

Follow Me

Matthew 4:18-22, 1 Corinthians 4:15-17
January 15, 2012

Stephan K. Turnbull
First Lutheran Church, White Bear Lake, MN

Web Description: Jesus may be the most famous person who ever lived, but few of us have ever seriously considered that we could live like he lived. He called his first disciples to “Follow Me,” and he still calls people today to follow his example today.

1. Welcome
2. Introduction
 - A. Have you ever known someone who knew the secret to doing something better than you but wouldn't tell you what it was? Like do you have someone in your family with a secret recipe for something and they won't share it. Your grandma knows how to make the best fried chicken ever, or she makes apple pie better than apples ever tasted, but she won't tell. Like it's ok for you to eat what she makes, but you're never going to be able to make it yourself? I heard of someone once who finally shared her secret recipe with someone but changed it first so still no one could make it like her. Now I get that people want to have something that's especially theirs, but I gotta say, don't you think that's kind of mean? And I know I just called your sweet little grandmother mean, but I'm sorry, it's true. You can't keep that stuff to yourself. If you know how to make the world's best fried chicken, people need to know how to do that.
 - B. But this is worse: Lots of people think Jesus is like your grandma. Most of us probably wouldn't think this if we really thought about it, but we act like it. Jesus was the most incredible human being who ever lived. I'm not denying that he was God, but he was also a human being and he lived the human life in relationship with God and other people like no one else ever has, like it was always meant to be. He lived with peace and power and love and joy and depth that you and I have never gotten to. Yet it almost never occurs to anyone that Jesus would want to share that recipe with us. We think that Jesus will let us eat his food, he'll offer us good things, like forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but rarely do we think that to be a Christian (a “little Christ,” “to be a chip of the old Christ block”) would mean to actually live like he lived. It's a strange thing.
3. We don't generally do that in other areas of our lives.
 - A. Let me give you an example. I experienced a running injury about a year ago. I developed an injury in my knee that likely came from a muscle imbalance in my stride. But I love to run. I love the challenge and the fitness level and the runner's high. I wasn't ready to be done running. So I decided to change how

I run. I had heard about people who embraced a different, supposedly more natural style of running. They run barefoot or in very minimal shoes that mimic a barefoot style of running. They change their stride to land differently. They take shorter and quicker steps. And so I read a lot about it. I watched videos online. I talked to people I knew who had made that transition successfully. I checked it out for a while as a curious outsider, and then I started doing it. I found people who were doing it already, and I learned from them, and then I started doing it myself. Do you know what that makes me? It makes me a disciple. Now I'm not giving my life to this. I might even back out down the road, but for right now I am a learner and an apprentice of a different way of running. I'm a disciple.

- B. Has everybody here heard of Plato? Lived about 2400 years ago. Wrote some famous philosophy. **Here's a picture of Plato.** When I was in graduate school I got to know some really smart people in the philosophy department. Plato was such an incredible philosopher that they would sometimes say that all the philosophy that's been written since that time is "just footnotes to Plato." But Plato didn't come out of nowhere. He had a mentor. He was a disciple of Socrates. Followed him around. Went where he went. Read what he read. Thought like he thought until he learned all he could, then he had to begin to build on it himself. Everybody knew that Plato was a disciple of Socrates, and then he went on to do even greater things that Socrates himself.
4. Jesus called people to be his disciples.
- A. By the way, notice the power and the grace in this call. It's one thing to say to someone, I want to learn your way. But then maybe they don't want to teach you. Maybe they don't think you have what it takes and they don't want to waste their time on you. If I called up Coach K at Duke University and said, "Teach me to play basketball. I want to learn how to run a beautiful motion offense like your teams do it. I want to learn how to play help defense like your teams do it. It's the best I've ever seen, and there's nothing I want more than to learn how to do that for myself." He'd say (well, he wouldn't say anything because I'd never get through to him), but if he did, he's say he has no time for that. It would be a waste of his time to coach me. And that's true. It would be. I don't have the basketball talent to do what he does. But it's a different scenario when someone who really has something to offer says to you, "I see the potential in you. I see the value in you. I see what's inside you and I want to help you become all that God made you to be." Jesus' call to follow him is already a word of grace. It's a word of promise from Jesus that he is committed to you before you are even committed to him. It is a message that you have value in God's eyes. It's a remarkable thing.

- B. Jesus called disciples in Biblical times. He said, "Follow Me." Come be my student, a learner of my way, see the world the way I see it, so that you can live life the way I live it, the way the creator of heaven and earth intended it to be lived.
- 5. But somewhere along the way, we lost sight of this whole thing. And as a result we are still frying inferior chicken. We are still baking pies that are a waste of apples. We are still living lives that are so much less than God intends because we have misunderstood Jesus' call to follow Him. We've made a couple big mistakes.
 - A. First mistake: Somewhere along the way we began to believe that being a disciple of Jesus was an extra thing. And so we created a class system. Most of us are average run of the mill Christians. But there are other people who take the extra step and go all the way to becoming disciples. But I have to tell you, that's just not in the Bible. I think that's a mistake that's hurting us.
 - i. I made this mistake when we used to have Bible study groups in this church and we called them "Disciple" groups. (This was about 5 or 8 years ago.) A lot of people joined one of those groups and learned a lot about the Bible through them, but a lot of people never did. And later some people told me, those groups weren't for me. "I'm not a disciple, I'm just a regular Christian."
 - ii. But there is no such thing as Christianity that isn't about following Jesus. Now some of you here this morning, you might still be kind of checking things out. That's ok. You're reading stuff, and you're watching what goes on, and checking it out. You're not sure whether Jesus is really for you or not. Maybe that's where you are. That's ok, and I invite you to take the time you need to see that Jesus truly is the hope of the world. But if you've said, "Jesus is for me. He's the Lord. He's my Savior. I want what Jesus offers," then there is not distinction between coach and first class Christians. Jesus doesn't offer leg room and red wine to some people in the front of the church and ask the rest of us to enjoy our pretzels quietly. Jesus would have to be one stingy grandmother to offer his fried chicken recipe to some of us but leave the rest of us guessing. Why do we think he would do that? But that's a mistake a lot of us make.
 - B. But we also make a second mistake that causes us more trouble than that. Our second mistake is this: Somewhere along the way we've gotten the idea that discipleship is the unpleasant route. Discipleship is for the truly committed who have decided that this is worth it, for the sake of some other goal. It's kind of like dieting. I'm not going to like this; it's not going to taste good, it's not going to be any fun, but I know it will be better for me in the long run if I do it. So we go on a diet. Except that most of us won't stay on a diet. We

just don't want to. In fact, I think we don't really believe it's worth it, or we would do it. But discipleship is also different than that. It's not the unpleasant route that you should buckle down and do it even though you'll probably hate it. Following Jesus may involve sacrifice and challenge, but it is the path of real joy.

- i. Jesus said to his disciples, "I'm telling you these things so that my joy may be in you're and your joy may be complete." Think about those first disciples of Jesus. They're fisherman. Men's men, working together doing hard jobs. Jesus invites them to follow him. Listen to what it says in Matthew 4... **"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. Matthew 4:19-20.** You're fishermen right now. That's great, but with me you could be fishers of men. You could be a grand adventure that goes beyond anything you're experiencing right now. And they jumped at the opportunity. They left their nets and followed him. They said, "Sign me up. I'm in on that."
 - ii. Jesus calls us to follow Him. To learn to see people like he saw them. To serve like he served. To pray like he prayed. To love like he loved. He's inviting us into a quality of life that goes beyond anything we would experience without him. This is first class flying. It's fried chicken the way it's supposed to eaten. It's apple pie that tastes so good you have to close your eyes when you eat it. He's not keeping the secret to himself. He is offering us the way to real life.
- C. And the reason it's so good is this: It's because being a disciple of Jesus does not mean just learning to imitate his actions. That is important, but it's way more than that. Being a disciple of Jesus means to experiencing God the way he knew God. It means to knowing God as your heavenly father, full who is full of grace and astounding love for you.
- i. Jesus told one of his most famous parables to try to make this clear. He had been keeping company with sinful people. Offering grace and forgiveness and new life. He called them to be his disciples. And the Pharisees were hopping mad. They didn't think it worked like that. That's not the picture of God they had. So Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son. He told the story of a resentful young son who basically stole his father's estate and ran off and wasted it all. He made a total mess of his life. The son finally came home again, when he had not other options, to beg for a job as servant in his father's house, just trying not to starve to death. He as homeless and hungry and broke. But his father saw him coming down the road and ran out to meet and threw his arms around him and welcome him home and called him "my son." But the young son's

older brother was none too pleased. The graciousness of his father was too much. He wanted the father to be stern and unforgiving. And he would not share in the Father's joy. But Jesus told the parable so that both Pharisees and sinners would both learn that "God is like this and not like that." To be a disciple of Jesus means, *more than anything else*, that we learn this lesson, that we come to know God like Jesus knew God.

- ii. Does your picture of God look like that of the Pharisees? Jesus invites you to see God as He knows God is. A loving Father with arms open wide, running down the road to meet you and give you your place in His family.
- 6. Disciple of Jesus want to fry chicken like he fried chicken. Disciples of Jesus see what Jesus taught and how Jesus lived and said "That's what I want. I want to know God like Jesus knew God. I want to love like he loved, pray like he prayed, live like He lived. Jesus invited me to follow Him, and there's nothing else that's worth more than that.
- 7. I told you I was trying to this barefoot running style, right? One of the training tools I've started to use are these sandals here. I won't bore you with the story, but they're adapted from the simple sandals worn by a tribe of people, most of whom run 20+ miles a day every day. They're just a thin piece of rubber to keep you from stepping on sharp stuff while you run.
 - A. I started wearing these around a little bit to let my underused muscles get to used to walking around more naturally. They've got these lanyards that you tie around your foot and ankle and they look like some ancient sandals from Biblical times.
 - B. I was wearing these sandals out to dinner at a restaurant one night and not thinking much about it. And the waiter comes by at the end of our meal and he says, all right man, you gotta show me the shoes. I'm thinking, "What are you talking about." But I pulled my foot out from under the table and showed him what I was wearing." And he goes "Yeah, man. Rockin' it Jesus style." The hostess saw what I was wearing and all the staff are like "did you see the Jesus sandals on the guy at table 26." Now you gotta understand, I'm not usually someone who draws any attention for what I'm wearing. I'm kind of out of my element here.
 - C. But it got me thinking. I want to be rockin' it Jesus style all the time, you know what I mean? Not just for my shoes I don't know if dressing like Jesus dressed is really what he was calling us to, but I want to live like he lived. And I'm pretty sure that his way of love and mercy and power and peace and depth and joy could be even interesting to the rest of the world than a pair of sandals.
 - D. **(Mission of First Lutheran and commitment cards next week)**
 - E. "Follow me", he said, "and they left their nets and followed."

PRAY