Follow Jesus

Matthew 4:18-22 Kimby Young

Matthew 9:9-13 February 18 2024

Luke 9:57-62

Imagine yourself going about your ordinary day. Maybe you are at your desk at work or school. Maybe you are chasing children or grandchildren. Maybe you are operating a machine, or driving, or laboring physically. Maybe you are creating something or figuring something out or talking to a customer. Maybe you are retired which means you could be doing any number of jobs because we all know retirees are busier than anybody. Anyway, whatever you do, imagine yourself doing that - going through your ordinary day. Like the disciples in today’s gospel lessons. Several are fishing. One is sitting at the tax collection office – very unpopular government work, but good money making. One seems to be plowing. Another helping his father. Actually several seem to be in the family business, including all of the fishermen in the first lesson. Anyway, imagine yourself doing what you do. Then along comes this stranger who says follow me. Maybe they had heard about Jesus before; maybe they had an idea what they might be getting into. But maybe not. Jesus says Follow me. Drop everything and follow me. And the real wonder of it all is that several of them do just that. They drop everything. They leave their jobs, their families, their responsibilities, their tasks – they drop everything and follow Jesus.

It's a fascinating idea. I don’t know that I could do that. As most of you know, I like to plan everything ahead. I’m working on worship ideas for after Easter. Actually I’m already planning for Christmas. I have a baby grand nephew coming in July and I’m looking forward to his graduation. Maybe not, but you get the idea. I like to plan ahead. I can deal with the spur of the moment, but I prefer to organize ahead of time. So when Jesus says “Follow me” and all these disciples drop what they are doing, I am very impressed. They are courageous and bold. I confess I might be more like the ones in the reading from Luke who say, “but wait let me say goodbye to everyone and finish all my responsibilities at home.” Even the guy who said, let me bury my father – it is believed the father wasn’t even sick, the man was saying, let me finish all my other responsibilities. It’s not that I’m reluctant to follow Jesus. It’s not that I think anything else is more important. It’s that I want to know where I’m going before I go, and the life of the disciples didn’t look much like that. They followed. Wherever Jesus led. They followed. Even to the cross.

I understand. It’s all about trust. Trust God. Follow Jesus. Know that God has a plan. Then plunge forward wherever God leads. Do whatever God places before you. Some of you are better at that than others of us. Not that I’m a bad disciple. I try to do what I believe God wills. In fact, I am quite confident that my love of scheduling and planning is a gift from God to be used for God’s purposes. God likes it when I think about the future. Just as God likes it whenever you do whatever it is you are good at, whatever it is you love doing.

That’s really the point of discipleship. Use your gifts. Do whatever you do for Jesus. Do your best at whatever you do, and give that effort to God. Use your gifts to point other people toward God, to show people God’s love and God’s grace, to work for God’s purpose of justice and mercy and peace. Use the interests and abilities and opportunities and skills that God has given you, in order to follow Jesus in the way of love. Do what you do for Jesus. Trust God and move forward in faith.

The question for today, and for this entire season of Lent, is where is God calling us to follow today. In the story, Jesus calls the disciples saying, “I will make you fish for people.” I will make you bring people in for God. Use the skills you already have to bring people to God, to show people God’s love. And Jesus says, I will make you able to do that. Anything you need to do, God will make you able. Like the disciples, be bold and courageous, step out in faith and follow Jesus, live God’s love in the world.

What do you think that means in your life?

What do you think that means for our church?

To follow Jesus. To be courageous disciples. To share God’s love in the world.

What do you think that means?

Here’s an idea for Lent, as we try to follow Jesus. Take a walk, literally. Take a walk in your ordinary life, in your ordinary neighborhood, in your ordinary day. Take a walk and look for Jesus. Look for places where you can show God’s love. Look for people who might need God’s presence – and if you are brave and bold like those first disciples – be Jesus for that person and extend God’s love. Every day, look around you to see where Jesus might be leading, to imagine where God might be calling you. And follow Jesus in the way of love.

In the scripture, Peter, Andrew, James, John, Matthew, all the disciples – were just going about their ordinary days, their routine jobs, their simple lives. And God used them to change the world forever. Now Jesus is walking in to your ordinary day, your ordinary life, your ordinary family, and saying, “Come. Come, follow me.” Following Jesus is about being the presence of Christ, the love of God in flesh and blood for each person we encounter. Imagine. Remember.

Jesus is right here, right now, sitting right beside you. Listen. Perhaps Jesus leans in toward you and calls, “Follow me.” Whispers. “Follow me.” Beloved Disciples, children of God. Listen. Listen carefully and prayerfully. Listen and respond.

Yes Lord, I will follow. We will follow. Help us to follow. Yes, Lord. Wherever you lead us, we will follow. Wherever you send us, we will go. Jesus says, “Follow me.” Follow me.