

The Wonder of Following Jesus!

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- [0 : 0 0] So, when you go to work and you do exactly what your job description asks of you, but you don't do anymore.
- You don't go above and beyond to impress a boss. You don't do anything more. You simply do what's required. You clock in, you clock out. This is what's called quiet footing.
- And it's, as of the last year or so, on TikTok, trending. You may think, well, I know plenty of folk who simply clock in and clock out. It's always been around. But in the last year or so, and due to the result of the pandemic, this deal of quiet footing has come to the fore.
- It was actually named as a big buzzword in the Holland's Dictionary of Words, one of the words of the year for 2022. And when people are just recognising that they don't get as much recognition and compensation for the extra hours they've put in, and to preserve and right and help, they decided to keep quiet.
- But they don't check their emails when they get home. They don't. Just do that little bit extra. And the churches and church leaders aren't mean to this. There was an article recently where a pastor, a pastor in America, that didn't want to reach its community.
- [1 : 2 0] He said, I tried outreach, innovation, inspiration. No matter what I did, the church didn't want to do anything to impact the community. It wanted to serve itself. It wanted its social gatherings and Sunday services.
- But the last thing it wanted was to make a difference. I loved the people there, and I didn't believe it was my time to leave. And so I quieted with the church. And for me, this meant that I simply continued teaching and preaching.
- I married and I buddied. I dedicated babies. I baptised believers. But I wasn't going to be the only person in the church trying to make an impact. And so I settled down and I became their chaplain instead of their pastor.
- Now, by the way, this is obviously not related to anything in here. I'm thankful to be in such a wonderful and outward-looking congregation that we've called here. But can we imagine for a moment Jesus coming to earth and saying to his disciples, those family brothers, and saying, Follow me, but don't think about it too much.
- Follow the numbers and that'll do you. Just listen roughly to what I'm saying and clock it at the end of the day and you'll be fine. And there's a four-hour Netflix binge you can watch, you know. Especially at Christmas time, watching Rotatch and Kelly.
- [2 : 3 1] But imagine Jesus saying that to us, that you can simply fill the numbers, and click the box and that'll do you. Can we imagine the background of this passage being altered where Jesus is in the wilderness and he's there for 40 days and he's being tempted and tested for the devil.
- And he's tempted to give up. And he responds by using both words. Think that Jesus didn't do that. But he said, All right, I'll do what he's saved. I'll just give in.
- Just, you know, go into the middle of the road. That'll do. And that's Jesus. God made him in every sin. He'd be offering for sin so that we could be made by God.

God gave him in every sin. So he could be the right to be the right to be the right to be the right. It's the story of Scripture. Jesus is perfect. And he fully empathizes with our failures, our faults, our concerns. Jesus, when he was tempted by the devil, he responded, by the truth of God's word, because God's word was stored up in his heart and he knew the importance of the Bible.

Knowing God, he didn't know who was the Son of God. And we see that Jesus then, he began his ministry at the beginning of the chapter, that he follows that same message that John the Baptist preached, that John the Baptist said, Repent and keep him with heaven.

[3 : 49] It's come close. It's come near. And Jesus is preaching that same message. It's not a clock in, clock out, fill in the numbers, bye-bye-bye. It's not a quiet, quitting message.

It's a follow me. It's never going to be really easy. It's going to mean a lot of change and it's going to mean a massive change to your life. And, you know, we, today, we live in a time of great change and upheaval in society and in our world with the pandemic and, you know, we're still feeling the after-effects and the process of living practice and the next decade is a decade or so.

It's going to be really tough for our nomination in the Church of Scotland which is a great time of upheaval that should have happened perhaps generations ago. But here we are and here we go.

The temptation is not so much well, I'm going to stop coming to church although that can't be the case. The temptation can be I'm going to go to church and I'm going to clock in and clock out and that's my law.

That's the temptation to go on cruise control. Be a cruise control Christian. But when we see Jesus in his heart for us this is what Eugene Peterson writes in the Message Translation.

[5 : 00] He says, Are you tired? Are you worn out? Are you burnt out on religion? Come to me. It's an invitation from Jesus. Get away with me and you'll recover your life.

I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Keep company with me and you'll learn and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. Keep company with Jesus. You'll learn to live freely and lightly. I love those breaths. Now this is the wonder of following Jesus what we're going to be thinking about today.

I wonder if someone will seek to rediscover that. I've been thinking of it from the beginning of this year. I need to rediscover this for myself. I really do. I want to go into 2023 just fill in the numbers. I want to see people come to me and say, I want to see lives changed.

I want to see my life changed. Beginning with my heart I've got to do something. This is where we're going this morning. What it means to all of Jesus and Jesus decided. So, at the beginning of chapter 4 we see the setting for Jesus' ministry is Capernaum.

[6 : 05] And Nazareth, the Christmas story is a small agricultural village. Capernaum is a larger fishing town and it was the largest town that surrounded the Sea of Galilee over there 30 times in total.

So, I guess it's kind of like the end of an S of the region if you could put it like that. And the same thing for Jesus calling his first disciples is all somewhat ordinary. He's walking along and he calls them.

We read in verse 18 Matthew tells us as Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake and they were fishermen.

Come and follow me Jesus said and I will send you out to fish for people. And then in verse 21 where Jesus calls two other brothers they saw them James son of Zebedee and his brother John they were on a boat with their father Zebedee.

See Zebedee gets two mentions there in the panorines and Jesus called them. I'm not told whether Jesus knew the fishermen beforehand but right at this moment he calls them.

[7 : 09]

And we know that there's at least one clue in the very unknowworthy mess of it all here the fact that we don't know anything about Jesus and he was very little before not so much but his life before the age of 30 or so he worked a fully a normal trade as a apprentice joiner and then you know a carpenter and he studied the Bible and did what the young Jews did and he's getting down to earth and behind the scenes now Jesus is beginning his ministry and he sees these two sets of brothers and there's just real down to earth sets about what Jesus is doing it's not a high in the sky way up here sort of Christianity or following God it's saying God is here and God is conscious and God is inviting you when you follow when you trust and there's a wild clue about today and there's all sorts of rumours you could see about Christian faith and one is that Christianity is a horrible nonsense Jesus might have existed yeah for sure maybe grasp all of that but he's certainly not the saviour of the world and those who claim to follow Jesus well they're not exactly the best examples you've probably heard people say that and you find that well these followers of Jesus they're exactly like the rest of the world who don't claim to follow Jesus or they're so full of themselves and so high philosophy that you can't get a conversation with them that as one said

Christians can be so heavily minded that of no part of the good they're unbelievable so far and they can't get a conversation and these criticisms of all Christianity have stuck around but according to the way that Jesus reveals himself at the beginning of his ministry according to the way that we live this life Christianity is the only religion the only faith that claimed that God came to earth as a human being and that it's a very earthy faith in fact it was so earthy that in the founding centuries all Christianity educated Greeks and Romans who ensized the Christian faith were being too down to earth and people who the Greeks and the Romans were repulsed that the infinite eternal mind of the universe became flesh so repulsed that's so common and so there's this sense of the divine becoming human and this two nature holy man and holy God we're going to contemplate that Jesus began his ministry by calling yourself and yourself to stand alongside him to be pro-laborers in this kingdom and say come follow me stay alongside me watch what I do

I won't place any heavy loads but you're going to suffer for me but if you know me and you know not just about me but if you know me as your friend as your brother as your king then you'll live freely and lightly because you'll know that I'm ready to be safe in me and so just as God called Abraham Joseph David and many others in the Old Testament so Jesus calls these men here to follow him and we see that people can't follow Jesus it's the unlikely and the ordinary all are invited Jesus as well would completely disregard his new family disciples that they're passionate they're skill set and they would keep on fishing he doesn't say you're not going to be a fisherman anymore you're not going to do this you're going to be these really holy joes are going to show you this he says no no you're going to be a fisherman you're going to be a fisherman in an entirely different way and you're going to learn the rhythms of life according to what God says according to what I say because I'm the saviour of the world he would keep on fishing but just a different kind of way and as they learn from Jesus they would become more like him and become more fully including themselves this is the wonder of only Jesus that he wants us to be part of his kingdom plans and that just as John the Baptist who baptized

Jesus and Jesus would ask him this question it's quite striking he would say and you come to me you're the savior of the world you're the one and Jesus suggests you you've got to know that this is God who's come to earth it's a kind of religion that's not so far removed it's faith in Jesus it's as simple as that and it's near because what God's kingdom looks like is that it's right in front of us it's right close to us it's Jesus emptying himself of his divine privileges and laying aside his glory because he's so interested in us and us being in a relationship with him and I wonder at the start of this year if you know this relationship for yourself and to know Jesus on a personal level not just a Sunday school level which is great to know and we want kids and young people to learn about Jesus but speaking to how we see her today if you know Jesus on that personal level that intimate relationship that he is our friend and that he is the savior who is the one who is the one who is the one for us well if you've watched the news the book of paper or anything like that to speak the man's been only involved in the news as a British fellow

Ginger and he's had three major interviews, hasn't he? He's all over the place, he's booked and released, it's there. Everyone's got an opinion about the Roe family.

[12 : 43] I watched the entire interview on ITD last week, I don't know if anyone else saw it. I just thought, wow, he's really given a lot of information here that we've never heard of, the likes of the Roe family.

And I'm sure, like I said, many of you have felt with this young man, you know, a great deal of compassion that he has to go through this, and that we had to lose his mother at such a young age, and, you know, in a public eye, in such a public way.

And he's deeply airing all the door to laundry with the Roe family. But, you know, you can see his struggles, where he's going through. And you're watching that, and you're looking at what the book's saying, and you think, well, this can't be good for anyone.

You know, as I've been watching this, what was unfolding with Prince Harry and the Roe family this week, I've been reading a new book at the beginning of the year, that's Tim Keller's new book called Forgive.

And he writes that forgiveness is a form of voluntary suffering. And forgiving rather than retaliating, you make a choice to bear that cost.

[13 : 52] And so whatever you might think of Prince Harry and what he's done in the case of public in his criticism, we know there's going to be prospects amongst that family, that very public family for a lifetime for sure.

But that's how you began to read that book, I was in Keller, and watch Prince Harry on TV, and whatever. I've had to think, in this passage here, we've got two sets of brothers, James and John, the son of Zebedee, you've got Simon, Peter and Andrew.

Imagine what it was like for them, the sons of Zebedee, to leave their dad at that moment, to once go and follow. Imagine what it was like for Simon Peter and Andrew to leave their family, and to follow Jesus.

He records their responses in the exact same way in verses 20 and 22. And at once, immediately, they left their boat, and they left their father, and they followed him.

And here's what's really interesting for us to know in this passage, is that in Judaism, he was the disciple who chose the rabbi, and I got alongside the rabbi, but here we've got the other way around.

[14 : 56] Jesus finds these four ordinary fishermen, he quotes and he says, I'm going to do the calling, because God is the one who calls, and equips, and who saves.

And God doesn't call me, he equips the call. He says, come, follow me, and come after me. And the fishermen, they would have known that it would bring great dishonour among their families, and that in a culture where obedience to father and mother was so keenly stressed upon in that time, so there's a sacrifice that these two sets of brothers are making in following Jesus, who's not really proven to be the sacrifice at all since the start of his ministry, but we see at once they called him, and there is this call, and call him.

Jesus would go on in Matthew 10, to say that anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who doesn't take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. So we've got this definition, which we can extend from Tim Keller's forgiveness book, of following Jesus as a voluntary sacrifice to suffer for his sake, to let things go.

It might receive support from family, friends, work colleagues, but by making that sacrifice to follow Jesus on a public level, we know that the amount of God's kingdom aren't always easy, but when we step out in the week is Jesus leads us on a great adventure.

[16 : 33] When he says, come follow me, come after me, he's not just saying, it's just halfway on the halfway hill. He's saying, I'm going to be up the mountain. I'm going to lead you in the valley, and I'm going to see you that this is a great adventure, that as you learn from me, you'll live freely and fully.

And so Jesus doesn't only call followers in the ordinary moments of our day, as fishermen, they were doing their work, that's what they were doing. He doesn't just call us to show himself to others in the ordinary day-to-day stuff of life as we have conversations.

But he brings both this challenge and conviction of what sacrifice truly looks like, and as Jesus comes to us, he shows us his heart for us.

He shows us his heart of compassion. When Jesus calls for the sacrificial, we transform ourselves to another Bible passage where Jesus is proud, we're hungry and having called him and listened to his teaching all day.

And Jesus has compassion on him. That's our Jesus for us. It's gentle and holy. It's neat and accessible. Jesus took on to me because he entered himself with his glory on earth.

[17 : 43] And that's when we know that the call of Jesus to follow him is to come after him, to learn from him, because he is the one who has revealed himself in his love and his flesh.

And I wonder if we were presented with this call today, for after him, to the sacrifice of that might be for us, what would it look like? Do some of us need to make that sacrifice fresh at the beginning of the year?

Maybe that call to serve this church in fresh and effective, and it's very simple but in a effective way. And I think that's a very poor group of this church, but maybe there's some of us who, you know, the experts serving in certain people who are calling us that step deeper, that these ordinary Christians that were called into an extraordinary one from the gospel changes everything.

It's good news for us and it's good news for the world. And as we thought about last week, it's like grace and grace alone, we're saying, we see Jesus' heart for us, it's full of compassion and needness and love.

It's an irresistible call of grace. And we know that his plans for us aren't for now alone but for eternity. Today's plans for us are greater than we could ever hope, be what imagined.

[19 : 01] And Jesus calls them, we read that they leave their nets. It's a sacrificial word, we're leaving something behind in order to follow Jesus. It means that we're giving something of ourselves and you're the one who's given up this life for us.

That's what Jesus did. He came and he not only lived among us and served and followed, but he died in our place. That is the main message of Christianity. Jesus died in our place.

And he was there from death as a biblical cross. But he rose again and he's got victory over death. And that's how we can know life ever more, because Jesus has a victory over death forever.

And so I wonder if God's not going to blow some hearts today of calling you and I to sacrifice at the beginning of this year, so that we might see God's kingdom advance, the challenges for you and I.

What would we need to do? We simply need to grow our love with God. We simply need to serve in a new way in the church. We need to be more public in our faith to be more demonstrative in who we believe Jesus to be.

[20 : 06] And if as a church we believe, we thought, well, this is how it was. But rather than thinking that was good, we want to honor God's work. And we can't go forward without looking back and recognizing how God has had to be at work.

And we always go back to the cross that we need to be. But also we have to look forward as Christians, as believers, and think, how do we keep church beings? How do we keep the main thing the main thing?

Calling Jesus means taking up our cross and looking to the cross as that sort of source of grace. How shall we respond to this today? To put aside some things that we might hold dear.

Actually, in God's mind, they're just maybe traditional things. They're just traditions of the church. They're just certain things that we can help. And it's not saying that we're going to completely release them from our midst, but saying that it is God calling us into a new season to know his heart for us, to know his heart for this community, to reach out in these days which are crucial and critical, to bring the good news of Jesus.

I see the time that is pulling on. I was going to just share a little bit from verses 23 to 25. But all I'm going to share is that Jesus is the same next day, today and forever.

[21 : 30] And when we respond to his invitation, we're stepping into his story, but we're also stepping into making history, like I get a bit cheesy with that.

Because God, this isn't almost that halfway road, He calls us to serve as a witness to Him. As Jesus is healing people and living people and many people in all religions are being healed of their diseases and He's bringing the enemies into the kingdom.

That's the challenge for us, to believe that God can still do that today. We might think about it in Mark 5 as well. We look for an amazing story of transformation and how that happens.

That as Jesus calls us forward, it's a day journey, isn't it? But sometimes transformation can be instant. In Mark 5, the healing of the demoniac, He's oppressed by demons.

Jesus comes and heals them with the word. Instantly He heals. And a man, what do we find? He can't not follow Jesus. He wants so badly to follow Jesus.

[22 : 36] What Jesus says, no, you're not going to follow me. You're not going to come after me. You're going to go at your time and you're going to be that litmus of God's mercy, God's miracle, God's life for you.

And that's quite interesting, isn't it? That this man believes all that Jesus is. Jesus doesn't call him in the same way that He calls these four Christian members. He calls him to be his disciple.

He calls him to go back to his kind. Very risky. A guy who has been in the midst and who has just been delivered. Such is the transforming power of God that we can change.

Just like that. But at the same time, we know for us that when we walk with God, it's a step-by-step process. It's a servant in that unshakable kingdom.

I love the way the worship song, Shine Jesus Shine, puts it. As we gaze on your kingly brightness, so our faces display your brightness, ever-changing from glory to glory. Mirrored here, may our lives tell your story, shine on me.

[23 : 39] The priorities of following Jesus and the brightest kingdom is that we get to partake in all that He has for us. We get to use our already-bear skills in the view of the now and not yet kingdom of God.

We get to grow and we get to develop and gifts that God has in store for us as well. Think of the greatest parents who fight behind the scenes for their mum as a healing gift.

She's prayed for a number of mums who weren't able to have babies. And if they did, it was all to our prayers. I think that God needs to be serious. There's the already gifts that we have.

There's the yet-to-be gifts that are there in front of us. But we all tell the story of the Gospel as we live in His story. We all show something of Jesus, the way we live our lives, if we're doing it in the same pattern.

Jesus is in the business of transformation. He's building His kingdom here. May He continue to do so in this coming year. May we be encouraged that all that's going on in our lives and in resisted temptation to fight the children that we should go through and put our heads.

[24 : 51] May God, by His Spirit, the heart of human hearts, that will log in for His presence, that we will know that our awareness of God has locked on us, that He will put in our hearts to see, that have that desire to see many new people come and follow Jesus with a full purpose.

I wonder if we need to respond to this today. Follow Jesus. Whatever that means, whatever that looks like, leave behind some things that will give you how long to for a while. Look forward, full and beautiful, and into the full and beautiful eyes of Jesus.

What a day that looks like for us. Don't miss that chance today. Come to Jesus. Maybe that's the first time you need to do that with a full purpose. You need to do that for the first time. To know Jesus. And follow Him.

To keep company with Him. Because He's got big plans for both here and for me. For this time. Amen. We're going to close our service by singing together the words of Because He lives, God sent His Son.

They called Him Jesus. He came to love, heal and forgive. He bled and died. To buy my pardon. And let's pray to sing. And let's pray to sing. The beautiful Savior of the name is.

[25 : 59] The beautiful Savior of the name is. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's say the words of the benediction blessing as we close our service. Tea and coffee in the hall afterwards.

[30 : 15] It would be great to see you. If you join us. Amen. Reminder this evening. Half past six. All welcome. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God.

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with us all. Now and here. Evermore. Amen.