

Two Invitations to Follow Jesus

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[0 : 00] This is particularly on verses 43 to 46. We'll begin again at verse 43 in reading. The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee.

He found Philip and said to him, Follow me, follow me. Some time ago actually, I think it was like six years ago, those of you who remember, we were embarking on a series on the twelve disciples and we looked at their characters, we looked at their personalities, we looked at their call, the call that Jesus gave them to be his disciples.

We looked at the relationship with Jesus as his disciples. And I'm certainly not going to repeat what was said six years ago.

I don't want to embark again on another series on twelve disciples. But as we've been looking in our morning services and the invitations that Jesus gives to know him, to follow him, to know God as Lord, to be his disciples, what we find here in John chapter 1, we might say, certainly from verse 43, what we find is what we might call a double-barreled invitation.

Because on the one hand, as we read there from verse 43, we see Jesus calling Philip, inviting Philip to himself with the words, Follow me.

[1 : 30] And then as we notice that Philip has been found by Jesus, then Philip goes to his friend Nathaniel and he invites Nathaniel to come to know Lord Jesus as Messiah, as the Christ, as the Saviour, and with the words, Come and see.

He, Philip, has been found by Jesus and in being found by Jesus, Philip asks a friend to come and see the Saviour. You know, as he said, we've found the Saviour.

Well, yes, because Philip has been found by Jesus, we'll come back to these intricacies just in a moment. So, the first invitation of Jesus to one, to be his follower, Follow me.

The second invitation, just a simple and yet a profound, we might say a profound act of personal evangelism. Simple words. There's so much meaning.

Come and see. And it's these two invitations we're going to focus on this morning. And may I say this will be the last of our, yeah, the last of our studies in some of the invitations.

[2 : 38] That are found in Scripture to know and follow the Saviour. Next week, of course, is the baptism. The week after that is our communion service.

So, this will be the last of our, certainly for the white line of the way, the studies on invitations to know and follow the Saviour. And we're hearing again the voice of Jesus.

We're hearing the voice of Jesus inviting sinners to be his followers. And I pray that that is, you know, has been your heart's desire. That is your heart's desire.

And that before anyone or anything else, that you know what it means to follow Jesus. Again, we'll be exploring in more detail what it means actually to follow the Saviour.

So, let's look first of all at what we see here is the invitation to follow Jesus. I mean, obviously, this isn't the only time that Jesus uses these words, follow me, when he calls the individuals to himself.

[3 : 38] I mean, in his public ministry, of course, he chose men to be with him and called them to follow him. But I think something we can overlook so often when we hear again the words of Jesus to others to follow him is the very fact that, you know, Jesus is in control.

It's Jesus who takes initiative. It's Jesus who calls people to himself. It's not any kind of leap in the dark by someone, you know, all of a sudden, yes, I think I'm going to follow Jesus.

It's certainly not any initiative in my part or your part to be a Christian. No, the call comes from Jesus. That's exactly what we see here in verse 43.

Jesus has decided to go to Galilee. He's been in the Jordan area. He's now going to Galilee. It's Jesus who finds Philip. It's Jesus who says to Philip, follow me.

Jesus is in a particular place at a particular time. This place and time that's been ordained from all eternity for Jesus to find someone ordained from all eternity to follow Jesus.

[4 : 50] You know, that's amazing truth. It's just wonderful truth and the truth that you and I must praise God for. You know, to be loved with that eternal love of God and called by that eternal call.

And yet in a moment of space and time to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus, the one in whom you've been chosen, the one in whom you've been called to, the one in whom you're saved, but in this moment, at a moment of space and time, hearing the voice of Jesus, that voice inviting you to follow Him.

I mean, that's just so overwhelming in the depth of grace and love because that call given to you who are an undeserving sinner, to me, an undeserving sinner.

And you know, when you realize, when you consider, you who know Lord Jesus as your Savior, you who have been found in Jesus and found by Jesus, you who are in Christ by faith, remember, it's all of God.

from all eternity, He chose you. He ordained that, yes, in a particular place, at a particular time, that you would be sought out by the words of Jesus to follow Him.

[6 : 10] An invitation that you heard, that was given in a particular place, at a particular time, but knowing that you, yes, have been called from all eternity, and yet hearing that voice at that moment in time, for many, I suppose, it's a church service.

You know, the Word of God has been preached on a particular Lord's Day, or maybe even at a particular midweek meeting. The voice of Jesus heard that call to sinners to repent and turn to the Lord Jesus, to follow Him as Lord and Savior.

And the Holy Spirit drawing that sinner to receive Christ as Savior, God working through particular circumstances to bring a sinner to salvation, and for that sinner to follow Jesus.

Yes, I'm sure many of you can testify to these circumstances. I certainly can. But then, notice in verse 43, look at the call of Jesus.

Follow me. Follow me. And that call given to a particular individual, and someone whose name, someone called Philip. And you say, well, why this person? Why Philip?

[7 : 21] Why him? Because it was God's sovereign will, God's sovereign purpose, that this man called Philip would be called by Jesus. If you remember sometime back, I think about a few months ago, in our evening services, we were going through Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and we were focusing on the subject of love.

And remember, our first focus, Paul's first focus in that letter to the church in Ephesus, that first focus of love was God's electing love. That teaching that reveals the love of God, that God should choose anyone for salvation.

And that choosing in salvation being in Christ, even before the creation of the world, even before Jesus came to earth, God planned, had planned to choose.

Yes, choose unholy people, people who deserve nothing of God's saving love, saving grace.

People who God knew before they knew God. And so, why Philip?

Because it was God's electing love in Christ. It was God's electing love in the one whom Philip would hear the voice, that voice calling him, follow me.

[8 : 38] There was nothing of any attraction or any merit in Philip that Jesus should call Philip to follow him. I mean, you know, as you know, in other parts of Scripture, Philip was actually a very ordinary man, a very ordinary Greek-speaking individual.

you find in the rest of Scripture, he was a very slow-learning disciple. He actually quite often failed to see the bigger picture. He couldn't quite, almost couldn't quite see the bigger picture of Christ's power.

But, you know, even if Philip being the absolute opposite of that, even if he had a much different character, that would have made no difference to Jesus calling him. Philip, this ordinary man, Philip was called, he was called from an ordinary part of the Middle East to do extraordinary things in following Jesus.

And so, the calling of Jesus to Philip, that invitation of Jesus to follow me, isn't that a great comfort? Isn't that a massive comfort to you?

You and I know that there's nothing of any merit in ourselves that Jesus should call you to follow him. it's all of grace because that grace shows forth the love of God and the kindness of God to you who deserve and to me who deserve nothing of that grace.

[10:01] Because it's not by the world's wisdom that anyone's saved. It's by the saving love of God. And, you know, when you read Paul's letters, you know, how often Paul rejoices in that great truth.

You know, he echoed, for example, the words that God spoke in Exodus 33 when God spoke to Moses, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

And, you know, Paul didn't want to, you know, anyone to say, well, God's been unjust in that way, in that choosing. Listen to what Paul said in Romans 9.

What shall we say then? Is there injustice in God's part? By no means. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but in God who has mercy.

And, of course, in 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 26, 29, where Paul spoke it wasn't by any of man's wisdom or man's worldly standards that God chose, that God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

[11:18] God chose what's weak in the world to shame the strong. He chose what's low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Philip couldn't boast in the presence of Jesus and being called, you can't, I can't. It's all of grace, all of God's grace. But in saying that, in saying that, yes, Philip was chosen because God chose to save him, because in Christ, Philip was chosen from all eternity, well, we have to actually focus on the words that Jesus uses here to Philip.

I mean, Jesus didn't just appear and, you know, Philip goes over to Jesus in some kind of mindless state. No, Jesus used words that engaged Philip's heart and mind and will.

Follow me, says Jesus. I mean, these are two simple words. And yet, they've come from the mouth of Jesus and because they've come from the mouth of Jesus, they are utterly powerful in the call and in the force of that call.

So, I think we do have to explore a wee bit more the words of the invitation to see the power of the word of Jesus, to see that word that's come from the one who has all authority to invite and all authority to be received as Lord and Savior.

[12:43] And so, whether it's Philip of Bethsaida or, we read just a moment ago, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, whether it's Matthew, the tax collector, whether it's you, whether it's me, who Jesus has given this call to follow him, that call has been heard and received and obeyed.

Why? Because it's Jesus who invites. It's Jesus who calls. And that's why Philip responds in the way he does to the invitation of Jesus. Because the call came from the Lord Jesus.

Because Philip heard the voice of authority. Divine authority. He heard the call of the Divine Son of God. He heard a command that wasn't going to be disobeyed.

Why? Because Jesus is Lord. Because Jesus is the Christ. Because Jesus calls by his authority that authority that's greater than any other authority.

So Philip didn't, you know, follow Jesus because somehow Jesus was admired by him. You know, some kind of good teacher or some kind of exemplary figure. I mean, at that time, a couple of thousand years ago, students that actually would follow a particular rabbi or teacher, somebody whom they respected, somebody they admired, you know, as a good rabbi, a good teacher, a good theologian.

[14:06] But of course, Jesus is infinitely more than a mere teacher, a mere, you know, respected individual. Jesus has all authority as Lord to call and to be obeyed in that calling.

What did Jesus later say to his disciples? You did not choose me, but I chose you. And in that choosing, Jesus still calls. He still invites.

Because the Savior who called Philip is calling you to follow him. I mean, it's the same words, the same authority, follow me. But then, of course, what have we got to say about these words?

What's contained in these words that's still there, still there in the living voice of the Lord Jesus? Follow me. Well, I think of it like this.

When we're thinking of that following Jesus, following after Jesus, going where Jesus goes, yes, teaching what Jesus teaches, living as Jesus lived, in obedience to God's Word.

[15:17] What he asks of you, to follow him, to walk behind him, in love. And yes, doing that, leaving all to follow Jesus. That's what Philip and the other disciples did, didn't they?

They left their livelihoods, they left their man-made security for that higher security of following Jesus. Just as you and I have to do in following Jesus.

Counting that following of Jesus more precious, more immediate than any other attachment that you have in life. But we've got to say this as well.

Because following Jesus involves absolute loyalty, an absolute commitment to the Saviour. That full and absolute commitment to the one who's called you into his presence, who's invited you to be with him.

He says, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age. So you have that relationship with the Lord Jesus that transcends any other relationship that's formed in life.

[16:23] Whether that relationship is in family or friends or whoever. You know, in life, we can sometimes talk about following in terms of support or attachment.

You know, fans of a particular team speak about following that team. You know, and that has the idea of complete support and loyalty to their team and they're not going to support any other.

Well, of course, in an infinitely greater, infinitely fuller sense, your following Jesus tells of your unbreakable connection with Jesus. You're not going to follow anyone else.

You're not going to have any eternal attachment to anyone or anything else. You'll seek to live for him and for us. That will be your first love, the Lord Jesus.

You're not going to be ashamed of him when you follow him. You may well suffer hatred in the world because of your utter devotion to him, but you'll continue to follow Jesus.

[17:24] And so the question has to be asked, are you truly following Jesus? I mean, he's invited you to follow him. He's invited you to walk behind him and yes, and with him.

He's invited you to be utterly devoted to him and that absolute commitment to him in his word and his truth in himself. And so ask yourself, as I have to keep asking myself, are you truly following Jesus?

Or are there times when your devotion is elsewhere? Following another? Maybe even following an idea about Jesus but not Jesus himself.

So yes, examine your following Jesus. Two weeks time, the Lord's Supper is going to be dispensed. Even now examine yourself to see, you know, the extent of your following Jesus because you're hearing that voice again, that invitation.

You utter these words that are still uttered. So don't drift in your following Jesus but be the more resolved to be that, to be utterly committed in your allegiance and your devotion to the Saviour.

[18:37] Remember as a child when, for a time anyway, we were growing up in Perth and we used to go to the afternoon Sunday school and one of the choruses that we sang, I still remember it, a very simple one, I have decided to follow Jesus but it's the words that were in that chorus, no turning back.

That was the refrain, no turning back. No turning back. Is that your true resolve? No turning back.

Are you following the Lord on that narrow road? Well, follow Him and continue to follow and don't be distracted by the lure of the world and be tempted by all the attractions that seem to grab your mind and your heart that have no eternal value.

But follow Jesus. Follow Jesus on the road to the cross. When you follow Jesus on the road to the cross, you'll see the Saviour who died for you. And follow Jesus on the road, yes, to the grave where you see Jesus who was dead for you there in that tomb.

Follow Jesus on the road to His resurrection and you see Jesus risen for you. And follow Jesus on that road to His ascension where you see Jesus ascended into heaven to be there interceding for you.

Follow Him to heaven itself where you have that sure promise of being with Him and seeing Him face to face. Are you on that road to glory as you follow Jesus?

[20:04] Because there's no turning back. The invitation is to follow Jesus. But notice, secondly, we said that there are two invitations here. And look at the second invitation in verse 45 to 46, the invitation to see Jesus.

Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, we have found Him. Now of course he could only say that because He'd been found himself. We have found Him of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathaniel said to Him, can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to Him, come and see. The invitation to come and see. And this is evangelism in action.

This is evangelism in the most basic and yet most, I think, most effective manner. It's not the product of some kind of strategic planning. It's not any kind of expensive, you know, campaign. This is evangelism that's as a result of following Jesus. And you see the evidence here. Because following Jesus, if it means walking behind Him, if it means doing as Jesus does and seeking, above all, seeking to glorify God, to bring people to that encounter with the Savior, to come to that saving knowledge of Jesus by faith, well, following Jesus involves certainly doing as Jesus does and making people aware of who Jesus is.

[21 : 30] Now, of course, following Jesus, we're not dying for others as Jesus did, but we are showing forth the love of Jesus in salvation. And you see there, as we commented earlier, look at the number of times that the word found is found.

Verse 43, Jesus found Philip. As we said, after Philip's been found by Jesus, Philip finds Nathaniel. Verse 45. If you like, a mirroring of Jesus' actions.

As Jesus found Philip, so Philip found Nathaniel. Jesus, let's emphasize that again, Jesus found Philip. As we said, Philip didn't find Jesus.

Now, you know, as I know, in the media, you go to the media, for example, and you often see the expression, so-and-so found God. You know, maybe it's after some kind of highly publicized misdemeanor on a person's part, so-and-so found God.

And I think there's an inbuilt kind of mocking when you read that. But of course, it's not the sinner who finds God. It's God who finds the sinner. It's God who searches for the lost sheep.

[22 : 41] What did Jesus say? I've come to seek and to save that which is lost. So that, in that seeking, Jesus finds. In that searching out the person who by himself couldn't find Jesus, couldn't save himself, the sinner sought out, found, saved.

If any of you have seen the film *Amazing Grace*, you know, the film on William Wilberforce, the great 18th century Christian abolitionist, in one of the scenes in the film, Wilberforce is actually seen praying.

His butler finds him praying. And the butler asked Wilberforce, you found God, sir? And Wilberforce responded, he found me.

And of course, he was absolutely right. Jesus came to find. He came to find you. If left by us, we could never have found Jesus.

But the love of God is such love of God for lost sinners that he pursued you, he found you, saved you in Christ.

[23 : 50] And of course, as we said, no one can seek and save as Jesus seeks and saves. But it's for you who are in Christ, you who by faith are in the Lord Jesus. You have a responsibility as I have a responsibility to search out others so that they hear the good news of salvation.

and that surely is the essence of evangelism. Jesus finds me, I must find others to tell the Saviour. So, what we're reading here, Philip's actually, well, that's why we read there from verse 35, actually what Philip's doing was actually repeating what had happened the previous day, the day before he was found by Jesus because you read there of Andrew finding his brother Simon, Simon Peter, to tell him that we found the Messiah.

So, Andrew had found his brother because he had been found by Jesus. Philip, he's been found by Jesus.

Philip's now going to seek out others to find, to meet with Jesus. And if that's finding, then it's action. Finding involves action.

Finding, others, means going out of your way. It means going out even of your comfort zone. Don't be content just to have been found by Jesus and that's it, that's it. Let's just forget anything else.

[25 : 13] No, because part of your following Jesus is inviting others to know Jesus. You have been given to invite others.

I mean, you have already received that invitation to know Jesus. well, you invite others to do what Philip did to Nathaniel, verse 46, to come and see.

I mean, as we said, Philip's going to look for his friend Nathaniel. I mean, Philip has now, even in that moment, having been found by Jesus, he's now got the zeal, his desire to tell others.

He wants to tell others about what he himself has been privileged to know. So he goes to look for Nathaniel and he finds Nathaniel and he tells Nathaniel about Jesus.

He tells him that the one who's been promised by the prophets, the one who'd been promised to come as Messiah, he's here, Jesus of Nazareth. And as you know, many times you've heard this,

Nathaniel's dismissive of such a claim.

[26 : 15] Can anything good come out of that backwater place in Nazareth? But notice, notice, Philip isn't rebuffed by that rebuke. He's going to persevere because he knows that that encounter with Jesus has to happen.

And so, very simple words again, come and see, come and see. Yes, Nathaniel at first has been a bit sceptical of what Philip said, but you know, in evangelism, don't be daunted, don't be put off. When there is that scepticism, tell others, come and see. Find a friend. Tell that friend about the Saviour. Tell him to come and see.

And surely that's the measure of faith in Jesus. That desire to follow Him and in following Him, inviting others to see for themselves the love and the beauty of the Lord Jesus.

To see the one who died for sinners. You have a great Saviour to tell others about. Now, it may be at times just like Philip here that all that you really can say is just come and see.

[27 : 26] Come to where Jesus is. Where do you see Him? Come to His Word. Come and hear the voice of Jesus speak again of His giving of Himself for sinners. Come and see the one who gave His life for others.

Come and see the one who has made sin so that those for whom Jesus died might not face the wrath of God against sin. Come and see the one who is crucified for you.

Come and see the one who is dead for you, who is risen for you, ascended for you. Come and see the one who has promised to return from heaven and to gather His people to know eternal life in the new heaven and new earth.

Come and see as I saw, as I came and saw and having come unseen never been the same again. but as you've yet to come and see the Savior, well, you've heard the invitation.

The invitation has been given even this morning to come and see Jesus. So don't put off what's so urgent in your life. There are many, of course, important things happening in your life but the most important thing of all is to come and see the Lord Jesus and He's waiting for you to respond to that invitation to come and see Him and in seeing Him to be transformed, to be changed and have your life sent in a new direction as you follow Jesus.

[28 : 53] So the invitation has been given. Don't refuse to hear that invitation and respond to that invitation. Don't, you know, send it back.

Sometimes we get invitations to go to a certain place and we have to say, no, I can't do that. Well, no, this is different. The invitation to come and see Jesus don't send that back but receive it and act upon it by faith and follow the One who will never leave you, who will never forsake you, who promises you new life in Him eternally.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we give You thanks that the invitations are given. The invitation from the voice of Jesus to follow Him.

And may it be, Lord, that even as that voice has been heard again, that there will be those who will follow Jesus with all their heart and soul and strength and mind.

We pray, Lord, that truly, Lord, You will empower Your people in that following to tell others to come and see the Savior. And may it be, truly, Lord, that there will be those who do come and see and whose lives are changed.

[30 : 08] so, Lord, may it be that You will be glorified in these invitations. Lord, bless, we pray, the proclamation of Your Word both here and elsewhere.

And may it be that all that has been said will have been to Your praise and to Your glory. Continue with us now, Lord, as we sing Your praise. And we ask, Lord, Your blessing upon the remainder of this day.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 96a. We're singing this at the start of the service and we'll close in this psalm.

We'll sing from verse 10 to 13. We're on page 127 and the tune is Bloxham. Tell every land the Lord is King. Established as the earth and cannot move, the Lord will judge the peoples in His truth.

Tell every land the Lord is King. 10 to 13. To God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[32 : 01] Amen. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest on and remain with you both now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.