jesus looks at Peter and says, "I know you. You're Simon the son of John. You’re a nobody, just a fisherman from Galilee. But I declare to you that you are Simon but you are going to become Cephas, Peter, a rock."

It sure took a while for Peter to become a rock, didn't it? He tripped up all throughout his life with Christ. He was always making silly comments. On the Mount of Transfiguration he would later said, "Let's stay up here on this mountain and build booths." He would later tell Jesus, "Lord, You're not going away; you're not going to die." That's when Jesus told Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." Peter said, "I'll defend You, Lord," and then he goes and slices off the ear of Malchus. Simon Peter so often doing or saying the wrong thing.

But here you have a prophetic statement. Jesus says "you are called a rock, a stone and some day you will be one. Eventually Peter became a rock. After the Holy Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost, we will see Peter as a rock. The same Peter who will deny Christ three times later stands up in Jerusalem and preaches a message indicting the whole population. He tells them they killed the Prince of life. And then he goes on from there to preach the person of Christ and 3,000 people will get saved. You read his epistles, 1 and 2 Peter and you see a tremendous rock. He takes a hard stand on discipline, on discipleship and on sound doctrine. And then finally, you see him at the end of his life crucified upside down and you say, "Yes, Peter became a rock." He was one of the foundation stones of the Apostles upon which Christ built the church. So here in John Chapter 1 when Jesus is first introduced to Simon son of John, He calls him a rock.

READ John 1:43-44

Jesus walks over to Philip and He says, "Philip, follow Me." Before we saw two disciples seeking after Jesus and now we see Jesus seeking after Philip. John does not record Philip's response. All it says is that Philip was from Bethsaida. John does not tell us anything about Philip's conversion experience. We know that Philip responded to Jesus because of what he does in verses 45-46 and the fact that he is named alongside the other disciples in the various gospels. The emphasis here offers us a divine perspective of salvation. "Philip, you have been chosen by God, follow Me." In John 15:16 Jesus said to His disciples one day, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit…”

The human perspective to salvation says, “I have found Him.” The divine perspective to salvation says, “I have chosen you, so follow Me.”

READ John 1:45-46

Philip goes right out and goes to his friend Nathanael and says to him, "We’ve found Him – the one that Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote about." Of course, they knew who all that was written about – the Messiah. So, who is He? "He is Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph, that carpenter." And Nathanael couldn't believe what he was hearing. Nazareth? The Messiah comes out of that place? Nathanael obviously did not have a very high opinion of Nazareth and he gives an honest human response: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" I mean, what's the Messiah doing up there in that place?

I love Philip's answer. "Well, let me sit down and discuss with you why I believe He’s the Messiah." No. He says to him, "Come and see." Don't stand around speculating about who Christ is, if you're really honest and you want to know if He's the Son of God, come and see for yourself. And so, Nathanael goes with Philip to meet Jesus.

READ John 1:47-49

Jesus sees Nathanael approaching and says, "Here comes an honest seeking heart." In Chapter 4 we are going to see Jesus interacting with a Samaritan woman, the woman at the well. She will conclude after hearing Jesus speak, "Never a man told me the things that this man told me. He's got to be the Messiah." Nathanael could not believe that Jesus Christ was reading his mind when he was sitting under a tree in a place where he thought he couldn't be seen. Jesus said, "I knew you when you weren't even here, when you were over there under that fig tree." Nathanael is probably thinking, "How did He know I was under a fig tree?" You don't need to tell Jesus anything about Nathanael. He knows everything about Nathanael. And with that little bit of dialogue with Jesus, Nathanael is convinced that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and he testifies to that fact.

Here’s Nathanael. He comes to Christ. The simplest little thing and he believes, right? Again, Jesus did not peform a single miracle for him. Meanwhile, you have the multitudes following Christ all throughout His ministry, witnessing everything He did and they conclude that He did it by the power of Satan.

So what makes the difference? Why do different people coming to different conclusions about Jesus. Why is that? Human will for sure, but also the sovereignty of God. Here we see that the Holy Spirit reveals the truth about Jesus to Nathanael. And so Nathanael declares, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel."

READ John 1:50

Jesus says, "You actually believe because of me knowing you before you got here? Listen, Nathanael, as amazing as you think that is, I am going to show you greater things than that. You're just getting in on the beginning."

READ John 1:51

This comes right out of Genesis 28. Remember Jacob's dream with the ladder? Jacob saw a ladder going from earth to heaven and angels going up and down the ladder. The ladder represented access to God. From earth to heaven and angels as ministering agents of God keeping it open, so that man could go to God. That was Jacob’s dream. Well in this verse Jesus says that the ladder, the way to God is the Son of Man. What Jesus is saying to Nathanael is "It is wonderful that you know I'm omniscient, but let Me tell you something better, you now have permanent open access to God through Me." Great news for Nathanael and for us as well – when you meet Jesus and trust in Him for salvation, you have open access to heaven.

Well we’ve only finished Chapter 1 and already we have heard powerful testimony about Jesus from John the Baptist, Andrew, the Apostle John, Philip and Nathanael.