

Follow

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Date: 11 January 2026

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[0:00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! We are in a series called Good News.

As we walk through the Gospel of Luke, you can go ahead and turn to Luke chapter 5, but we're going to be walking through Luke, heading all the way to Easter, and the title of the message today is Follow.

Now, we all love to hear good news, don't we? As I think about my life, I have a few moments that kind of come into my mind. Like when I was born, the doctor would have told my dad, hey, good news.

He's going to be okay. He came out breech, umbilical cord wrapped around his neck, but he's going to be okay. And mama's going to be okay too, although that was a really rough delivery. Or I remember the time my brother and I went to the Greensburg Skills Competition for basketball, and I was able to tell my parents, hey, good news.

I won best 10-year-old in Decatur County. Too bad that didn't make me any taller, right? Or the time when I was 18 in my first year in college, I was studying elementary ed.

[1:29] I had gone to a Campus Crusades Bible study. And for the first time in my life, I heard the good news of Jesus. And as it marinated in my heart, one day I went to my parents and said, good news, I want to give my life to Jesus.

Can we start going to church? And we did. And then about two years later, after God had already been doing so many awesome things in my heart, in my life, I said to them after a year of Bible college, I said, good news, I feel called to preach the gospel.

I'm scared out of my mind, and I feel really inadequate. But God's made it so clear, and I want to be faithful to Him. I want to follow Him wherever He leads. Now, fast forward 15 years to 2018.

We had been in ministry for a while. We had been in Morristown, Tennessee in ministry for three years. And I called my parents up again and said, hey, good news.

We're coming back home with your grandkids. I'll be the next lead pastor at FCC. Now, after nearly seven and a half years, some of you may see that as good news, while others may not.

[2:37] I don't know. But we all love to hear good news. And I appreciate Pastor Mitch kicking the series off last Sunday as my family got some much-needed R&R; after a busy Christmas season here at FCC.

And as you turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke, probably about four-fifths of the way through your Bible, it's the third book of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark. Then you come to Luke.

If you hit John, just hit reverse one book. But you may not even realize that the word gospel, it literally means good news. The Greek word is euangelion.

And Dr. Luke, in his Holy Spirit-inspired gospel, was very detailed about sharing the good news of Jesus. He uses the verb form of this word ten times in Luke, which is more than Matthew does or Mark or even John.

And Luke wants us to understand in those 24 chapters the good news of salvation for all who will put their faith in Jesus Christ. And I appreciate Mitch teaching about the temptations of Jesus last week, how he stood strong, and even what we can learn from his perfect example as we live a life of holiness and purity in Christ through his power.

[3 : 56] And today we're going to be in Luke chapter 5 as we see Jesus call his first disciples, specifically Simon Peter, and we even learn a little bit about his call on each of our lives.

So let's start here. If you've got your Bibles, go to Luke chapter 5, verse 1, and let's just read this whole story together. It says, It says, Verse 4, When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep water and let down the nets for a catch.

Simon answered, Master, we've hurt hard all night and haven't caught anything, but because you say so, I will let down the nets. When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' feet and said, Go away from me, Lord.

I'm a sinful man. For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. And so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, Don't be afraid.

[5 : 38] From now on, you will fish for people. So they pulled their boats up on the shore. I love this. Left everything and followed him. Now I love this story and the impact this made on Simon Peter, on James, on John, probably on everybody else around.

But those guys in particular would have been Jesus' inner circle of three within his larger circle of the 12 disciples he poured into. These blue collar, rough around the edges, kick butt and take names later, men would go on to be used of God in ways that no one ever saw coming.

And we wouldn't be here today as followers of Jesus Christ if it wouldn't have been for how God transformed their lives in every way. See, these guys were professional fishermen who knew the trade well.

They'd been doing it for a long time. They knew that fish usually hid deep in the sea during the day and came to the surface at dark. That's why they fished at night and they cleaned their nets and slept during the day.

But here Jesus was on the Sea of Galilee where the Jewish historian Josephus says that Galilee was estimated to be around three million people who live there at this time.

[6 : 52] So a lot of people. And in a day where there was no technology, a gifted speaker would truly draw a large crowd. And listen, Jesus was like no other speaker.

And while we don't know how many thousands of people were crowding around him, this time we know it was significant. And they were hungry for the Word of God. Now the cool thing about this phrase, Word of God, it often refers to the same thing as we would say the Bible or the Scriptures.

But that's not what it means here. When it says Word of God, it means they literally heard God speaking to them. Jesus, the source of truth, the source of the Word of God. And we just studied for seven messages over November into the Christmas season.

We talked about the Word alive, speaking truth directly into our hearts. And listen, this was unlike any teacher they'd ever heard before. They had sat under gifted speakers, but Jesus wasn't preaching a message like those other rabbis.

They were talking about man-made traditions. Listen, churches do that today too, right? They were talking about man-made traditions. They were just quoting a bunch of rabbis. He was speaking truth about the kingdom of God.

[8 : 05] He was speaking forgiveness, salvation, eternal life. And you know what I've noticed? When we who are called by God to preach, when we get out of the way and we let the Word of God do what it does, lives are truly transformed.

When we stop trying to add to it or take away from it, when we halt from doubting it or trying to make it fit what our culture teaches, that's when things are going to go well.

Because God is in it. And when we do it our way, God is not in it. So when we stop trying to add to, take away, and let God do what He does, it's amazing.

And I love how 2 Timothy 3, starting in verse 16, tells us what the Word of God wants to do in each of us. It says all Scripture.

Not some. Not just the part you like. Not just what fits your political agenda. All Scripture. Is God, excuse me, God breathed.

[9 : 12] And it's useful. So here's its purpose. For teaching. So we need to learn, right? We need to get into it. We need to understand it and know it and study it.

So for teaching. For rebuking. So when we get a little big for our spiritual britches, God will give us a spiritual spanking because He is that perfect loving parent who loves us enough to do that.

But listen, He doesn't just rebuke us. He corrects us with the truth. And shows us the right way. And the Word of God is also, its purpose is to train us in righteousness so that we build those spiritual muscles and become more and more who God has created us to be.

And then verse 17, you would ask the question, why? Why all of that? So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Because God has a purpose and a plan for your life.

And it starts by letting the Word of God transform you. That's why when I prepare a message, and listen, I have grown so much in the last 20 years in my understanding of preaching.

[10 : 20] But I don't start with finding the funniest story or the most clever story. I don't try to think of the perfect outline that everything starts with a P and everything rhymes, you know. I try to start by just sitting before God, before the Word of God, and studying out the passage, discovering the life-changing truths that God wants to teach us, even asking the Lord, please guide this process.

And then with the Holy Spirit leading me, we add stories, we add application, we add the creativity that help it to make sense in our world today. And here Jesus has been speaking to this crowd along the Sea of Galilee, and they were literally hearing the voice of God proclaiming the eternal truth of God.

They're crowding around Him so much that He sees some boats along the water's edge with the fishermen cleaning their nets after a long night of failure. They didn't catch nothing.

And at this point, Jesus already has a relationship with Peter. So He gets into His boat. They're crowding Him so much He needs a little room. Gets into the boat.

Has Peter take Him, you know, just a few feet out. It kind of creates sort of a natural amphitheater in that location where His voice would have carried really well. And here He sits down and He speaks life.

[11 : 41] And we have no idea how long He spoke, what He spoke about, because there was a greater point to be made that Luke wanted to emphasize here. Jesus had a God agenda with Peter, James, and John that I'm sure splashed on everyone else.

After the sermon, He tells Peter to take His clean nets that they have worked hard cleaning and just throw them back out into the deep water for a catch. We're talking big nets.

Now, you have to realize at this point in Jesus' ministry, which was still fairly young, Peter had already witnessed Jesus heal the sick like his mother-in-law, already heard Him teach with authority like he'd never heard from other rabbis, saw Him do other miracles, and so he had a deep respect for Jesus.

But now this rabbi was encroaching on his territory, and he could have easily thought, Jesus, you just need to stay in your lane. Man, you can preach, you can heal. We're even wondering if you might be the Messiah.

I even hear you can build things as a carpenter. But listen, fishing is my world. This is what I know. And it's not smart to put your nets in the deep water in the daytime.

[12:52] Everybody knows that. And I'm guessing something like that went through Peter's head because he says in verse 5, Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.

So humanly speaking, he's right. It doesn't make sense. But we're not humanly speaking because we're talking about the miracle worker. And Peter knows this.

So next Peter says, after he thinks about what came out of his mouth, but because you say so, I will let down my nets. Guys, that's faith.

When it doesn't always make sense, when the world would tell me to take a different path, when I look like a lunatic, when I want to rear up and take control, when I would choose revenge or have to prove that I'm right to someone, I choose truth.

I choose to follow my Savior because you say so, Jesus. I will trust you because you are the way, the truth, and the life. And what happens? The nets fill up with a catch of fish like they'd never seen before.

[13:59] And they begin to break under that significant weight. Then James and John are called in to help. Some others, they come in, they start to fill both of the large fishing boats.

And we're not talking little tiny boats. We're talking, you know, bigger boats that would at least hold 12 disciples and Jesus as they did on many occasions. So pretty good sized fishing boats. And they start to sink under the weight.

Listen, we're not talking just a really good catch. This was a miraculous haul. And they would have recognized immediately that this was the hand of God at work.

And not only that, can you imagine the financial increase this would have brought to their business. So let me back up for just a second before we proceed with the rest of this true story. Because as I studied this passage, okay, when I studied this passage, I realized this isn't just what Jesus wanted to do in Peter, James, and John.

Good news. This is also what he wants to do all throughout Scripture as he teaches us, what he wants to do in us. So let's look at this progression that we see in this passage of what it looks like to come all in to Jesus.

[15:06] And you know what? It starts with grace. It starts with grace. Jesus already healed his mother-in-law, Peter's mother-in-law, of some kind of ailment, some kind of sickness.

And depending on what Peter thought of his mother-in-law, that could have been good, that could have been bad. I don't know. I'm just kidding. But now Jesus shows him amazing grace. See, Simon Peter was a roughneck.

He wrote checks, his behind couldn't cash, wasn't the kind of guy most rabbis were going to hang around, for sure wasn't the type that they would allow to be their disciple, so far from being the best of the best from the right family.

He was a simple blue-collar fisherman with a bad temper and a big mouth. Probably not in the best mood after a night of working with no cash to show for it. And Jesus meets him in this dilemma and shows him grace, opens his eyes.

Jesus knew exactly what it would take to open a guy like this his eyes. Now look at verses 6 and 7. After Jesus tells him to throw his nets into the deep water in the middle of the day like no one would have done, it says that when they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

[16:16] So they signaled their partners in the other boats to come and help them, and they came and filled the boats so full that they began to sink. That's grace. When their way had failed, listen, this applies to us too.

When their way had failed, God flooded them with revenue. Kind of reminds me of that scene from the movie Forrest Gump. Remember that movie? Iconic. Forrest bought the shrimp boat after he got out of the military and wasn't catching anything at all.

And then one day, a hurricane came through destroying all the shrimp boats in that region except for Forrest's boat. I think he called it Jenny One or Jenny or something like that.

And that's when catching shrimp became easy because as Forrest said, Bubba Gump shrimp's what they got. And you know what? That was a terrible impression, I know. But you know what? Peter went from failure to overflowing with fish because Jesus got in his boat.

Because Jesus showed him mercy amid his rebellion and sin despite his character flaws. By the way, in the fancy theological circles that we kind of call this prevenient grace.

[17:27] That's the grace of God that chases us down before we ever come to know Him as Lord and Savior. And I like how Isaiah 53, so going back to the Old Testament, Isaiah 53, prophesies about the mercy and grace that Jesus would show us as this passage was penned hundreds of years before Jesus came to dwell on this earth.

Here's what Isaiah 53, 5 and 6 says. But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on Him and by His wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us have turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Or to put it a little more simple, Romans 5, 8, that God demonstrates His own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. See, He meets us in our failures, our fears, our frustration, our futility, and He lavishes His grace on us.

And it's clearly shown here by this miraculous catch of fish that changes everything for Simon Peter, for James, for John. And then next, I want to show you that that grace, it has to lead to surrender.

[18:45] It leads to surrender. Jesus has shown us mercy by not giving us what we deserve. He's shown us grace by giving us the unmerited favor we don't deserve. And when we stand, like Peter did before His mercy and His grace, we can't help but to surrender all to His Lordship.

Luke 5, 8 shows us Peter's response to Jesus' miraculous power and grace. It says, when Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord.

I am a sinful man. See, that word that's translated as Lord is the word kurios, which can also mean God. So earlier in the story, Peter referred to Jesus in a very respectful way that those in authority, those in teaching roles would often receive.

He called Him Master. Kind of like if we would call someone Sir or Ma'am, okay? But now he recognizes that this is his Lord and his God.

And what was his response? He fell on his knees and begged Jesus to leave. Does that make sense? It does, because the holiness of God was shining a bright light on his sinfulness like God often does to us when we stand before his awesome light.

[20:03] See, there's not true conversion to Christ unless there's real surrender. Let me say this another way. If the holiness and majesty of Christ don't produce a remorse towards sin and a deep desire to turn away from that sinful lifestyle, then it wasn't a true conversion in the first place.

And this isn't me playing God. This is me believing what God says in His word. So the grace, the holiness, the power, the majesty, the mercy, these amazing qualities of our God, they have to lead us to a place where we recognize that He is God and I am not.

We recognize our sinfulness before Him. We have a true remorseful heart of what we've done. And then we follow that biblical command that we see over and over again.

We repent. And that word repentance or repent is simply a military word that meant the equivalent to about face. That means to turn 180 degrees, to go the opposite direction.

And yes, when I encounter the power, the holiness, the grace of my God, I see clearly my own sinfulness before Him. But now I must turn away from that old sinful lifestyle.

[21:19] I have to turn and follow Christ. See, 2 Corinthians 7:10 says this well, Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrows bring death.

See, grace should always lead us to a place of full surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Otherwise, it's just phony emotions and a glorified bath when you get baptized. So, grace must lead to surrender which last must lead us to follow.

Follow Jesus. I love after the biggest catch of their lives which would have been a huge financial boost, they leave it all behind. Here their business takes off like it never has before and they're like, okay, we're done.

And listen, it makes sense because Jesus is the one they're leaving it behind for. Look back at Luke 5, verse 9. That's talking about Simon Peter. Here's what it says.

For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. And so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, don't be afraid.

[22:30] From now on, you will fish for people. So they pulled their boats up on the shore, left everything and followed him. Church, this was a divine appointment. Peter went from being a fisherman to a fisher of men as he would start this often tedious and painful process of growing and maturing into the image of Christ, becoming the leader in the church that he was called to be.

And I love how the grace of God caused him to see his own sinfulness. And then by faith, he repented, surrendering everything to Christ.

And what happens after he, after we come out of those baptism waters? What happens? We follow him. We leave behind whatever is hindering us, no matter how big we think it is, and we follow.

Do you know what that word follow actually means in the original language? This is really cool. Ready? I'm going to blow your mind here. It means to follow. Very simple.

You spend time with Jesus. You follow him wherever he goes. Time in prayer, time in the word. You go where he goes. You seek with everything you are to mimic him, to be conformed to his image.

[23:45] We follow all of Jesus according to all of his word with all our heart. And I've told you this before, but in that first century culture, a lot of prominent rabbis had disciples who followed them.

And there became sort of a prayer that one rabbi would pray over another rabbi's disciples. He would simply say this to them, sort of a blessing. May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.

In other words, may you walk so close to him that when he kicks up dust, it covers you and you become just like him. So let me say this to you. May you be so close to Jesus that you become just like him.

And guess what? Just like he did with Simon Peter, with James, with John, the Lord has plans for your life that are good. And some of you, you know that and you're walking in his plans.

Keep it up. Continue stepping out in faith, letting him work in you, through you. It's not always going to be easy. There are going to be challenges. In fact, those hard times are often the best instruments that God uses to mature us, to grow us, to equip us to be who he needs us to be for our future.

[25 : 02] But don't forget, Romans 8, 28, and we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

I know that we also have some listening right now who maybe, maybe you have given your life to Jesus at some point and now you feel like you've failed him.

Maybe you feel like you've just kind of walked away and you've abandoned him and you don't feel like you can come back. Well, did you know that Peter made some major blunders too? We still call him one of the greatest leaders in church history though, and he was, and probably the biggest one that people talk about, there's several, but the biggest one was when he denied Jesus three times.

You remember that story where he's talking a big game at the end of Jesus' life, no matter what goes down, Jesus, I'm going to stand with you, I don't care if the rest of these cowards walk away, I am with you to the end, and you know what happens?

First chance he has to prove it. When people start questioning, weren't you one of his disciples? He denies Jesus three times. Then the rooster crowed, just like Jesus said, and he was filled with shame.

[26 : 15] And it kind of appears, I don't know this for sure, but from reading scriptures, it almost seems like Peter had sort of given up on himself and that call to ministry a little bit, maybe went back to his old life as a fisherman, but then Jesus shows up, and this is after the resurrection, and I believe it's the third time he shows up to Peter.

And in John chapter 20, we read this story about Peter and some of the others having fished all night and they caught nothing. Does that sound just like our story? At the beginning when Jesus met Peter, now here's at the end when he appears to him, they fished all night and caught nothing again.

And this guy shows up on the shore, and they can't tell who it is, and he says, hey guys, throw your nets on the other side of the boat. And they're probably thinking, yeah, we got a wise guy here. What's it going to do moving the nets ten feet, right?

But they did it, and guess what? They caught another miraculous catch. And that's when the light bulb goes off. It's Jesus! And Peter dives into the water and swims to the shore to see his Savior.

And here Jesus reminds him that he still has a call on his life to be a fisher of men. And he uses a little different phrase. He says, feed my sheep.

[27 : 31] Now aren't you glad that we have a God who doesn't give up on us when everyone else does? When we give up on ourselves? And if you found yourself straying off that straight and narrow path, maybe you're saying, man, I've not been to church since I don't even remember when I've been to church.

Well listen, today it's time to come back to Jesus and to church just like he teaches us to do because you need that support system. You need to be worshiping him and growing together with the body of Christ.

He wants us to come back and start following because he wants to walk with you every day and he also wants to use you for his purposes. Or maybe you're listening to this and this God stuff has never really been your jam.

Maybe it's never been really a part of your life and you've been fishing in your own power, often finding yourself catching nothing, finding yourself worn out, depleted, defeated.

And I want you to know that his grace wants to meet you and change everything. He's been chasing you for a while and he wants to forgive all that junk as he comes into your life and teaches you how to follow him.

[28 : 38] That starts with a heart of repentance, a heart of surrender. So good news, we have a God of grace who meets us in our sinfulness and he alone brings life as he invites us to follow him and be used for his glory.

Amen? All right, pray with me. Father, we're so thankful for your word. Thank you for preaching into our hearts this morning. May we be not just hearers but doers of your word.

Take our hearts, change us, Jesus. We pray in your name. Amen. Well, hey, let me give you this quick invitation. Once again, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana.

And if you're listening to this and you have questions about your faith, questions about church, call us. 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you. Have a fantastic week.