Chosen to Follow

Mark 1:16-20 Kimby Young

1 Peter 2:9-10 September 8, 2024

Romans 8:28-30; 37-39

We are chosen disciples of Jesus called to follow Jesus Christ wherever Jesus leads us. Usually that leading is into concrete service using our natural gifts and circumstances - Living a life of loving others. This is called discipleship. Discipleship is a never-ending process of growth and fulfillment. You never graduate from Christianity. We should always continue to learn and grow in faith. Always follow Jesus. That means we keep moving. Today, how are you chosen by God to grow and to serve?

A disciple is one who learns. Disciple comes from the same word as discipline – not as punishment but discipline as a pattern of learning. The old way of learning was to follow someone around - like an apprentice or an intern. Follow and imitate the master in order to learn what to do. Follow me, Jesus says. I will teach you how to love people. I will show you how to serve God. The first disciples did literally follow Jesus around from place to place learning. Today we follow the teachings and actions of Jesus outlined in the Bible. We have been chosen by God to follow, to learn, to grow in God’s grace. It is a lifetime of learning. How are you growing right now? How is your love for God expanding or reaching out into the world? If you need some help figuring it out, give me a call and we’ll talk. But I would suggest joining a class or a group, getting involved in a mission, offering your gifts or skills in teaching or music or caring or leadership. Join a pillar or committee. Look for ways to care and share. Look for ways to follow Jesus.

The point of the church is to try to help each other find ways of following Jesus and serving God. Of course you can do that outside of church. But almost everything we do in the church is intended to help us figure out what it means to follow Jesus. And there are a million different ways to share God’s love. Your challenge as disciples is to find your way – the way God calls you to serve.

Today is rally day. The point of rally day is to answer that call to discipleship, to commit again to following Jesus and serving God. We don’t make as big a deal of it as we used to. Rally Day used to mark the day we would rally back to Sunday School and promote students up a grade. Now we do that at various times throughout the year as programming and attendance shifts and turns. But today is still a good day to “rally” our faith. A rally – like a pep rally – is all about energy, excitement and hope for the future. It is a time to stir each other up. In the church Rally day is a time to be enthusiastic about our togetherness and intentional about our commitment as disciples of Jesus Christ. It might be a time to start something new. It is a time to remind ourselves to continue to grow and learn and listen and become, all that God calls us to be. So let’s get excited about Jesus. Let’s think about what it means to follow Jesus Christ in the way of love. Let’s rally for Jesus. Let’s cheer for God. Let’s go for faithfulness. Yay God!

As much as I joke – I am actually excited about church – this church – right now. I am excited by all the wonderful things you are doing – classes and choirs and mission and giving. Your deacons are working so hard to build fellowship and to care for members. Your elders are being so thoughtful and visionary, trying to discern God’s future for us. You volunteers just keep coming up with more and more ways to gather and care and give and share. We are trying to find ways to reach out into the community in care, to invite people to come worship and work and praise God with us. There is a sense of energy and urgency here at church - that God is calling us to something new. Something consistent with who we have always been. But something that will carry us into the future and bring people together here to serve God for another 150 years. There is joy in our serving. There is purpose in our gathering. There is love overflowing by the grace of God. That is discipleship. That is following Jesus.

God is calling you to faithfulness. Just like Peter and Andrew, James and John, Mary and Martha, and Paul and everyone else down thru history. Jesus is calling you. Right here. Right now. Christ is calling. May you be blessed to listen and to respond.

The struggle is How do we follow Jesus when we can’t quite see where Jesus is going?

The answer. One step at a time.

First step – listen. Listen for God’s voice.

How do we hear God’s voice over all the other loud voices or over our own selfish wishes? The answer is – take time. Be patient. Be persistent. Just keep asking and listening. And most of all focus on God. If you need help, join a group. If you need help, give me a call. Discipleship is about finding your own way of following. An apprentice may make a lot of mistakes. You just keep trying. You just keep asking the master for help. You just keep following Jesus.

Second step – don’t do it alone. Ask for help. Gather with others. Jesus didn’t call one disciple. Jesus called twelve at a time. Even in this passage Jesus called two by two. We **can** come to God and hear God alone. But we are better together. I’ve said it before. We are better together. Together with God. Together with other disciples. You are not alone. Even if you feel alone, you are not alone. Follow Jesus in community. That’s what the church is for.

Third step – hmmm. Maybe that’s the step we just can’t see, the one that I can’t define for you, the one that is different for every single person. But God will lead you as you trust God. The third step is all about trust, all about hope. It is knowing, believing – that God has a plan and a purpose for you and for us together. Trust God and step out in faith. Even blind faith. Because we know God is there to catch us. Jesus is here to lead us. The Holy Spirit is here to give us everything we need to serve God well and faithfully.

Our next step? Well that’s the very best step. Into the very hand of God. Thanks be to God.