

Series: Called to Follow

“The Coaching of a Disciple”

Luke 5:1-11

As we open God’s Word we come to the second sermon in our series, “Called to Follow.” I believe that one of the most important matters facing the Church today is our role and responsibility as disciples of Jesus Christ. We live in a culture where many people describe themselves as “Christians.” They are described as such for a host of reasons – they grew up in a religious home, attend regular worship services, have knowledge of biblical principles, their political views are conservative, they have a heart to love and serve people, and they genuinely try to do good in their life. These are just some of the reasons that someone might call themselves a “Christian,” and somewhere between 60-70% of the US population identifies as such. However, if this were actually true, then why is it that we struggle in so many basic ways? If we are truly followers of Christ, then why does our culture look so different than Him? Even in the Church today, if we were truly followers of Christ then why do so many deny the authority of God’s Word and outright dismiss it anytime it conflicts with our own personal preferences and wants? My point is simply that many people call themselves “Christians” while not truly being a follower of Christ. It is interesting to note in the Bible that Jesus never once referred to His followers as “Christians.” The title Christian did not begin until Acts 11 in the city of Antioch when the pagan population looked at those who had been profoundly changed by the resurrected Christ. Having seen the evidence of a changed life by Jesus, they looked at His followers and called them “Christians.” The title, however, was so rare in those days that it is only used three times in the entire Bible. On the other hand, the term that is most used to describe those who believe in Jesus and follow Him as Lord is “disciple.” In fact, this simple title is used over 270 times in the New Testament to refer to those who are truly devoted to following Jesus. This is the focus of our sermon series and of our message today.

Show Text

Last week we saw that Jesus’ call to be disciples is a **relational** call. It is not merely about content to be memorized, a code of conduct to be accepted, or a class to join. The call to discipleship is first and foremost about a personal relationship with Jesus. We next saw that this call is **transformational**. The call to follow Jesus is one that will lead to radical change in our lives where He molds us and shapes us to be who He wants us to be. We saw that it is also **purposeful**, meaning that we now have been given a new purpose, which is to glorify the Lord by making disciples. And finally we saw that this call is **communal**, that we are following Him together in community with other followers of Christ. These four core components will be evident once again in our text today and throughout most of our series.

It is important for us to understand that following Jesus as a disciple is a process. Some may not like the thought of Jesus “coaching,” but what I am trying to explain is that following Jesus and being transformed by Him is a process, but He is the One who leads and directs every step along the way. Much like a coach will do, He comes alongside His followers to lead them, teach them, model for them, challenge them, and push them further because He knows He has more for them than they can likely even see in themselves. It was this process that had brought them to this

specific moment, and as we will see in a moment, it was another process that would take them further. At this point in time, Peter and the others have already met Jesus and have believed in who He is. John 1 records the story of Andrew learning about Jesus and then going and telling his brother Simon, whom Jesus called “Peter.” In other words, they have already trusted in Jesus, and on that foundation, Matthew 4 records the next encounter when Peter and Andrew were casting their nets into the sea. It was very common on the Sea of Galilee to fish in the shallow water during the day. Being close to the shore, Jesus simply called out to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They didn’t know at the moment all that this entailed, but they did believe in who Jesus was, and they welcomed His invitation, immediately leaving their nets to follow Him. Matthew 4 and Mark 1 record the fact that they went with Jesus throughout Galilee as He was proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom and began to heal many people. In fact, in Luke 4, just prior to our text Jesus went to Simon’s house and healed his mother-in-law. As this was all happening, news about Him was spreading everywhere and people were coming to Him to determine for themselves who Jesus really was. While all of this was wonderful and good, there were still things about Jesus that the disciples had yet to learn. There were also still things in their own life that they had not yet let go of. Jesus shows up on the scene in Luke 5 as Peter and Andrew and their partners James and John have all been working diligently and fishing through the night. Jesus, knowing that there was more to accomplish and more to do in their lives and through their lives than they could see in the moment, intentionally went to where they were and called them to further relationship. Step by step, He was leading them to where He wanted them to be.

I. The Disciple’s Call (vs. 1-4)

As I look at this text I am reminded once again that God is always doing more than we see or know at any given moment. There is far more that He wants to do in us, through us, and even for us than we can imagine. It is easy for us, though, to read these verses and get caught up in what is happening in the crowd. With all the people being healed, it is not surprising that people are beginning to press around Jesus to listen to what He is saying. As Jesus is there by the Lake of Gennesaret, the crowd begins to press against Him, and He knows that He needs some space. It seems coincidental that one of the boats there belongs to Peter, but there are no coincidences with God. This was all by God’s divine, intentional plan. Though Peter was now believing in Jesus and following Jesus as a disciple, there was still more that God wanted to do. Already having a relationship with Peter, Jesus got into his boat. This simple step is important because it is a reminder to us that relationship with Jesus always begins with Him. He got in Peter’s boat and called for him. This may sound simple, but the implication is that Peter was on the shore, and now Jesus is calling him closer for a purpose that Peter didn’t yet fully understand. The Lord’s call is always a call to come close. It was Jesus who invites us all, saying, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,” **Matthew 11:28**. This could certainly describe Peter in the moment. Jesus took the initiative and called Peter to come close. In other words, it didn’t begin with the disciple but with the Lord. He is the one who drew Peter, He is the one who called Peter to follow, and now He is the one personally bringing him to His side to lead him further. Many think of Jesus feeding the multitude and astounding the crowds, but in this moment Jesus was more intent on calling the one than lingering with the crowd. Now that Jesus calls Peter close, He takes two strategic steps:

A. The Invitation of the Lord (vs. 3a)

It is important to note that Jesus didn't rebuke Peter and the others for fishing. This was their livelihood and how they provided for their family. Their previous leaving to follow Him in Matthew 4 appears to be a temporary leaving. They apparently returned here to catch fish. Perhaps they were getting food for their families. Perhaps, like Paul who occasionally made tents, this was simply their means of provision. This was all that they had professionally known, but there was more that the Lord wanted them to know. And, most importantly, there was more that He wanted to do through them. So, with patience and persistence, Jesus took the initiative to invite them to further relationship. When Jesus got into Simon Peter's boat, He didn't begin with a strong demand. He made a personal request, "Simon Peter, will you put the boat out a little ways from the land?" What would you do in that moment if you were Peter? The text tells us that he had already gotten out of his boat and he was somewhere nearby on the shore mending his nets. He has worked all night and is likely exhausted. Not only is he exhausted, he is completing his final task before heading home for the day. There is no doubt that he is ready to close up shop and get some rest. He had his plans made in his mind, but Jesus now asked him for a small push in the boat. Those who have been to the Sea of Galilee tell us that the still waters there act as a sounding board or a loudspeaker. In other words, the still waters pick up a speaker's voice and throw it up on the beach so that everyone can hear what is being said, even when it's spoken in a conversational tone. Peter knew why Jesus requested this, but didn't know further what the Lord had in store. Peter understood that Jesus wanted to use his boat as a platform or pulpit to teach the multitude, but he had no idea how the Lord would use this platform to teach him. The whole opportunity at hand was brought by a simple invitation, "Will you go out a little from the land?" It is here that we must recognize that when the Lord calls us to do something or asks us to participate in something, it is not merely about **what** He is asking us to do, but about His invitation for us to draw closer to Him. In the moment all Peter heard was the request, but this request was actually a personal invitation for him to know the Lord deeper than he had known before.

B. The Instruction of the Lord (vs. 4)

Luke gives us no further detail of what Jesus said to the crowd. We don't know if it was a short sermon or a long sermon because the emphasis immediately shifts to what Jesus directly said to Peter. In His first statement, He asked something of Peter, but now that Peter has responded and is sitting closer to Jesus, Jesus gives a word of direct instruction, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Can you imagine the scene with me? This isn't what Peter had signed up for. It was clear that when Jesus asked He was going to use the boat as a platform, but now this? Didn't Jesus know that Peter already had plans? Up to this point, Peter has been hospitable and compliant with Jesus' request. After all, it wasn't a bad deal at all. He was still somewhat in control of the situation. Perhaps at Jesus' first request he reasoned, "Well, this isn't what I had planned, but at least I get to sit back and relax and listen to Jesus for a little while. He only asked to go into the shallow water close to the shore, so this shouldn't take too long. Surely the people won't stay here all day long either. They'll eventually go back home, and Jesus will go on His way, and besides, it's my boat. I can determine when the day is over and get back to what I was doing so I can get home." Peter apparently didn't have a difficult time accepting Jesus' invitation so long as he still thought he had a measure of comfort and control. Isn't this like us still today? We are willing to say "yes" to Jesus so long as we still have a measure of comfort. We are willing to follow Jesus so long as we still have control. Many are content to follow Jesus as long as they are in control, but Jesus immediately shows

us that our call to follow Him is never about our comforts or control but about His will in our lives. God wants to do in us, through us, and for us things that will never be accomplished if we stay at ease in the shallow waters of life.

Jesus' personal word of instruction for Peter demonstrates a process that He is taking to call Peter out of his comfort zone and to a deeper place of understanding, relationship, and devotion. Do you see the process of Jesus' call? 1) Put out a little into the shallow waters, 2) Go out into the deep, and then 3) Let down your nets. Step by step, Jesus was leading him to a place of deeper relationship, and He does the same in our lives today. **Alistair Begg** said it well, "The callings of God never leave you where they find you." Henry Blackaby reminds us that God is still speaking through His Word, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and even through circumstances. There are many of us today that God is speaking to as He is calling us to put out into the deep. We've been hanging out in the comfortable, shallow waters for far too long. In the shallow waters we often become complacent and buy in to the illusion that we are in control of our situation, but God is calling us to a deeper walk with Him. If you have never trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior, then today that is your first step. Come to Jesus and trust in Him as Lord. For all who have already trusted in Christ as Lord, do you hear His voice? Do you sense His call to go deeper with Him? Is His Word prompting you further? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you that now is the time? Is the Church encouraging you and showing you opportunities to grow? Are you seeing in your circumstance that it's not just a storm, but a vehicle through which Jesus is inviting you closer? Peter did not know all that was to come from this simple invitation and specific instruction, but Jesus knew exactly where this would take him if he was willing to obey.

II. The Disciple's Crossroad (vs. 5)

There was absolutely nothing difficult about what Jesus instructed Peter to do. He was a fisherman by trade and had spent countless hours, days, and even years, on this same body of water fishing. He was familiar with every aspect of it. In other words, the instruction to go out into the deep water and let down his nets for a catch was not very demanding. However, that does not mean it was easy. The challenge with following Jesus' instruction in this moment was not in the difficulty of the task but in the difficulty of trusting Jesus. It has often been said that the problem of the heart is the heart of the problem. Like a master physician knowing exactly where to work, Jesus touched on this strategic, sensitive area of Peter's life. He has spent the entire night fishing and every time he has drawn the nets in, they have been completely empty. He likely was defeated and discouraged and just wanted to go home, and now Jesus is instructing him to do something that doesn't make sense.

It is here that Peter comes face to face with the crossroads of discipleship. The crossroads is found when we come to the place of realization that we must go His way or our way, but we can't do both. This crossroads reveals a major struggle in our own self-will. When we are at this place, we wrestle with these questions – "Will we do what we want, or what God wants? Will we do what we think, or will we trust what God says? Will we walk by sight, or will we walk by faith? Will we live according to our comforts, or His commands?" We cannot stay where we are and go with God at the same time. We will either obey Him and follow Him, or we will choose our own path. It is a problem of the will, and we see that in Peter's response, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing..."

We see this struggle plainly through Peter's hesitation and reluctance. It is quite a contradiction to call Jesus "Master" and then reason why you shouldn't do what He has called you to do. There are many people who call Jesus "Lord" but don't actually do what He says, but their actions actually prove that He is actually not their Lord. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:20-21**, "So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." In other words, the truth of our claims is seen in our obedience to Jesus. Peter has been given a direct instruction from the Lord, and he is struggling with it. If we're honest about it, we can likely all relate on some level. The callings of Christ always demand that we live by faith. What Jesus was calling Peter to do seemed very strange and made little sense at all. Think of it for a moment. Jesus stepped into Peter's boat and gave instructions on how and where he was to fish. Can you imagine the logical problems? How could Jesus possibly know the ins and outs of fishing or the location of fish? He was a carpenter, and humanly speaking didn't have any experience on these waters. ****ILL:** Let me illustrate that. We have several mechanics in our church. Could you imagine me showing up to one of the shops and giving them instructions on what kind of tool to use for specific maintenance jobs? They would look at me like I was crazy and say, "Pastor, you stick to preaching and let us fix the cars." Could you imagine if I showed up in your kitchen tonight when the dinner was being prepared and I started making recommendations of which spices you should include? You would think I was crazy because you probably know that I am not a chef. I am no expert in those things, so it wouldn't make sense to follow my instruction. In fact, you would probably say, "Pastor, get out." The whole thing seemed strange, but it defied human experience and logic. Everyone knew that on the Sea of Galilee during the day you caught fish in the shallow water, but Jesus was instructing the exact opposite. The point is simply that everything within Peter was likely leading him to reject Jesus' command. Physically he was tired and hungry, professionally he was discouraged and defeated with nothing to show for his efforts, emotionally he was worn out and just ready to get home, and mentally nothing about this situation made logical sense. But spiritually, there was something stirring within him. After all, this was Jesus. This was the One whom he had already believed and had begun to follow. This was the One who was already performing miracles and accomplishing what was humanly impossible. This was the One who had invited him to follow Him and promised to transform him. Peter, in this moment, had to decide - would he go with his wants, or would he follow the Lord's will?

This is exactly where many of us are today. We are at a crossroads. We can go forward with the Lord, or we can go our own way. Sadly, there are many in the Church today who are wishy-washy, here and there, because we have yet to determine who or what we are truly living for. Many claim to believe in Jesus, many claim to follow Him, but when the rubber meets the road, when His will contradicts our own, when His desire isn't easy, when His instruction doesn't make sense or we deem it to be too costly, we then come face to face with the problem. Who will we follow? Peter could have said, "I didn't sign up for that. I don't have time for that. I don't like that. This doesn't make sense to me." Peter could have said many things and made up many excuses, but Peter in this moment did something profound. He responded, "But, I will do as You say and let down the nets." Peter was modeling faith for us. **Warren Wiersbe** defines it: "Faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of the circumstances or consequences." He did not fully understand every aspect of the situation. He didn't have faith in the task itself, but in the Person calling him. He said, "Because You have said it Lord, I will have faith and obey." **Hebrews 11:1, 6** once again reminds

us, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen...And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Faith is not merely an emotional feeling, nor is it content that is memorized. Faith is a conviction that is evidenced through action. Peter is modeling “Because-You-Said-So Obedience.” ****ILL:** Every parent has probably faced the time when they give their child instruction and the kid asks, “Why?” As a father, I usually try to take time to explain the “why,” but there are some situations where that is not necessarily possible, and there may even be times when I explain but it is still not clearly understood. When that happens, I may look at my children and ask, “Do you trust me? Do you see that I have your best interest at heart? Do you trust that I know what I’m doing?” In those moments, their actions are directly related to their trust in me. Similarly, Peter showed through his commitment and conduct that he truly trusted the Lord.

III. The Disciple’s Conviction (vs. 8-10a)

Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that God rewards those who seek Him. This does not mean that every reward will come this side of heaven, but God in His grace does often allow blessings in our lives. The point of these blessings is not merely for our comforts and conveniences, but to deepen our conviction and discover ways to bless others. Peter didn’t know what was about to occur, he just knew that the Lord was worth trusting and obeying. As soon as he lowered the nets, his experienced hands holding the line indicated that something amazing was happening. He could instantly tell that not only had he caught something, but this was a huge catch of fish. There were so many fish in the net that as they began to lift it up, the nets began to break. He quickly called for James and John to come help them as quickly as possible. Both boats ended up being so full of fish that the boats were now so heavy that water began to come in. The sadness and exhaustion from the night of disappointment was instantly replaced with celebration and excitement from the extraordinary catch of fish. I’m sure the guys were shouting and high-fiving because they had never seen such a thing before, but as all the celebration was taking place, all Peter could think about was Jesus. Peter understood that a miracle had taken place right here in front of him. How was it humanly possible for Jesus, a non-fisherman, to know exactly where to cast the nets? Peter and his group had fished all night and caught nothing, and they knew those waters as well as anyone. Now, in just one word from Jesus, a large school of fish has miraculously appeared right beside his boat at the exact time. Peter had never before gotten such a catch of fish that would break his nets or weigh down the boats, but at the word of Jesus, all of this transpired. He had two primary convictions:

A. He Acknowledges Jesus as Lord

The word for “Lord” is not uncommon. It means “one who rules, one with authority, one who has control.” There are times in Scripture that someone would call Jesus “Lord” as a sign of respect and honor, but it is interesting to note that after the resurrection when people would refer to Jesus as “Lord,” they were acknowledging and declaring His deity. In other words, to call Jesus “Lord” was to accept Him as God. This is why Thomas said in **John 20:28**, “My Lord and my God.” To say that Jesus is “Lord” means that He is God and has all authority in heaven and on earth. Years later, Peter was certainly at this conviction. In **Acts 10:34-36** Peter was at the home of Cornelius explaining the truth of Jesus. Listen to his words, “Opening his mouth, Peter said: ‘I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word

which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all).’ ” In other words, Peter clearly knew that Jesus is Lord of all, and he proclaimed it to everyone he could. Where did that conviction begin in Peter’s life? How had he come to that conviction? That all began here in Luke 5. Peter in this moment acknowledges that Jesus is Lord and ruler, which leads him to a second conviction.

B. He Admits His Sin

Immediately upon acknowledging Jesus’ Lordship, Peter also admitted his own sin. He says clearly, “For I am a sinful man.” It sounds odd, doesn’t it? Who said anything about sin? Jesus had not rebuked or confronted his sin at all. Yet, having experienced the presence of God, he is now suddenly aware of his own unworthiness. Peter’s statement is not suggesting that he wanted nothing to do with Jesus, but rather suggesting he was unworthy of Jesus having anything to do with him. Peter was fully aware of the doubts that had been in his mind. He was fully aware of the fears that had prevented him from truly leaving everything behind to follow Jesus. Peter was fully aware of his own inadequacies and insufficiencies that left him empty-handed just hours earlier. Knowing now that he was in the presence of holiness, his humanity stood out like a sore thumb. Courageous, successful, strong, wealthy, proud, and independent Simon Peter is now broken before the Lord. His independence and self-will are now gone. His selfish pursuits and plans are all laid aside as he throws himself at the Savior’s feet, fully surrendered to the Lord. He is not worried about appearances. He is not worried about being right. He is entirely caught up in the presence of the Lord, and he humbles himself before Him.

The same is required of us today as well. We cannot follow Jesus fully without acknowledging Him as Lord and admitting our sin and need for Him. In a crowd this size, I can’t help but wonder who might be here today and has never taken these steps. Have you personally trusted in Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? Have you acknowledged His Lordship in your life and admitted your sin and need for Him? Friend, if you have never taken this step, I invite you to do so today. There are many who go to church and commit to all sorts of outward actions in hopes of bringing the changes in their life they desire, but true salvation does not begin with our efforts or works but with God’s grace poured out in our life through faith. Many people would hear Jesus’ teachings and watch His miracles, many who would follow Him to an extent, but in many cases, the length of their following Jesus was limited because they never truly followed Him as Lord. Like a bandwagon, fair-weathered fan who signs up when things are going well, many follow Jesus the same way. But if you do not truly follow Him as Lord, your lack of authentic relationship will eventually be exposed. The change that you desire in life is not found by trying harder, being more consistent at checking off the boxes, going to church more, or any other self-made thing. The change that you need is to submit to Jesus as Lord. It is this trust in Jesus that led to the final observation:

IV. The Disciple’s Commitment (vs. 10b)

They were all amazed at the catch of fish, but as Peter acknowledged Jesus as Lord and admitted his own sinfulness, Jesus then gave a word of peace and purpose. He said, “Do not fear...” We aren’t told what fears were present. Maybe he feared his inabilities and was walking in insecurity. Maybe he feared how he would provide for his family if he was fully following Jesus. Perhaps he feared a lack of control with all the uncertainties of the future. Perhaps he was simply fearful of the Lord’s presence, knowing that Jesus is God and that he himself was unworthy. Regardless of

the fears in Peter's heart and mind, Jesus spoke through all that with a similar word of instruction. His last instruction had turned out pretty good. Surely Jesus could be trusted with this as well. "Fear not, from now on you will be catching men." This expression "from now on" indicates a change that is taking place. There is a turning point that is taking place as Jesus further equips him for catching men. From this point forward there would be a total and complete change within Peter's life.

I love how Peter and the others responded. They didn't ask questions. They didn't debate or delay. They focused on Jesus as Lord. They didn't know all that was to come, but they knew that He was with them and that their lives would never be the same. Remember, up to this point Peter's life was focused on catching fish from the sea, but now that he'd experienced the power and presence of Jesus, he would never be the same. From now on, he would be focused on catching men for Jesus. Matthew 4 tells us that Peter and Andrew left their nets to follow Jesus. Matthew 4 tells us also that James and John left their boat and their father to follow Jesus. Now in this moment of surrender, Luke explains something very important. As soon as they brought their boats to land, at this point, these disciples left "everything" and followed Jesus. The boats, the nets, even the great catch of fish - they were all left behind because Jesus was Lord of their lives. From this point on, their lives would be lived with Him and for Him. From this point forward they were "all in" with Jesus, never to turn back or go another way. They were so devoted to Jesus that they followed Him completely, no matter the cost.

What about you today? Are you fully surrendered to Jesus? Is there something that God is calling you to leave behind as you follow Him? In what ways is He calling you to deeper and closer relationship? Is there something He is leading you to do that is testing your faith? I pray that we will have faith and follow the example of Peter as we surrender our all to Jesus, and that from now on our lives will be changed by His presence with us!