

John 1:35-51

“Follow Me”

Imago Dei Church | 6/10/2018 | 2 Services

INTRODUCTION

(ILL) In one of the more ridiculous episodes of the TV show “The Office,” the regional manager (Michael) of a small paper company finds his world changing because of advances in technology, and he’s having a hard time keeping up. So in an effort to win back some clients with a “personal touch,” he goes out on some sales calls. While out trying to make the sales, he finds himself blindly following the technology he hates. When his GPS system in his car tells him to turn right, Michael insists on following its instructions, even though immediately to the right there is a lake. So Michael and his loyal sidekick Dwight dutifully plunge into the lake. Michael, of course, draws the only logical conclusion: technology is trying to kill him.

Who you follow matters. It always has and it always will.

And human beings are wired to follow. Everyone follows someone or something.

We follow people on **social media**;
we follow **fashion trends**;
we follow **sports teams**.

Even hipsters—those living outside of mainstream fashion and media interests—all look the same. Someone is setting their trends.

The question for us is not, “will you follow?” but “Whom will you follow?” And maybe connected to that, “Why will you follow them?”

The passage we’re looking at today is about following Jesus. Last week One showed us that John the Baptist came on the scene with an intense focus on pointing us to the main character of the story—Jesus.

This week we see **5 men come into contact with this Jesus** and their lives are changed forever.

The story is, on one level, pretty straightforward:

John the Baptist points his followers to Jesus.

They leave John and follow Jesus.

One (**Andrew**) goes to get his brother (**Peter**), who also follows.

They all go find another guy (**Philip**), who follows and then goes to recruit another (**Nathanael**).

In this basic overview we can already see the big idea I have for you this AM.

Main Idea: Jesus invites us to know, follow, and share him.

1) KNOW HIM AND BE KNOWN**(1:35-36, 47-51)**

The first thing that jumps out at us about these men is that **knowing him truly seems to be at the core of their decision to follow Jesus.**

Over and over again in this text, John is trying to highlight that **the invitation to follow Jesus is primarily about who Jesus is.**

It's as if he's putting a big neon sign over Jesus' head that says, "Look at him!" He wants us to see Christ, and to see him for who he is.

We see this emphasis in the **concentration of names or identifications** of Jesus in this text.

He's dropping in these not-so-subtle hints that **what makes all the difference** to these men as their lives are forever changed is that **they've found**—not just some **new life philosophy**; not some **new diet** (they haven't gone paleo!); not just some **new mindset or lifehack**—they've found *Jesus*.

No less than 7 times in these verses is Jesus given some kind of title or descriptor that John is using to show us that knowing Christ is what makes all the difference for these men.

(ILL) It's as if I were to come up to you and say, "Hey, I've met this great guy. I'd love for you to meet him. Big guy. Red suit. Black belt. Strange hat with a little white ball at the end...jolly...likes milk and cookies." Who'd I be talking about? And what would you do?
(Possibly do Tony or Donnie)

John drops in all these descriptors so that we know Jesus' identity is central to the narrative.

The first one is seen in verses 35-36.

[John 1:35-36](#)

[35] The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples,
[36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

In the verses leading up to this passage, John the Baptist is out in the wilderness pointing people to the "Lamb of God," and he continues that same work here in this text.

The scene opens with John now standing with some of his own followers when Jesus walks by. True to form, John points his followers to Jesus and identifies him:
"Check it out: the Lamb of God."

Now, it seems **unlikely that this is the first time they had heard** this. John's been telling people that his entire life's work is to point people to Jesus. So surely those who knew John and had decided to follow him were not just now for the first time hearing about Jesus.

But look what happens! Two of the ones following John left him and started to follow Jesus.

It's as though hearing again, for the 2nd, 3rd, 4th time that Jesus was the God-given lamb who would take away their sins fell on them in a particular way and they decided to drop everything and follow him.

(APP) This is a good word for many of you today. Some of you may be hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ preached for the first time today, and we're glad you're hear.

But many of you have heard this gospel message over and over, but have not believed. We're glad you're here too! But be aware, **the point of all of this is that you will see and know Jesus** for who he is.

He is the Lamb of God, meaning that his life was sacrificed to pay for your sin and my sin, so that every barrier that keeps us away from God could be removed and we could know God as Father.

Kids, high school students, college students, all the way up to our senior citizens—do you know Jesus? Have you really come to know him for who he is? John wants you to see, as though for the first time, who he really is.

So John begins this text by identifying Jesus, and he will continue to do so throughout the text. Jesus is also referred to as

Rabbi / teacher (38)

Messiah / Christ / Anointed One (41)

“Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote” (45)

Son of God (49)

King of Israel (49)

Son of Man (51)

The last three of these come in Jesus’ interaction with Nathanael (drop down to vv. 47-51).

John 1:47-51

[47] Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” [48] Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” [49] Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” [50] Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” [51] And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Nathanael is interesting because his own recognition of Jesus is coupled with Jesus knowing him!

Before Jesus and Nathanael even interact, Jesus can make pronouncements about his character. He has “no

deceit—not perfect, but honest. Not double-minded. He's going to tell it like it is.

John doesn't say Nathanael is humble! Notice that he doesn't correct Jesus! Instead, he marvels that Jesus knows him.

When Jesus shows him that not only does he know his character, but he knows where he ate breakfast(!), Nathaniel begins to worship.

Son of God
King of Israel

Each of these were **unmistakable messianic terms** for Nathanael. They were his recognition that Jesus is God's chosen servant, his rescuer, sent to complete God's mission in the world.

These are lofty titles. For Nathanael they almost certainly had **political overtones** and therefore would have been a sort of low-level treason.

And interestingly, just as Nathanael doesn't correct Jesus, **neither does Jesus correct Nathanael!**

Instead, Jesus simply marvels that all it took was a little omniscience to convince the former skeptic (remember, Nathanael's first reaction was to scoff at the idea that anything good could come out of Nazareth).

Jesus assures Nathanael and the other disciples—you ain't seen nothin yet! In verse 51 he tells them, **“You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”**

This is a clear reference to Genesis 28, where Jacob (later 'Israel') has a dream or vision in which he sees this very thing.

What Jesus is saying is, ‘Just as angels ascended and descended on a man when God began his work in the people of Israel, you’re going to see even more that will be similarly confirm the pronouncements you’ve made.’

Nathanael responded to the invitation to follow Jesus and received a double blessing: he **came to know the Savior**, and he **found himself truly known**.

This is the invitation for us today.

The good news of Jesus Christ is, in coming to Jesus for who he is, we find life and we find ourselves most loved and most cared for. We are truly known, and truly loved—in him.

For many of you, it might be that the scariest idea in the world to be truly known. You might be thinking that if anyone knew who you were, what you'd been through, what you've thought about or done—surely they'd be done with you.

Jesus is not scared off by your sin, your past, or your failures. He knows them all, and he still invites you to turn to him and know him truly.

This is the grace of the gospel. To know him truly, and to be known by him.

This is what being a Christian is all about. We all—Christians and non-Christians alike—tend to make Christianity about all kinds of other things.

We can make it about **moral performance** (being a good person, doing the right thing)

We can make it about **religious ritual** (did you go to church, have your quiet time, and avoid cussing?)

We can make it about **social activism**.

None of these quite get to the heart of the gospel.

The Christian life is not about performance, ritual, or activism. It's about knowing Christ truly, and being known by him fully.

This is what Jesus invites us to as disciples.

Secondly, Jesus invites us to...

2) FOLLOW HIM AND BE TRANSFORMED

(1:37-42)

John 1:37-42

[37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. [38] Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" [39] He said to them, "Come and you will

see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. [40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

I love how immediate, how matter-of-fact is the calling of the disciples. John's guys just drop everything and follow.

When Jesus sees them coming after him he turns around and asks simply, “**What are you seeking?**”

The question is simple enough, but rather than diving in with an awkward, “Uh, can we devote our lives to following after you?”—they simply ask, “Do you sleep?” “Yes.” “Cool cool cool. Where is that?”
(This is how I imagine all social interaction!)

Jesus' response encapsulates the invitation to all of us: “Come and you will see.”

In all of John's lofty language in John chapter 1, it seems a little strange that John records this mundane conversation.

It's as though he wants us to understand that this is a small example of a bigger picture, **an invitation not just to these two men but to all of us**: come and see.

Jesus invites the men to follow him, and they will.

Next, Peter is brought in. His brother Andrew was one of the two followers of John the Baptist, and Peter is brought to meet the man they can identify as the Messiah, the Christ, the promised Savior.

When he meets Peter, Jesus does a strange thing: he renames him! (ILL: [can you imagine doing that to someone?!](#))

What is Jesus doing here? – Well, Peter/Cephas means rock. This pronouncement is two-fold. On the one hand, it shows that following Jesus means a complete submission to Jesus' authority. He is, in a sense, remaking Peter by renaming him. He's doing what God did to so many in the OT when he changed their names.

And secondly, he's committing to do something to Peter. He's committing to transform him. He's not saying Peter IS NOW a rock and a pillar for Jesus' people. He's saying Peter WILL BE. He's saying, 'I'm going to make you into something you are not.'

When we follow Jesus, we're submitting ourselves to be transformed by him. We are committing to give our lives to the only one who is worthy of our devotion (because of who he is), the only one who is worthy of our trust (because he knows and loves us)—to make us into what we are not yet but one day will be.

Jesus invites us to follow him and be transformed. The two go hand in hand—they cannot be separated. There is only one kind of Christian. One who follows.

We cannot separate belief from following! We cannot separate following from being transformed!

And we cannot separate following from inviting others to follow.

Thirdly, Jesus invites us to...

3) SHARE HIM AND BE USED

(1:40-46)

John 1:40-46

[40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

[43] The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." [44] Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. [45] Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." [46] Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

It's an unmistakable theme of this passage that a natural and essential component of following Jesus is sharing with others the good thing we've found.

(ILL) Disciples are like a newly engaged woman who's showing off her ring. If they're not shoving their hands in people's faces, they're trying to make it as unmistakable as possible!

That's what happens here.

John the Baptist's disciples follow Jesus. In v.41, John (the writer) says the very first thing Andrew does is go tell his brother.

The very next day, they all go to find Philip.

Immediately after, Philip goes to find Nathanael.

Boom-boom-boom-boom. One right after the other.

And when they find them, what do they say? What was evangelism like for the first disciples?

"He brought him to Jesus" (42)

"We have found him!" (45)

"Come and see." (46)

Evangelism for the first disciples was the same as it is for us.

We aren't required to be the hero. We don't have to impress people with our learning and our insights. Our job is to (a) testify & (b) invite.

We testify to what we have found and experienced,
and we invite them to meet the same Jesus we have.

Christian, you may not be the world's greatest evangelist and that's fine. You may not have all the answers to all the theological questions in the world. That's okay.

Here's my encouragement to you. Take some time this week, get a pen and paper out, and simply write out the answer to this question: What have you found in Jesus?

After answering this, consider who you might invite to "come and see" the Jesus you have met.

CONCLUSION

Non-Christian in the room today, this is our hope for you. We have met Jesus. Jesus knows us for the broken, hurting, and rebellious people that we are. Yet he has loved us. He has invited us to know him truly as the one who can save us from our sin. He can deliver us from the brokenness of this world. He is God's plan to reconcile the world to himself and right every wrong (and always has been—that's why they were so excited to find the one who was written about!). And he invites us to follow him.

Even today, Jesus is welcoming, beckoning, inviting us: "Follow me."