

Armagh Baptist Church
Sunday 17th May 2009 – 7:00pm
“Are you Following Jesus?” John 1:35-51

Introduction

This is now our third study in John’s Gospel.

On the first Sunday night in May we were looking at John 1:1-18

- ‘In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...’ (v.1)
- ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory...’ (v.14)
- ‘To as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become Children of God – to as many as believed in His name.’

Then last Sunday we were looking at John the Baptist in vs.19-34

What did John the Baptist think of Jesus?

- ‘He’s greater than me...’ (v.27)
- ‘He’s the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’ (v.29)
- ‘He’s the Son of God.’ (v.34)

So we come to tonight’s passage – John 1:35-51

Here John the Baptist drifts off into the wings, and Jesus comes to take centre stage. Here Jesus comes to the forefront of the picture, while John is quite happy to move into the background.

When we get to John 3:30 we will hear John the Baptist saying, ‘*He must increase, I must decrease.*’ And that’s exactly what begins to happen here.

John the Baptist is quite happy for the spotlight to be taken off him, and for it to focus very definitely on the Lord Jesus Christ from here on in. So from v.35 onwards we see Jesus gaining his first 5 disciples or followers.

Discipleship is a key theme running through the Gospels of the New Testament. What does discipleship mean? Who or what is a disciple?

Well a disciple is simply a follower, a student, a pupil, an apprentice of someone else. A disciple is one who is constantly learning from another’s teachings and their example. Discipleship is on-the-job-training! It was a common sight in Jesus’ day for Jewish Rabbis or teachers to have their own group of disciples around them. Even to this day in Eastern religions you would hear talk of someone being a disciple of the Dali Lama, for example. So to be a disciple of Jesus, or a disciple of John the Baptist, was not a strange idea for the times they were living in.

At the end of Matthew's Gospel in Matt 28:19-20 we have what is known as the Great Commission of Christ. There Jesus commands the remaining 11 disciples to...

*'Go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*

Although it has often been preached that Jesus commands us to 'Go!' from these verses, there is in fact only one command in the Great Commission, and that is to *'make disciples!'* That is the only verb in the imperative mood, in the command form, in the whole of the Great Commission.

The task of making disciples has got to do with **teaching doctrine**, but it has also got to do with **setting an example** to those who are following you. It's not either or, it's both and. We have got to practice what we preach; we have got to **live** our message as well as **preach** our message; we have got to lead by example, as well as just fill minds with facts. So we've got to **model** what it means to be a follower of Jesus, as well as just talk about it!

I said when I was inducted to this church just two weeks ago, that I wanted to emphasize discipleship in every area of church life, and I mean that. It's just as important for a Sunday School teacher, Bible Class leader, Youth Leader, Children's meeting helper, Bible study speaker, elder, deacon, pastor to be modeling discipleship as it is for each one of us to be teaching the Bible, or preaching the Gospel to those under our care. Discipleship must be lived and modeled as well as taught. We must lead by example.

So here in the very first chapter of John's Gospel we find Jesus calling his first disciples. They are going to have the privilege of following Him for the next 3 years, of hearing him teach and preach, of seeing him touch people's lives in all kinds of ways, of watching him live and breathe what it means to be in relationship with God, and to know God as your Father!

What a privilege they were about to have.

In these verses we see 5 men begin to follow Jesus, so let's take a look at these **Five Followers** tonight.

I want to draw your attention to two verses which contain Jesus' own words:

John 1:43 – *'Follow me!'*

John 1:39 – ‘Come and see [for yourself]’

In the first of those two verses Jesus is calling Philip to follow him. Jesus is still calling each one of us to follow him today.

So are you following Jesus?

Have you ever come to Jesus?

Have you ever trusted Jesus as your own and personal Saviour?

You can come to church, and be religious, but if you have never met Jesus for yourself, if you’ve never experienced Jesus for yourself, then you haven’t even begun to follow Him.

Jesus is saying to you tonight: ‘Follow Me!’

He is saying, ‘Come to Me, and see for yourself what I am like!’

Don’t write Christianity or the Church off until you have tried Christ for yourself, because sadly there is all the difference in the world between Christianity as a religion, Church as an Institution, and Christ Himself! Knowing Christ personally as your Saviour is a different thing altogether.

If you do accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you will never be disappointed by Him.

So let’s look at Jesus first Five Followers tonight:

1&2. Two Disciples of John the Baptist go off to follow Jesus (v.37)

Who were they?

Andrew (v.40) and John – anywhere in this Gospel that you find an unnamed disciple it is usually the writer – John himself.

This is the disciple who lay back against Jesus as they reclined at the Last Supper (See John 21:20,24). So, some think that Andrew’s companion here was John, the Gospel writer.

Why did they decide to follow Jesus?

(i) **They heard John the Baptist’s message (v.36, 40)**

‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’

They were already following John the Baptist, but he couldn’t take away their sins – no man could!

No man could, no priest could, no rabbi could... but Jesus could!

That’s what made the difference – and that’s why they followed Jesus.

That’s why we should follow Jesus today too.

‘Who else can we go to? He alone has the words of eternal life’

(See John 6:66-69) - Jesus **alone** can take away our sins.

- (ii) They decided to act upon what they had heard (v.37)**
They not only heard it
They believed what they heard
And they acted upon it too!
Have you?

Were you here last Sunday night when I preached on John
1:29?

'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'
Have you done anything about it since?
Did you believe it?
Have you acted upon it?

(iii) They decided to follow Jesus (v.37)

If you believe that Jesus can take away your sins,
That He died on the cross for your sins, then it's time you did something
about it. Have you committed your life to the Lord yet?
Have you asked Him to take away your sins?
Have you begun to follow Him?
Why not begin to follow Jesus tonight?

So Andrew and John:

- (i) heard the message,
 - (ii) they acted up on it, and
 - (iii) They began to follow Jesus.
- (cf James 1:22-25 – not hearers only, but doers!)

But then we read a lovely thing in v.41:

*'The first thing Andrew did (now he was saved)
was to go and find his own brother' and in
v.42 'He brought him to Jesus!'*

Andrew was just so full of enthusiasm and love for his new found Lord
and Saviour that, top priority in his mind, was to see his family saved
too!

If you're saved, I hope you don't take the attitude, 'I'm alright, Jack!' I
hope you have a concern to see others saved too – whether that would
be other people in your family, or connected to this church in some way,
or indeed other people out there in this whole surrounding city and
countryside.

What about your brother - or your sister - Are they saved?
What about your mother – or your father – maybe getting on in life – are
they saved?

What about your children coming up after you – are they saved?

All Andrew said in v.41 was, *'I have found Christ!'* A short simple testimony.

Have you even told your loved ones that much?

'I've found Christ, I've become a Christian, I'm saved!'

Every time we meet Andrew in the pages of the New Testament, he's busy introducing others to Jesus:

e.g. The Boy with 5 loaves and 2 fish – (John 6:8-9)

e.g. The Greeks who said, 'Sirs, we would like to see Jesus (Jn12:20-22).

Are you as concerned to introduce others to Jesus?

N.B. You can't introduce someone to somebody you don't know yourself.

But just look who Andrew brought to Christ here in John 1:

3. Simon Peter

This man became the Apostle Peter - the one we were hearing this morning preaching on the Day of Pentecost and seeing 3000 people getting saved!

Andrew brought the **ones and twos** to Christ.

Peter was used by God to bring **thousands** to Christ.

But if Andrew hadn't opened his mouth and pointed Peter to the Lord, what a different story that would have made?!

If my older brother David, hadn't told me how to get saved on that night away back on 1st Jan 1974, would I be here tonight preaching to you? I don't know, but I'm very grateful that he did point me to Christ!

In v.42 Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter.

Simon = unstable – e.g. how he denied Christ to the slave-girl.

Peter = rock – e.g. his boldness to preach at Pentecost.

When we get saved, our names are changed:

From sinner (Rom 3:23) to saint (1 Cor 1:2)

From child of the devil (Jn 8:44) to child of God (Jn 1:12)

We are called Christians – lit. those who belong to Christ.

When we get saved, our nature is changed too (2 Cor 5:17):

'If any man be in Christ he is a new creation,

old things are passed away, all things have become new.'

Are you a child of God yet?
Have you known this change yet?

4. The next man we meet is Philip:

(i) **Jesus went to Galilee to look for Philip (v.43)**

(ii) **Notice Philip's background (v.44)**

From Bethsaida – friends of Simon and Andrew.

This was possibly the link for Jesus to meet with Philip – via his friends.

(iii) **Philip's testimony (v.45) – to Nathaniel.**

V.45 is Philip's testimony – it is simple, factual and enthusiastic!

Philip found Nathaniel and said, '*Come and see for yourself!*' (v.46)

5. And finally, Nathaniel

(v.46) – Nathaniel was prejudiced towards Nazareth – a stumbling block!

(v.48) – He was surprised that Jesus knew all about him – he got a shock!

(v.49) – But he believed who Jesus was – '*You are the Son of God!*'

Conclusion

As Jesus said to each of these men then, Jesus says 2 things to you now:

'Come and see!' – for yourself...

'Follow Me!' – let me lead you from tonight on...

(v.50) – '*You shall see greater things than these...*'

(v.51) – '*You shall see heaven opened...*'

Begin to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

Truly commit yourself to Christ as Saviour and Lord of your life.

And it will only be the beginning of your walk with God –

- You will see greater things than these in the days to

- come.
- You will one day see heaven itself opened to welcome you home!

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