

Come, Follow Me Fishin'

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[0 : 00] Hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And I'm so thankful that you've tuned in to this radio broadcast where we are all about just preaching the Word of God, getting into the Word, and letting the Word get into us.

Now, my wife, Bethany, her maiden name is Alt-A-U-L-T. And each September, they have this extended Alt family reunion right outside of Columbus, just about 25 minutes from here.

So after church, we pack up and we make our way there. And we're always the last ones to eat because all those heathens didn't go to church, okay? But after the lunch, it's become tradition that a group goes and plays softball.

So you bring your glove, and from kids up to adults, it's just very easygoing, very casual two or three innings of softball. Well, we've been married for 15 years. I've never participated in it.

But this year, I decided I was going to play. Hey, Jovi, my spunky five-year-old, decided that she would join me. So here we are, ready to pick teams. And most of these people already know each other.

[1 : 08] And honestly, other than seeing them once a year, we really don't know any of them very well at all. So we're just kind of outsiders already, and they start to pick teams. And I got to tell you, and I'm sorry if this sounds a little braggy, but when I was a kid, I loved sports.

I played everything. And when we were on the school playground picking teams, I was always one of the first kids chosen. But not on this particular September day as a chubby 39-year-old, okay?

So if you can picture this in your head, Jovi and I are standing there holding hands, waiting for our names to be called. And we had this big pile of people, and one after another, they start to go to their teams.

And guess what? We're the last two chosen. And they didn't even know our names. So if you know me very well at all, I am competitive. And with an attempt at a happy-go-lucky smile on my face, I was fired up and ready to prove them wrong for choosing me last.

I get up to bat that first time. They throw me a nice arching ball. I reach back with everything I have, and I swing as hard as I could.

[2 : 19] And guess what? I missed. It was embarrassing. It really was. And I proved that maybe I should have been chosen last. And then next swing, I hit this weak fly ball that was caught kind of on the edge of the outfield.

So next time up, I am just ready for some redemption. They throw me a ball, and I absolutely crushed that thing over the third baseman's head. Heard a few people say, whoa, because I really got a hold of this thing good.

And I thought, okay, that'll teach you. I bet you won't pick me last next year. But I'm just kind of having some fun with this, guys. But isn't that kind of human nature? None of us want to be picked last, do we?

We all want to be first. We want to be chosen. We want to know that we're somebody special. Even going back to elementary school, do you remember that first time you learned that little Susie thought that you were the cutest boy at school?

Or for you girls, that little Tony thought that you were beautiful? Whether you liked them back or not really didn't matter. It just felt good to be someone's first choice and to get that opportunity to check the box, yes or no.

[3 : 28] Now, welcome back here to the second week of our series called Disciple. And if you want to go ahead and grab your Bibles, go with me to the Gospel of Mark, probably two-thirds, three-quarters of the way through your Bible, second book of the New Testament, right after Matthew.

But last week, we kicked off this series talking about John the Baptizer, talking about his great example for us of what a disciple really looks like.

He had this tender heart of repentance. He sacrificed to serve in the exact way God called him to, and he was always very humble in that it was all about Jesus.

He must become greater, and I must become less. See, it all starts with a heart that is broken and fully surrendered to the servant-hearted Son of God.

And today, I want to skip down just a little bit here in chapter 1 and look at these iconic words, Come, follow me. Now, if you've grown up around the church and around the Bible, you know those famous words were spoken by Jesus when he called his 12 disciples to follow him.

[4 : 39] But oftentimes, I don't think we can quite put ourselves in these people's shoes like we should. See, before Jesus spoke these celebrated words to them, each of these guys had to feel a little bit like I did there that day, standing on the softball field, being chosen last.

Because in that culture, the most prestigious and highest career to aspire towards was to be a religious leader, a rabbi. They were revered.

They were respected. People sat under their teaching, their authority, learning God's word. And yet, for each of these 12, at some point, they had heard those words that you don't have what it takes.

You're not the best of the best. You just need to go back to your family trade. Yet, I love how Jesus just shatters all the stereotypes, all the cultural norms to speak these powerful words to ordinary people just like us.

He says, come, follow me. So grab your outlines for me today. And you could do that by going to the YouVersion Bible app. You can click on events.

[5 : 52] Click on First Christian Church of Greensburg. And that will take you to the outline on that app. And let's talk about these simple yet life-changing words, come follow me.

So here's the first thing I want you to see. The invitation is for me. Right there from home. Say that with me. The invitation is for me. See, the way the Jewish educational system worked in the first century is that there were several different layers of education.

And in order to go on to the next one, you had to be towards the top of your class. You had to be the best of the best. Otherwise, it was, hey, glad you got some education.

Now go back home and do your family trade. And only those who were the elite got the opportunity to approach a well-known rabbi and ask if they could be his disciple.

Even fewer heard these words, come follow me. In other words, he would say, be my disciple. Walk with me. Be just like me.

[6 : 57] I pick you. Now, you should be here in your Bibles at Mark chapter 1. And let's start in verse 16. It says, As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

Come follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people. At once they left their nets and they followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James and John, sons of Zebedee, in a boat preparing their nets.

Without delay, he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and they followed him. Now, I think a lot of people, especially when we don't know God's word very well, we see these disciples of Jesus, these apostles, as kind of these larger than life, holy men.

And honestly, all the depictions that we see in cathedrals across the world may not help to show their human side. But listen, they were just like us. They weren't the best of the best.

And yet, Jesus broke all the molds when he called these ordinary men to follow him and to be his disciples. You look at Simon, who we know better as Peter, even at his brother Andrew.

[8 : 19] And we have two guys who appeared to be involved in a successful fishing operation where their family did pretty well. And yet, it was still a blue collar, very messy job.

Kind of some rough characters in that field. And we know that Andrew and maybe even Peter were disciples of John the Baptist before Jesus called them. John's message of repentance had resonated with these two guys.

They had been introduced to Jesus and they knew there was something special about this guy and they had to wonder to themselves, could he really be the Messiah?

And if you pay attention to some details shared throughout the four gospels, it appears that Andrew may have been a little more reserved and yet still enthusiastic about Christ.

He was inquisitive. He was resourceful. And then there's Peter. And this guy was loud. He was boisterous, impulsive, hot-tempered.

[9 : 20] He was prone to something that many of us have done more than we would like to admit. See, it's called foot and mouth disease. And yet Jesus, God in the flesh, knew every detail about the good and the bad of their personalities, even their past.

And he still looked at them and said, come, follow me. Then we see two more guys that Jesus called to be his disciples, James and John.

Also successful fishermen who seemed to be in partnership with Peter and Andrew. See, fishing was a big deal in this culture. It was big business. And from the description of their father having hired men, they would have done just fine fishing.

But as we look a little closer at these two guys, they were kind of vengeful and fiery. Jesus himself even called them the sons of thunder. They were rebellious, judgmental, and they were selfish. And Jesus looks at these guys in all their faults and calls them to be his disciples. Now, let me take you real quick to Mark chapter 2. I want to look at one more call Jesus had on a disciple.

[10 : 37] Verses 13 and 14, Mark chapter 2. And let's look at another disciple called Levi, better known as Matthew. See, here's what it says in Mark 2 verse 13.

It says, Once again, Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd gathered to him and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow me, Jesus told him. And Levi got up and followed him. Now, Jewish tax collectors were listed right up there with thieves, murderers, liars, even prostitutes in this culture.

And the reason why is because they were basically choosing to be a traitor, to be a Benedict Arnold. They worked for the Roman government that was oppressing their own Jewish people. These tax collectors were notorious for getting the amount of money that Rome required, sending that on to Rome, and then charging extra to line their own pockets and there was nothing you could do about it.

[11 : 44] Rome could care less as long as they got theirs. And a guy like Levi working this job would have also been considered unclean. He would have been barred from attending a synagogue and prohibited from testifying in a Jewish court.

That's how hated these tax collectors were. And now, could you imagine just the shock waves that would have went through Levi, even through the crowd, the religious leaders, when Jesus looked at him in his filth and said, come, follow me?

I can almost picture his head kind of held low, trying not to make eye contact with Jesus because that's what we do when we know we're guilty, right? And Jesus not only speaks to him, which no other respectable rabbi would have even considered doing other than to cast judgment on him, but Jesus also calls him to leave behind that empty lifestyle and to follow him, to be his disciple. Now, I could go through the other eight disciples and I could point out the good, the bad, the ugly of each of them as well, but here's the deal. I think Jesus was very intentional in who he chose here. He broke every cultural norm, ticked off all the rabbis, the religious leaders, and he made it clear that he is calling ordinary people, he's calling you and he's calling me to be his disciple.

[13 : 17] It doesn't matter if your color is white or blue, it doesn't matter if you've been in church since birth or maybe you've never stepped foot in a church in your life, it doesn't matter if you have a past that others consider pretty good or if you're like Levi and others hate you and look down on you because of where you've been and what you've done.

It doesn't matter if you're nine or 99 or somewhere in between or even younger or older, Jesus looks you in the eyes today with a love and compassion of a creator who fashioned you in your mother's womb and he says, come, follow me.

The God of the universe. The one who created everything out of nothing in what I honestly believe is six literal days. The one who paints those beautiful sunsets.

The one who puts air in your lungs and sustains you in this world every second of every day. He looks you in the eyes despite all your fears, faults, and failures, despite the insecurities and the inadequacies and he says to you, I choose you.

I am so thankful for a Savior who loved you and me so much that he went to the cross and died a death that he didn't deserve.

[14 : 41] That he didn't deserve so that you and I wouldn't have to face the punishment that our sins demand. And that same God not only forgives, but he calls us into a relationship with him.

To walk with him every single day. So each of us can say the invitation is for me. But we can also say the commitment is for me.

The commitment is for me. Now, while I stand in awe, absolute awe, that Jesus would love and forgive someone like me, even call someone like me to preach, which honestly says more about his sense of humor, but I also realize that this invitation, this amazing grace, it also requires a decision on my end just like it did when Jesus called these disciples.

Look back at our passage here and I want to point out to you verses 18 and 20 here in Mark 1 where Jesus calls Peter and Andrew first here in verse 18.

It says, at once they left their nets and they followed him. At once. And then verse 20 with James and John, without delay he called them and what's it say?

[15:58] They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and they followed him. Now, you compare this story to the rich young ruler later in Mark 10 and here was a guy who was religious and everybody's eyes, I mean, the rich young ruler was a good man.

He was a good ruler. He had a good heart in everyone's eyes and yet Jesus could see what was really happening in his heart. The one thing holding him back from truly following Christ was his wealth and it says that when Jesus called him to give everything to the poor and to come follow him that he basically said no and he walked away because honestly he worshipped that wealth and that status.

But these disciples of Jesus, as much as we can point out their flaws just like we can point out our own, they left everything behind to follow him and I'll tell you what, it paid amazing eternal dividends.

So, what does it look like to really follow Jesus? Well, let me start by sharing with you what it doesn't look like. There were four country churches in a small town in Texas.

There was a Presbyterian, a Baptist, a Methodist, and a Christian church and each church was overrun with some pesky squirrels. Well, one day the Presbyterian church called a meeting and they were going to decide what to do about the squirrels.

[17:25] Well, after much prayer and consideration they decided the squirrels were predestined to be there and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will. In the Methodist church the squirrels had taken up habitation in the baptistry bowl.

The deacons met, they decided to put the cover on the bowl and drown the squirrels. But, unfortunately, the squirrels escaped and there were twice as many of them there the next week. The Baptist group got together and they decided that they were not in a position to harm any of God's creation so they humanely trapped the squirrels and set them free a few miles outside the church.

Well, three days later the squirrels were all back. But, the Christian church came up with a great solution. Here's what they did. They baptized the squirrels, put them down as members of the church, and now they only see them on Christmas and Easter.

You know, what's funny about that is we laugh at that, but the reason we laugh is because there's way too much truth to it. It's so easy to buy into this cultural Christianity.

[18:30] You can call it Americanized, you can call it watered down, you can call it very comfortable Christianity, but the reality is it's really not Christianity at all. The reality is that we're losing sight of the commitment that Jesus requires from us as his disciples, and even if we know better by our words, what do our actions actually say?

Because just like these five disciples that we've talked about, are we willing to come to him ready and willing to go wherever he leads because that's what a disciple does.

See, in Mark 8, 34, a passage we'll look at a little deeper here in probably about five or six weeks, but God's word says, it says, then he, talking about Jesus, called the crowd to him along with his disciples and he said, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

See, that's what total surrender looks like. That's me and my selfishness dying and being replaced by a life committed to Christ and committed to the kingdom of God where my heart beats for the things of God.

Getting into the word isn't a chore. It's not a last priority, but my soul longs for the God-breathed words of life because they set me free. Being faithful to the bride of Christ, to the church, is a top priority and when other things get in the way, they gotta go because my worship time is that important.

[20 : 07] Whether it's my sleep schedule, my laziness, my kids' activities, my own hobbies, nothing is gonna deter me from my worship time with my brothers and sisters in Christ just like we see in the word of God.

And every day as I'm meditating on the word of God, as I'm following the Holy Spirit's leading, as my prayer time is never ceasing, I am finding my people to go deeper in God's word and deeper into accountability.

In other words, like these disciples, I am truly following Jesus and not just my own invented version of Jesus. It's the biblical version.

Now, I don't know about you, but as I studied this passage last week and I wrote these words that I just spoke to you, it hit me like a ton of bricks because following Jesus can never be about me.

It can never be about my comfort. And while that may come across strong and it may require me to kind of reprioritize my life according to God's will, I'll tell you what, Matthew 6.33 is absolutely right when it says for us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness because when my heart beats for Jesus, He will provide and I will lack nothing.

[21 : 25] In fact, being in the center of God's will is a place of joy and contentment that the busyness of this world will never satisfy. This invitation to follow is for me and so is the commitment.

And then last, and I want you to see this, the mission is also for me. The mission is also for me. Now, not only do I have this life-changing invitation from the Savior that I'm still in shock that He would call someone like me, not only am I called to follow but I'm also called to be a part of the greatest mission that the world has ever known.

So go ahead and look back here at Mark 1, verse 17 with me for a second. Here's what it says. Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people.

While that's a great translation, I think a lot of us learned it this way. Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. See, Bethany and I have some friends that have a pond on their property and we've gone out there a few times to go fishing with them but if you know me, things like hunting and fishing really aren't my thing.

I have nothing against them whatsoever but they're just not my thing because I'm impatient. I am too ADD to sit there and wait all day for a fish to bite on my line or for a deer that may never show up to walk in front of me.

[22 : 50] But I did enjoy fishing at our friend's pond because, listen, this pond is different than most ponds. First off, they stocked it with fish, like heavy, heavy stocked it with fish and they feed those fish daily.

So like, they're ready when something hits the water, they're coming up to see if it's food. It's almost like going hunting and as soon as you get out and get in your deer stand, you have 10 deer just standing there right in front of you ready to be shot.

Okay? I mean, I'm serious. Within 10 seconds of casting your line, the fish are fighting over who's going to get to your line. So, I can actually do that type of fishing and the good news about fishing for people is that they're all over the place too.

Kind of sounds like something Jesus said here in Matthew 9. He says, it says, when he, Jesus, saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

Listen to this, verse 37, Matthew 9. Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Now, I don't know about you but sometimes I am so busy doing life, even making sure church stuff is all perfect and all ready to go.

[24 : 07] I'm so busy checking off my to-do list that I forget that I am called to be a fisher of men. I am called to have my line in the water and my eyes and my heart open and ready to tell someone else about the amazing love and freedom that is found in Jesus Christ alone.

Tell somebody else about a God who ripped all that sin off of my heart who has forgiven me and who has set me on his solid ground and given me a joy and a peace that this world can't offer.

And one thing I've noticed in the godliest people that I've ever been around one thing true disciples of Jesus all have in common as they walk intimately with him is that every single one of them has a heart that beats to share Jesus with a lost world.

That's always a byproduct of truly following Christ because when you and I seek first the kingdom and his righteousness there's nothing that hurts your heart more than to know that someone is lost and separated from Christ for all eternity.

And when you're truly walking with Jesus you know that you've been saved to serve. You have been saved to serve. You've been forgiven so you can go fishing.

[25 : 25] Okay? So let me leave you today with some really powerful words by the famous preacher from a few generations back Charles Spurgeon. He actually puts it like this and it's kind of a long quote so just stay with me here but it's good stuff.

He says when Christ calls us by his grace we ought not only remember what we are but we ought also to think of what he can make of us.

It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into the apostles that men so handy with a neck would be quite as at home preaching sermons and instructing converts one would have said how can these things be?

You cannot make founders of churches out of peasants of Galilee but he says that is exactly what Christ did and when we are brought low in the sight of God by a sense of our own unworthiness we may feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what he can make of us.

Charles Spurgeon continues to say he says oh you who see in yourselves at present nothing that is desirable come you and follow Christ for the sake of what he can make out of you.

[26 : 41] Do you not hear his sweet voice calling to you and saying follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Now I love that quote I know it was kind of long but it's good stuff and today I hope no matter what baggage that you and I have maybe drug into wherever you're sitting okay I hope you can see that you are invited to be a disciple of the king of kings.

You are invited to make a commitment to leave anything of this world behind and follow Jesus into the center of his will for your life and oh yeah he's going to use you to impact others for the glory of God.

Come follow me and let's go fishing. Let's pray. Heavenly Father thank you so much for these words of life that you have spoken to us today.

Thank you for this challenge. First for the encouragement that no matter where we've been or what we've done no matter what we've been told about who we are and what we'll amount to in this life that you love us and that you have called us to yourself.

Thank you that you call us not to this boring life but to a life of surrender and commitment where we are truly dedicated to follow you and thank you that we get to be a part of the greatest mission on this earth and that is to love and serve others into the arms of Jesus Christ.

[28 : 13] So Father we just lift up this message to you I pray that you will stir hearts and you will grow us to maturity every day as we seek to be more like Jesus. Thank you Jesus we give you praise and we pray in your precious name Amen and Amen.

Hey real quick I want to give you this invitation if you're listening to this message and God is just moving in your heart and you're ready to say I'm ready to give my life to Jesus maybe you have some questions about what that really looks like please reach out we would love to come alongside you here at First Christian Church of Greensburg Indiana my name is Ray Sweet I'm the lead pastor you can reach me at 812-663-8488 Monday through Thursday 8 to 40 that's 8 to 430 that is our church office or you can email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com hey we pray that you've been blessed by this message have a great week