

The Call to Follow Jesus

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[0 : 00] That was awesome. Praise the Lord, man. There is joy in the house of the Lord. Amen. If you would turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 4. Matthew chapter 4.

! Let me pray for you. Dear Lord Jesus, I pray that you would just bring your text to life today. Bring your text to life. Amen. Call out to us. Let us follow you faithfully. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So what you see in Matthew chapter 4, 18 through 22, is the calling of the first four disciples. Four of the most prominent, but three in particular, Peter, James, and John. But the fourth one is obviously Andrew, Peter's brother.

These four men have the incredible honor of showing us what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, to be a follower of Jesus Christ. And you notice one of the things that stands out is the immediacy.

[1 : 38] It's that it's a decision that is urgent to make, to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Now at this point, they had probably already met Jesus. Talked through a little bit of this last week.

John chapters 1 through 4 kind of describes the ministry of Jesus where he was working by himself, but had some of these disciples that he was showing things to.

So they had probably in some way or another been disciples of John the Baptist and probably even heard John point at Jesus and say, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. They probably had some idea that Jesus was special. They might have even seen him already turn water into wine at the wedding in Cana. They'd already beheld some of his glory, but they had not yet completely followed Jesus.

They were not yet disciples of the rabbi or the teacher Jesus. But I want you to see some things before we really get into the text. I want you to see some things about the way that Jesus calls these disciples.

[2 : 41] The way that Jesus calls these men. First, Jesus calls them in a way that's very moving. It's a call to action. Jesus calls his disciples to follow him, right?

They had to actually move. They had to go. It was a call to act, not a call to being sedentary, not a call to being, staying in the same place or remaining where they were. It was a call to action. It was a moving call. It was also an inspirational call. Jesus called them not to be just his followers, but to be fishers of people.

He gave their vocation a purpose, right? It wasn't just that they were going to be fishermen anymore. They were going to actually act. They were going to be fishers of people. It was an inspirational call.

And the other thing is, it was a personal call. Jesus called these men in a way that they would appreciate, in a manner that they would understand. Again, they're fishermen. So he used this kind of short parabolic language where he says, follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

[3 : 38] That was language that they understood, right? So Jesus called them in a very personal way. And I want you to see that our Lord Jesus Christ, when he calls, he calls us in a moving way. He calls us in an inspirational way, in an inspirational way.

And he calls us in a personal way as well. And how does he do that? Well, in the same way that he knew Simon and Andrew and James and John, when he called them, Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, knows you and me intimately, better than we know ourselves.

And so he's able to call us the same way that he called them. See, for these four brothers, they heard the call to follow Jesus. And without question, they recognized that obedience to the master, to the teacher, to Jesus was better than staying where they were, right?

Going from where they were to where he would take them was the single most important thing in their life. They gave up financial security. They left their jobs behind. They reprioritized their relationships.

James and John left their father in a boat. I couldn't imagine leaving my dad in a boat. He wouldn't know what to do. He's not a fisherman. But Zebedee knew what he was doing.

[4 : 50] They reprioritized family relationships. The point that Matthew's making here, when he uses the word immediately, is that this was a quick decision. It was a sudden decision. They saw that it was better to follow Jesus, and they went.

Now, the same Jesus who called these men commands men and women, boys and girls, still today to follow him. The call to follow Jesus is still being proclaimed.

The response for us who have been called to follow Jesus is the same as it was for these four disciples. Recognize the importance of the call, the value of the call.

Prioritize the relationship with Jesus above the relationship with anything or anyone else, and immediately follow him. So today, as we go through this sermon, as we go through this passage, I'm going to ask you three questions.

Three questions. Because I want you to see the beauty of this passage in the fact that Jesus Christ is still calling. Calling. Jesus Christ is still calling.

[5 : 57] So everyone pull out your bulletin. Okay? Did you grab a bulletin today? Or are you handed a bulletin? This is a review on our deacons also.

If you don't have a bulletin, then we need to talk about it. No, I'm just kidding. Had your bulletin. Open it up. And you'll notice underneath the sermon title and the verses, there are three boxes. You see those three boxes? Okay. Grab a pen or a pencil. I don't care what writing utensil you use. You can use a marker. You can use one of the crayons from the kid's book if you want. Whatever you use, grab something.

Share with the neighbor. Whatever you're going to do. I'm going to ask you three questions. Okay? And I want you to write down your response. It's a small box. Don't worry. The answers are yes, no. Okay? The answers are yes, no.

So, I want you to write down your response. And here's the very important piece to this. What you write down is for your eyes only. This is not to be shared with your neighbor.

[6 : 55] Don't copy your neighbor. Don't copy your spouse. Don't copy your friend. Don't copy your sibling. Don't make fun of your sibling. All right? Whatever you put in these boxes is between you and the Lord.

Okay? Everybody on the same page? When you get those old test things, the little blockers that we used to have in school, you know? No, I'm just kidding. All right. So, I want you to be ready. I want you to write down your responses to these questions.

Question number one. Have you heard Jesus call out to you and say, follow me? In a personal way. Have you heard Jesus call out to you and say, follow me?

And I'm not saying an audible cry. I'm not saying you've audibly heard Jesus. I'm saying, have you heard the voice of Jesus in your heart? Have you heard Jesus call out to you and say, follow me? Now, you might have heard Jesus call out to you in the middle of a restless night. Maybe you knew you were aware of your sin and your need for a savior. Jesus opened his arms to you for salvation in the middle of a restless night.

[7 : 52] Maybe it was when you were holding a precious newborn baby for the first time. And the sweetness of that baby was overwhelming. And the beauty of Christ became real to you in a way that you hadn't yet seen him.

And you responded in faith. Maybe you heard Jesus cry out to you or call out to you in the middle of a sermon. Or while you were singing or while people were singing around you songs of praise.

Have you heard Jesus call out to you and say, follow me? Maybe you hear Jesus calling out to you right now. Have you heard Jesus call out to you and say, follow me?

Now, perhaps you answered no to that question. Maybe you've heard about this type of call. You've heard about this type of relationship that people have with Jesus. But it's never happened for you. You've never truly, personally felt like you were called to believe in Jesus.

Or maybe even you've heard this call. And you know that you need to give your life to Christ. You need to follow him completely. But you haven't yet done that. And so maybe you wrote down, no.

[8 : 54] Regardless of where you are. Regardless of where you are in life. Whether or not you've been a member at First Baptist Church of Lewisburg for the past 80 years. For the past 20 years. Or whether this is your first Sunday here.

It does not matter. Write down your answer honestly. Have you heard Jesus call out to you and say, follow me? Right now, whether you've heard him gladly and accepted his call.

Or you've been ignoring his call. I want you to listen closely. Because this Jesus is alive. This Jesus is on his throne. And this Jesus is calling out to you today.

And if you have not heard Jesus. Or if you are hearing Jesus right now. Say to you, follow me. Then there's only one response. And that is to immediately follow him.

The Lord Jesus Christ is calling. He is calling. And the beautiful thing about the call of Christ. Is that if you repent of your sins and believe in him for salvation. You will be saved.

[9 : 55] There's another beauty to this. And it's the fact that Jesus calls those who are unworthy to be called. There's not a single one of us who deserve to hear from almighty God.

As I was walking through the sanctuary this morning. I was praying. And I was overcome with this joy at the realization. That of all of the billions of people who have lived on this planet.

God knows my name. He knows me personally. He knows me better than I know myself. How does he know me? How does he know you? He is beyond comprehension.

And he calls those of us who are unworthy. The beautiful message of the gospel. Is that while we were yet in our sin. Then Jesus Christ the son of God died on the cross for you.

For me. That's the beautiful hope of the gospel. What love is this? That the son of God would enter into our mess. And save us from it. What love is this?

[10 : 51] It's unbelievable. So it doesn't matter where you are in life. Or where you've come from. Or what you've done. If Jesus Christ is calling you to follow him.

Do not delay. I have a second question for you. Have you left everything behind to follow Jesus? Have you left everything behind to follow Jesus? It says in the text that Jesus called out to Andrew and Simon Peter.

While they were casting a net. Follow me. He told them. And I will make you fish for people.

Immediately they left their nets. And they followed him. They left it behind. And they go down. He calls John and James.

Immediately they left their boat. They left their father. They left everything. And they followed Jesus. They left it all behind. Earlier this week when I was writing the sermon.

I was writing down my notes. In my office. Which is on this side of the building. There is something that happened. Okay. It was a super spiritual. No I'm just kidding. It was the fire department. They got a call.

[11 : 54] Okay. They got an alarm went off. Alright. And here's the thing. I can hear everything about the fire department. I hear it when they come outside on lunch. And they have loud conversations.

I hear everything. Okay. That window. Yeah. It doesn't really stop the sound at all. So I hear what. They probably hear me right now. They're like hey that guy. Anyway. So I heard that the alarm went off.

That they received a call. Alright. And within a matter of about two minutes. Probably less than that. The truck was fired up. And they were off. I mean it was impressive. It was really really impressive. When firefighters get the call. They have one obligation. Respond. Right. The first responders for a reason.

One obligation. Respond. In that moment. When the alarm rings. When the call comes in. Nothing else is more important. The card game they were playing.

[12 : 49] The video game they were playing. And yeah. Firefighters play video games. I have some friends. That's what they do sometimes. You know. They play video games sometimes. They have dinner together. They cook dinner together. It doesn't matter.

If they're cooking. If they're in the middle of. Cooking chicken. They have to turn the stove off. And go. Because the single most important thing. That they have to do. Is respond to the call. And friend.

Listen. If Jesus Christ is calling you. To follow him today. The single most important thing. That you have to do. The only obligation you have. Is to drop everything. And follow him. Reprioritize everything.

And follow him. If Jesus is calling you. Then there is nothing more important. Than following him. It's the most important yes.

That you can ever say. See. Following Jesus. Matters. Not only for this life. But it matters for eternity. Jesus Christ. The son of God. He calls you to follow him.

[13:46] And he offers to you salvation. Romans 3.23. Says that the wages of sin. Is. I'm sorry. It says that all have sinned. And fallen short of the glory. Of God. That means that every single one of us.

Are sinful people. We have sinned. Against a holy. And perfect. And righteous God. Romans 6.23. Says that the wages. Of that sin. What we've earned for our sin. Is death. That's eternal death. Separation from God. For eternity. But there's a beautiful hope. The grace of God. In the person of Jesus Christ. Offers salvation.

Romans 6.23. Finishes. It says. But the gift of God. Is eternal life. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. So when Jesus calls. When you hear the tug on your heart.

When you feel the tug on your heart. When you know. That you are in sin. Separated from God. And you see that Jesus is beautiful. And holy. And he calls you to himself. You have nothing else to do.

[14:42] But say. Yes. Lord. I will follow. That is salvation. Salvation. Believing in Jesus Christ. And you might think. Well is that true. Because I've got a lot of things.

I need to focus on. I've got a lot going on. I've got more important things. Right now. Than worrying about what happens. Way down the line. Can I encourage you to trust. Jesus. See Andrew and Peter.

Were fishermen. They didn't have their father with them. This probably wasn't a family business for them. At least not in the same way. That it was for John and James. But when Jesus called. They recognized. That following Jesus.

Was better for them. Than staying in the boat. That they would receive better sustenance. From following Jesus Christ. Than they would ever earn. Through their own work.

James and John. Whenever they followed Jesus. They recognized. That it was more important. Or more beneficial for them. To follow Jesus. Than it was. To really worry about.

[15:38] Making sure. That dad was okay. With them leaving. And not following him. In the family business. It didn't matter. Following Jesus. Mattered a lot more. Now listen. I'm not telling you. That if Jesus is calling you.

That you should quit your job. Okay. I'm not telling you to do that at all. Although I will say. If Jesus is calling you. To follow him. In a deeper manner. Maybe to ministry. Or maybe to missions.

Or something like that. Then you should be prepared. To follow him. Wherever he does call. I'm telling you. That if you want to follow Jesus. You do so. Based on faith in him.

Not based on. What you can accomplish. Or provide for yourself. So have you left everything. To follow Jesus. Regardless of what's holding you back.

Whether it be a job. A relationship. If Jesus Christ calls. And tells you to follow him. Then the answer is. Yes Lord. Wherever you lead. I will follow. Follow. Now if you answered no. If you haven't.

[16:35] Followed Jesus. Completely. If you haven't left everything behind. And followed. Jesus. I want you to understand that. Following Jesus doesn't come with a check bag.

Okay. You know at the airport. You have a check bag. I like Southwest. You used to get a free check bag. Not anymore. Cheapskates. Oh anyway. Forgot there was a Southwest employee here. My bad. Anyways. They're not cheapskates. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it. It's a great company. Love them.

Okay. Only fly them actually. Okay. We're actually sponsored by. Okay. Okay. All right. The call to follow Jesus doesn't come with a check bag.

All right. It's not Jesus and. It's not Jesus with. It is Jesus and Jesus alone. Right. When Jesus calls you to follow him. That means you set everything else aside. So let me ask you this.

[17:40] What is stopping you from following Jesus today? What is holding you back from following Jesus completely? What is following. What is holding you back from obedience? From obediently stepping into what Jesus is calling you to?

What is preventing you from accepting his call? Here's the thing. Jesus can't only be your savior. He must also be the Lord of your life. So the call to follow Jesus is a call to follow him and to follow

him exclusively.

Hebrews 12. One says, let us lay aside every hindrance and sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us. So what is holding you back from following Jesus completely?

What about this? What are you trying to bring with you on the journey? What are you trying to take with you? What relationship are you unwilling to let go of? What sin do you still love?

What is preventing you from following Jesus exclusively? Do you hear that? Jesus is calling.

[18:44] Jesus is calling you to himself today for salvation, to obedience. Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, is on his throne right now in heaven and he's calling today.

I've got a third question for you. This one's a little bit different. It's really for those of you who've answered yes to one or both of the previous questions, but it comes directly from our text.

Have you been fishing with Jesus? Have you been fishing with Jesus? What did Jesus tell Andrew and Peter? Peter, follow me and I will make you fish for people.

See, the call to follow Jesus is not only going where he goes. It's also a call to do what he does.

Jesus is in the business of saving sinners. And if you have followed Jesus, then you get to share in that call.

[19:55] You get to fish with Jesus. And notice this. Jesus doesn't say, follow me and you will become fishers of people. He didn't say, follow me and if you try really, really hard, you'll be able to fish for people.

He says, follow me and I will make you fishers of people, fishers of men. That's what Jesus says.

So if you want to fish like Jesus, you have to follow Jesus.

You have to spend time with Jesus. You have to listen to Jesus. Look, I'm not a fisherman. Okay, I'll acknowledge that right up here at the front. I am not a fisherman. Okay, I think I like to think that I like to fish, but then I get out there and I get really bored.

Anybody else with me on that? Fishing is kind of boring. Okay, good. I know there's at least a few honest people in the room. Also, you know, it's just, you know, it's a whole thing.

It's dirty. It's a whole day. Anyways. Anyways. Now, I'm not a fisherman, okay? I'm not a fisherman.

But I know that there's someone in our congregation who is quite the expert fisherman.

[21:01] That's Brother Woodson Carter right over there. Let me just show you. This is, this man, this is just like, that's a Tuesday. You know what I mean? Like, he is unbelievable. He's an unbelievable fisherman.

Now listen, if I desired to learn how to fish, and I wanted to get really good at it, I can tell you right now, I would spend a lot of time with Woodson Carter. I would learn how to bait a hook the way that he does.

I would learn how to cast a line like he does. I would learn how to sit still and wait like he does. I don't desire to be a fisherman. But if I did, I would learn from him. Now, on the other hand, look, if I were to call myself a fisherman up here, and I never went and fished a day in my life, except for maybe a couple times a year, or I take Jack out to a little pond with his, you know, little two-foot fishing pole or whatever.

If that's all the fishing I ever did, but I told you that I was a fisherman, would you believe me? Would you accept that? You shouldn't. But here's the thing.

That is exactly what it's like when we claim to follow Jesus, but we never get outside of the walls of the church and tell people about him. Will anyone believe that you are a follower of Jesus if you aren't calling sinners to salvation?

[22:18] Does anyone believe that you're a follower of Jesus if you aren't fishing with Jesus?

That's what Jesus calls us to.

He calls, still today, follow me. I will make you fishers of men. When you spend time with him, the master fisherman, when you learn his heart, when you hear the tenderness with which he calls sinners to salvation, when you hear his gospel and the way that he shares it, when you follow Jesus, when you learn from him, then you can fish with him.

We have to go from being fish to being fishermen with Jesus. A fish isn't going to catch another fish. We have to be fishermen. Have you been fishing with Jesus?

Look, who's in the water? Who in your life is in the water right now waiting for a line? Who can you pull up in the net? Who is it that God desires to use you to bring a friend, a family member, a neighbor to salvation, and yet you won't share the gospel?

The amazing thing about the way that God works is that, yes, salvation is solely his work, right? And he still calls us to participate. How then can they call on him in who they have not believed? [23 : 42] And how can they believe without hearing about him? How can they hear without a preacher? Father, followers of Christ are the method for telling a lost and dying world about Jesus. Friend, Jesus is calling you today to follow him completely. Completely. That means doing what he does. He's calling you to go fishing with him. He's calling you out on the water. Jesus is calling. Let me ask you one more question. What would it look like if every single person in this room, of every age, man, female, you know, boy, girl, doesn't matter, any age. What would it look like if every single one of us were committed to following Jesus? What would it look like if we were committed to telling one person the gospel this week? And I'm not talking about inviting someone to church. I'm talking about sharing the gospel with someone. Explaining their need for a savior. Telling them to repent of their sin. Believe in Jesus. [24 : 49] And have life. What would it look like if every single one of us went out fishing this week? There's enough of us in this room that we could absolutely change Lewisburg. If only we were fishermen with Jesus. Do you hear him yet? Jesus is calling. He's calling you to follow him. And I want you to understand, I've talked about this a little bit, but there is a real urgency. When Jesus calls, there is an urgency. Do not delay in your response. We have no idea how much time we have left on earth. We have no idea how many more times you'll sit in your pew. We have no idea. If Jesus is calling, respond obediently today. Don't delay. Don't put it off until next week. [25 : 50] And today, Jesus is calling some of you to believe in him and to follow him for the first time. There are some in this room that Jesus is calling to salvation right now. But here's the thing. There's a few things you need to do. And let me explain it for you. I'll break it down. First of all, you need to repent of your sin. God's word says that if my people who bear my name humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. When you repent of your sin, it's like you're a soldier who gets a command to do an about face, right? You know, you get a little turn, and you go the other direction, right? Going right now, you're going away from God. Jesus calls you to repent. That means that he's calling you to turn around and now go towards him. Jesus is calling you to repent today. The second thing that you need to do is believe in Jesus. God's word also says, now without faith, it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Brothers and sisters, you have to believe in Jesus Christ completely. [26 : 57] If you want to seek God, if you want to please God, then the only way that you can do that is by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Let me explain to you what faith is, what it means to believe in Jesus. There's a very famous rock climber, okay? His name is Alex Honnold. Have you all heard about this guy? You know what I'm talking about? Okay. Let me just tell you who he is a little bit, okay? He climbs some of the most unbelievable, dangerous structures and rock faces in the world, and he does it without any ropes. He does it without any harness. He does it without anything at all. He just climbs. Let me tell you what faith is. Faith is when you reach up into the crevice of a rock and you trust that it's not going to break because you're about to put all your weight on it. Faith is when you... He climbed Taipei 101, one of the biggest buildings in the world, okay? This was just a few weeks ago. He climbed Taipei 101 without any ropes, all right? Faith is when you reach up onto the trim of that building and you trust that it's not going to fall. That's faith. Faith is that Jesus is calling out to you right now, and when you reach to him to answer his call, it's trusting that he will hold you. [28 : 08] It's trusting that he will save you. That is faith. Repent of your sin. Believe in Jesus. And then listen, this is really important. Follow Jesus without shame. I'm convinced that what keeps many of us who are followers of Jesus from obedience and telling people about him is a sense of shame. A sense of shame over our own past sin.

A sense of shame over our own inadequacy. Here's the thing. Jesus Christ calls you to follow him without any shame. God's word says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew and also to the Greek.

For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. Listen, if you are being called to follow Jesus for the first time, then respond today. Do not delay. Others of you, Jesus is calling you to let go of the sin and the relationships and the things that are holding you back or are fighting for top priority in your life.

[29 : 15] Jesus is calling you to repent and to trust him and follow him only and to set those things aside. Jesus is calling you to obedience today. Well, there's a third group.

Those of you who have believed in Jesus and trusted him as Savior. Those of you who have really set things aside and focused only on him. Jesus is calling you out on the water.

Jesus is calling you to fish with him today. This week. Next week. Jesus is calling you to obey his command and to preach the gospel.

To tell people about Jesus. Jesus is calling. So listen, here's what I'm going to have you do. You have your answers in your bulletin.

You know what you wrote. That's between you and God. But I'm going to invite everybody today to stand. Okay? And here's the thing. Whatever God is calling you to do.

[30 : 12] Because here's the thing. I believe. I know God's word will not return void. And Jesus is calling. Whatever God is calling you to do. Whatever Jesus calls you to do.

Here's what I'm going to invite you to do. Step out in faith. Okay? We're Baptists. We don't like to get out of the pews. But here's what I'm going to ask you to do. Come forward. And if it's time that you need to pray and repent of a relationship or a sin that's holding you back that you haven't let go of.

Repent. Turn from that. If it's that someone's on your heart that you know God's been calling you to share the gospel with them and you haven't yet. Then come forward and pray for that person. Pray for the courage to share the gospel with them.

But here's the final one. If you are called right now to believe in Jesus for the first time. Then come forward and give your life to Jesus. Jesus didn't call the disciples and let them stay where they were.

He had them walk and follow him. So what you're doing when you step out is symbolically you're stepping out in faith. The call to follow Jesus isn't only emotional and internal.

[31 : 12] It's not only private. It is a public calling. So follow Jesus. Let me pray. Jesus, thank you for who you are. Thank you for your salvation. Thank you, oh Lord, for the call that you have placed on the lives of the people in this room.

God, I pray that you would call people to yourself for salvation right now. I pray that those who are called would respond the same way your disciples did in obedience. We also pray, Lord, that you would give others the wisdom and the encouragement to be obedient and come forward and repent of the things that are holding them back.

And Lord, I pray that you would put right now on the hearts and the minds of those believers who trust you and love you the names of people who they should share the gospel with.

God, you have prepared fields. Let us be faithful workers. We love you, Jesus. It's in your name that we pray. Amen. Amen.