

The Men and Women Who Followed Jesus

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Date: 27 February 2022

Preacher: BK Smith

[0 : 0 0] thankful for that. So let's get back to the life of Christ here, guys. I'll be honest with you, I've rewritten this sermon three times. The last time was at seven in the morning.

Today, it's been a struggle, and part of it is there's just so much here that I want to unpack for you because there's so much power in life that I want you to see that is found in the life of Christ, and some of the things are just so absolutely subtle, we sometimes miss it. So I'm hoping to connect a few stories in the life of Christ for you, but I want to specifically look at the term, what did Jesus mean when he said, follow him? Follow him. That is a loaded term as we're going to see, and it means many things to many different people, and we're going to see this in different lives of people, but as you know, the study of life of Christ, we're taking from all four of the Gospels. We're not just sticking in one of the Gospels. We're looking at all four. We're kind of looking at the different testimonies that we find within the Gospels, and we are in presently what is known as the Galilean ministry. This is an 18-month period of time where Jesus spent with his people in northern Israel blanketing the land. He actually does three specific preaching tours through all the land of Galilee, and this is where we see many of the stories of Jesus' actions take place in Galilee during this 18-month period. Remember, Jesus was on this earth in his public ministry, we believe, for roughly three and a half years. The first year, the first phase, the first year of his ministry was when he was baptized, which was kind of his calling to be about his father's business, and he knew that calling was going to happen when John the Baptist started baptizing in the Jordan. That's when Jesus would know the time has come, because remember, Jesus Christ is a king, and every king has a herald, and John the Baptist was that herald. He was the one who came, who cried out in the wilderness, repent for the kingdom of God is near, and Jesus knew he's the king. He's coming, right? So that first phase is Jesus kind of getting those things in order, and what's going to happen, and we're going to look at a little bit about that this morning, is there's this mass of people that are around John the Baptist, which speaks to the hunger that existed in Israel at that time for Jesus? And remember, Israel is no happy place at that time. First of all, they're ruled by Romans, and the leaders that the Romans have put over them are cruel, horrible people. Cruel, horrible people. At a whim, they wipe out towns. They murder thousands of people if they feel it is a challenge to their authority, okay? So this is who the people live under. Then you have the Jewish leaders, which are mostly set in the temple, and we read about those. Those are the Sadducees, and they are horribly corrupt people as well. They're robbing from the people because the people know if you're a faithful Jew, you need to go to Jerusalem, you need to offer sacrifices at the temples, and these people are ripping them off in any way possible. So not only are they under this oppression of a foreign power, and

Israel hasn't had a king for 600 years. They've been under domination from all these foreign powers now for 600 years, and they're longing for the Messiah because they understand in the Old Testament there's prophecies that God will send a Messiah to deliver his people. So there's this messianic expectation, we call it. So the people are just waiting for someone to come and save them because they can't overthrow Rome. They have no way of undoing the corruption that exists in the temple.

So they need God to send his Messiah. So that's the stage upon which Jesus comes. So that first phase of his ministry, first year, he starts gathering all those people that are around John the Baptist, and secular sources tell us that the people were so great that followed John the Baptist that Herod, one of the four leaders who ruled in Israel, started getting pretty uppity about this.

He started to get concerned about his power base because so many people were following after this man, John the Baptist. Now as a herald who speaks, what is he supposed to do when the king finally arrives?

[5 : 09] Nothing. He's supposed to be quiet and send the people over to Jesus, and that's what Jesus starts doing. The people start leaving John the Baptist, and they start following Jesus because they're understanding that this is the Messiah that John the Baptist had been crying out and telling them. The king is no longer coming. The king is now here. So now he's presenting himself to the people in Galilee. So as y'all know, there's three things that he's doing. One, Jesus Christ is proclaiming himself as king, the Messiah.

The kingdom of God is now at hand. Repent and believe in me. That's the message. He's doing miracles, and we talked about this last week. He's going through the land, and he's healing every sort of disease, malady, demon possession, mental illness, all these different things. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, everything. Jesus Christ is healing. There's nobody he's not healing, and this power, and the fact of the matter is, Jesus, and we're going to talk about this a little bit next week, but there's actually a specific verse where the people are so overwhelming Jesus, he tries to get away in the wilderness just to get a breather, and he says, listen, I got to get away from this. Why? Because I still have to tell you about my father. I still have this proclamation that I have to give you, and we're going to see that story that there's these little segues in the gospel where Jesus is trying to get away from the crowds just to take a breath, but he wants to, he knows the most important part of his ministry is preaching the truth of the gospel, right? But we all know that God is full of rich compassion and mercy, and everywhere he goes, he shows up by boat, there's crowds and crowds and crowds, and we learn that the message actually spreads far into Syria and other parts outside Israel, and they start bringing their sick, their hurt to him so that he may heal them. So this ministry of Jesus is getting vast. So by doing the miracles that he did, he's not proving that he is God because he does the miracles, remember we talked about that, but the miracles authenticate the words that he says, remember that?

We talked about that last week. By doing the miracles, he's saying, listen to me. Moses did those miracles. Paul does those miracles later on. Elijah, Elisha in the Old Testament, the prophets did miracles to authenticate the words that he was saying, because the words were the most important part of the ministry. Hear this truth that I have for you. So he's going around, and then we know the third phase, which will be the final year of the life of Christ, where he's going to spend time teaching. We're going to cover that later, and obviously that is the cross, but right now we're in this 18-month period of the life of Christ. And today I want to examine, just as I said earlier, when he calls people to follow him, what does that mean? I've already taught you the gospel, the good news, I've authenticated my words with miracles, and now Jesus Christ is forcing people to make a decision. And this is an amazing study, because there's actually almost, I struggled whether there was three types of people or four types of people. One we have is this massive crowd, and this crowd was in the tens of thousands of people of any moment following Jesus. So big, he couldn't even go into villages or towns. It was just so many people around him. There was just crushing impact of the people that wanted to be near Jesus. So you have the crowd, and in that crowd, and we talked a little bit about this last week, there's a lot of people who follow because they want to know what's in it for them. Amen? They do. They want to be healed. And you know what? I don't blame them. And we're going to learn a little bit about a story today. There was no health.

Authority. No social services to help homeless people find homes. If you were hurt, you didn't have family. If you had leprosy, you're not even allowed in the village. You have to get away as far as people because you're unclean. And you're actually commanded when people come to you, you have to say unclean, unclean, unclean. It was a horrible place to live.

[10 : 19] So what you would do if you would have someone hurting, we're going to talk about this later, but you just bring them to the city gates and let them beg all day. If you were lucky enough to have family that cared enough to take you there.

And historians tell you near the city gates, you know, when we go into a city, you can see the splendor and all that kind of stuff. Do you know what it was like at the front of first century city gates? It was sewage. It was stinky because it's not like these people can go to the outhouse. They would just live in this dirt and mire, just hoping someone would have pity on them enough to give them money that they could pay for food, that they could help with their family in some sort of way.

So this isn't a some people try to romanticize what life would have been like there. It was not glorious in any way.

So you have the crowd and we're going to look at rejection and why people rejected Jesus Christ. And we're going to cover that in a couple of weeks. But we also see people responding. So I called them we all know and David read for us the story of God calling the apostles to follow him.

[11:52] And I want to share some other stories. But the fact of the matter is if you were there and you were listening to Jesus and you were able to conclude from his words and the works that he did that he is indeed the Messiah, that he is God come in the flesh.

And you wouldn't see and do that. The question that you're automatically put to is how do I respond? It's the same thing today.

When you are confronted with the truth of everything Jesus Christ is, you have to respond in some way. You either have to reject it or accept it.

There's no middle ground. There needs to be some sort of response. And the response that Jesus Christ asked for is follow me.

how do you ignore such a command?

[13:11] Like what would it take for you to walk away from Jesus Christ knowing the things that he did, knowing the things that he saw?

So there's a reason to accept him and there's a reason to reject him. Now what's interesting about what it means to follow Jesus is it actually means different things to different people in the Bible.

For some people it's going to be to believe the gospel, to believe the truth, to believe the Messiah, to hear the words and repent. Others, it's going to mean something more.

It's going to mean becoming an apostle, one appointed by God to do a work of Jesus Christ. I'm going to look at this a little bit. And then we're going to see other people and how they respond.

So we're not, I don't want to look so much at the crowds this Sunday because that is such a big thing. That's why I had to rework the sermon because it was just so much depth to understanding what that crowd signifies in the life of Christ because you have to think that crowd is filled with tens of thousands of people who will shout and want him to be king and in a couple of years they will crucify him and they will cheer the Romans on as he dies on the cross.

[14:40] How do you get from point A to point B? And we're going to look at that. How it is unbelief come about in the crowd.

But I want to share some of the other stories with you that I think that are absolutely amazing about some of the individual stories that the gospels give to us and I want to share some of those with you.

So please take your Bibles out and look at John 4. John 4. If you do not have a Bible please let me know because obviously we can have them on our phones.

One of my favorite one is YouVersion is the version that I use. But we have Bibles so if you do not have a Bible here please request one or ushers would love to give you one because I want you to read along in the text with me.

And we're going to be bouncing around in the gospels a little bit because I want you to see these stories and I want you to see some of the power that happens in the connections. And here we're kind of talking about some of the people who get to experience Jesus.

[15:49] So let's take a look at John 4. Look at verse 46. And this is one of Jesus Christ's first recorded miracle. In fact it's the second one after the wine.

We know some other miracles happen in John chapter 3 because Nicodemus says you did many signs and things that only God could do but here we are and this is happening in the first phase of ministry.

Like I said Jesus baptized in the wilderness he goes to Jerusalem Judea which is the southern part he then heads north into the land of Samaria which was kind of like hybrid Jews mixed in with other races and the Jews hated him.

If you weren't pure blood you were a mess and they hated you for that so they wouldn't even go there and now he's heading back up towards Galilee. So look at verse 46. So he that's Jesus came again to Cana in Galilee.

Remember that's where the wedding in Cana happened when Jesus turned the water into wine. Right? Where he made the water into wine I don't even have to comment it already says that. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill.

[17:02] Now the official that John is talking about is a Roman official. This isn't a Jewish official this is a Roman official and as we know they're the ones who rule the land and anybody acting in

that kind of an official capacity would have been a part of the government.

The Jews were left to do their Sanhedrin they were allowed to do their own little court system but overall the government controlled by Rome and they gave it to different leaders.

Remember Roman officials had two goals. One keep the peace two collect the taxes. You could do anything else as long as the money flowed back to Rome and Rome did not have to send an army to quell a group of people Romans were happy.

Alright? So this guy works in that line of work. The person who ruled this land is a man by the name of Herod Antipas and Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great and he would be the one who would eventually behead John the Baptist.

So we understand this official to be a member of Herod Antipas' court. very most likely he was either a Roman citizen or he functioned as a citizen of Rome a Gentile of some sort.

[18 : 35] But there's something else we know about this man. He's desperate. He's very desperate. His child is dying and of course we know what parent wouldn't do all they could to save their child.

So verse 47 when this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son for he was at the point of death.

Sometimes the gospels are so subtle with the words. What happened was remember in John 3 Nicodemus a religious ruler comes and approaches Jesus and he says you must be from God because no one could do the things that you do.

You've done these signs and wonders and Nicodemus is like he's the head religious teacher in the land. So he's recognized you are a rabbi.

Okay? So Jesus is down in Judea southern and then he's gone back north. It's a couple of days journey away and this official is based down in the south.

[19 : 51] This man is chasing after Jesus. He's heard the stories because Jesus is the talk of the town right now in Jerusalem in Judea that's the southern part and this guy has a desperate need and remember last week we were talking about if there was real miracle workers and we're talking about New Testament apostles who could heal at any time we would all go to them amen?

We would find out where they lived and would we not take our loved ones to them? They wouldn't be hidden and mysteries for us to understand. I'd take my mom who has cancer I'd make sure I'd fly and get her over there.

Some of you have spouses children who have ailments you would take them there. So that's what this guy's doing. He knows someone can heal his child so he's hunting this guy down.

Just think about this this is a Roman citizen looking for a Jewish rabbi. This isn't an ordinary type of thing event that happens. So this man obviously desperate chases Jesus down.

So Jesus says to him so obviously he finds him presents his situation to him and says unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

[21 : 20] Like that sounds kind of like an uncaring statement right? But that that's the thing that Jesus has been dealing with.

People who are desperate to believe Jesus because of their life situation they don't ask a lot of questions. Why? Because they're at the end of the rope. And you know why they're at the end of the rope?

Because God wants them at the end of the rope. God wants them in a place where they're ready to accept him. And that's a hard truth for us.

Very hard truth. But you who are believers in Jesus Christ you know your story. there was a point there was a need that you needed to be met and Jesus was there to hear your cry.

Amen? Whether you grew up in the church it doesn't matter. At some point you had to lose your parents faith and you had to accept this other faith. Some of you belief was easy peasy.

[22 : 27] But some of you belief is really hard. It's tough and we're going to talk a little bit about that today. But for some it's really easy to follow Jesus.

Some it's not easy to follow Jesus. So Jesus is actually testing this man. He's challenging them because if you remember later on we talked about the Luke 4 the people in Nazareth kept demanding Jesus to do miracles even though they had heard the miracles.

They wanted to see the miracles. for some reason the testimony of all those people wasn't enough. Usually that's a sign of disbelief so Jesus doesn't deal with that.

And we're going to talk about this because later the religious rulers want to see signs and Israel is a disease or Galilee is a diseased free zone.

Everyone who's needed to be healed is healed but yet that wasn't good enough and we're going to talk a little bit about that in a couple weeks. But anyway Jesus is challenging this guy. Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

[23 : 38] So he's like what you want me to do some tricks? Do you want me to turn the sand into a goat or a unicorn? What do you want me to do? But I want you to note here how this official responds.

And remember when you work for a tyrant that would wipe out cities or towns or at a whim wipe out a family because you do not trust them?

It might seem like it's a really good job. Like who would want to work for John Horgan, our premier, if you messed up and you messed up in such a way he just put you to death?

Right? Hey, Bonnie Henry, you kind of messed up with some of the COVID stuff. You know, masks really aren't all that good anymore. You know, there's a whole bunch of stuff. What would it feel like to her? Because it's not a complete science.

Everybody's struggling with it. What happens if he just killed her? Find me a better doctor. What a horrible place that would be. So this guy has got to be pretty efficient, know what he's doing, pretty competent, and you'll notice in the text he doesn't even respond to Jesus because he doesn't even want to waste his time.

[24 : 56] The fact of the matter is he understands, hey, Jesus, I just hiked up here three days from Jerusalem. I left the palace. I went through these dirt roads.

I went through Samaria. Do you know how crazy those people are? And then I get here. They hate you guys, but that's a whole other story, right? And he's hounding and he's looking for Jesus. And this is before the crowds are really all that big.

And he comes to him and he says, notice in verse 29, the official said to him, sir, come down before my child dies. Jesus said to him, go, your son will live.

The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he went on his way. And he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering.

So he asked them the hour when he began to get better. And they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him. The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live.

[26 : 06] And he himself believed in all his household. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

God did him. He was desperate. He was desperate. Jesus simply has to say, hey, he's healed. And remember it says he believed. But I want you to notice what Jesus doesn't say. Follow me. It's not in there. It's not in the text. What does someone do whose life has been touched by Christ in such a profound living way to do?

Turn with me to the gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 8 specifically. Luke chapter 8.

I want to call your attention to a very small phrase which tells us how this man responded to Jesus.

[27 : 19] So Luke 8 starting in verse 1. It says, soon afterward, this is Jesus, went on through cities and villages proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.

And the twelve were with him. He's obviously talking about the apostles. Now notice verse 2. And also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.

And that's the story of Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene came to him possessed by many demons and now she's following him. And this is verse 3.

Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Harold's household manager, and Susanna and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Guess who Chusa is? His historian tells us that that's the man in Luke chapter 4 or John chapter 4.

[28 : 21] That is the man who runs Herod's household. His whole family believed and guess how they're following Jesus? They're providing.

So Jesus, as we all know, there's these three phases to his ministry. the first tour he's going through Galilee, he's talking, he's meeting people, he's bringing them to him.

In the second tour, he starts to call specific apostles, men who will become apostles to follow him.

But he's also got these group of disciples and it's a larger group of people who are giving, providing.

And a lot of times, if you were a rabbi in that time, you were defined by a rabbi because you had people that followed you because you could teach them. And often rabbis would be educated at premier schools, so they'd go about the land, so people would work during the day and then they would follow him at night when he would teach them.

But Jesus, he gets to a point, he's not stopping during the day, right? He's still going. There's work to be done. I gotta do, continue on this tour. And he needed people to provide for this.

[29 : 33] And we're seeing here a family, obviously, life changed because of Jesus and their giving of their means. So isn't that an incredible story? Herod's household is funding Jesus' missionary journey, right?

Right? So that's like a bunch of BC people funding a ministry to French people. Like how crazy is that, right? But that's what's going on.

And that's how choose a response to follow him. Jesus doesn't even say it. Now turn to Mark 5, chapter 1. And as you guys know, I've already preached on this passage, and this is one of my favorite passages in all of scripture.

Because I believe more than anything else, this passage teaches us what it means to love Jesus. So Jesus Christ, he's over in Capernaum, he takes a boat, and I'm not going to spend this much time because you guys don't have three hours to be here today. Takes a boat across the ocean, he gets there and he's in the land of the Gerasenes.

[30 : 48] And this is a Gentile land, filled with unbelievers, pagans, as it were. It's the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. And they soon meet a man who is possessed by seven demons named Legion, we soon learn.

And this man, verse 3, tells us he lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. No one had the strength to subdue him.

Now you need to understand, people buried people. They didn't have graveyards like we do. They would build caves, and they would leave their dead in the caves, and then many family members would be buried, they'd own that plot of land.

This is where this guy's choosing to live. Okay? He was in such rough shape, Luke 8 tells us that when Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons, for a long time, he had worn no clothes, and had lived not in a house, but among the tombs.

So this guy, like this guy's stark raving mad, he's possessed by multiple, and then we learn in Mark that his plight is so horrible that he's taking these stones, and he's scraping his skin off.

[32 : 15] He's scraping his skin, and in the Greek when it says he's yelling, they're unearthly screams. People in the town can hear the pain of this man's shrieking, and they've tried to subdue him, whether it's to protect themselves, or to protect him, they've tried to put on chains around him, and the text says he was able to break free.

This is a tough case, right? Jesus, as you know, he goes in, demons kind of challenge him, he says, shut up, I don't want to hear from you, and they say, have mercy on us, stick us in the pigs, Jesus says, all right, get out of the pig, go ahead, get out of this man, go to the pigs, they jump in the pigs, pigs all run over the cliff and die in the sea.

Verse 28, this is, you know, when he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, what have you do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? And this is, as you've said, as I've said before, the one people who know who God is, 100% who walks the earth is demons, but as we all know, knowing who Jesus is doesn't guarantee salvation, right?

You can know all you want about Jesus inside and out, and that's where the follow part comes in. Do you follow him or do you go against him?

So, of course, Jesus commands the demons to get out of this man. Verse 35, then, the people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and this is it, and they found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, being naked is a sign of perversion, okay?

[34 : 15] To be in the tombs, and just, I want you to think of the apostles, the disciples that were with Jesus, and they see this. You couldn't picture a more unclean man in scripture, possessed by demons, running around naked, perverted, living in tombs with the undead.

If you had something to do with the dead person, you couldn't go to the temple for seven days, right? Like, and then there's pigs in the land, right? As you know, Jews, unless it's bacon, can't have pork, right?

Just kidding, sorry, about the bacon, but anyway. So, now, they come out, and they see that man who had been tormenting, breaking chains, destroying, scaring people, crying out in the middle of the night, sitting there in his right mind, and what were they?

They were afraid. God can only do what man can't do, amen? So, they know something's happened that's greater than their understanding, for who has power over demons?

then it says, verse 36, and those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.

[35 : 51] There was a demon they tried to deal with, and they didn't have the power to deal with. Someone comes and has more power than that demon. instead of embracing that power, what do they do?

They ask them to leave. But this is the best part of the story. Verse 38, the man from whom the demons had gone begged that he go be with Jesus.

You see, when Jesus touches your life, when Jesus saves you, the closest place you want to be is next to Jesus.

Amen? He doesn't have to say, follow me. When you understand the life he has saved you from, the desperation, the brokenness, you get this.

But Jesus tells them something else. He says, return to your home and declare how much God has done for you. And this man went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

[37 : 07] You know what followers of Jesus do? They obey. So here's this man once possessed, becomes a missionary for Jesus.

He does what he's told. And the reality is the gospel is filled with these stories where Jesus goes in and touches someone, makes a difference, and he doesn't even have to give the challenge to follow him.

They instinctively know what that is. Now the reality is we are all different. Amen? We all come from different walks of life. We all come from different backgrounds.

Some of you might share the same parents, but very few do. We don't have the same backgrounds. We've had to deal with different challenges in life. So that idea of following Jesus actually means different things to different people.

So does this text tell us that we're all supposed to go to the city we were born to to be missionaries? No, it doesn't say that, but that's the task that he gave this man.

[38 : 10] One of the realities you may not know is we all start off as unbelievers. You know that? No one is created God positive. There's not a person in the world who is God positive.

We all begin as not neutral like we're a blank slate of paper and then as we grow up because we live in Christian homes or whatever, we just kind of become God positive or God negative.

But we somehow believe that we're in this neutral category. No, no. The Bible teaches that we actually start in the God negative part. And we got to go from God negative to God positive.

There's no neutral. Right? Why is that? Because when sin entered the earth through Adam and Eve, it tainted every one of us.

It did. It's what the Bible teaches quite clearly. We've been touched by sin. And not only that, sin lives inside of us. We don't even have the strength to deal with the temptations outside of us.

[39 : 17] Because why? We have this fallen nature. We're broken. We all know our stories. We know how that touches us. Whether we came from a broken home. Perhaps it's a rich home, together home, but neglected.

Perhaps there's been sexual abuse. All those things touch on. If you grew up with alcoholism, drug abuse, all those things affect us. Our decision making, our education, our friends.

It's incredible. But we all start with one thing in common. We're enemies of God. But there's good news. John 3.16 says, For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. So the whole mission of Jesus Christ is to help us clean up our messes and get saved.

Okay? Now this is where I'm telling you the proof is we all start off enemies of God. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already.

[40 : 29] Because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God. So today to finalize the sermon, I want to go over three reasons why we don't believe.

What keeps us in the negative? what keeps us under the judgment of God, which keeps us lost, broken, sometimes foolish.

The first reason is some people have never been exposed to truth. They've never heard the truth of the gospel. They've never heard the name of Jesus. We live in a multicultural society today and it amazes me.

When I was at university, I would say Jesus. People kind of knew the name, but they really had no idea. Kind of where I grew up, everybody knew Jesus. Catholic background, everybody's Catholic. But when I got to university, there's 30,000 people, international from all over the world, had never known.

And I used to work with Campus Crusade for Christ. Some people would hear the gospel right away, believe, bing, game over. They loved it. Just like the man who needed his son healed, just like the man who needed the demon gone from him, as soon as he heard and saw what Jesus did for him, they're all in.

[41 : 42] So they've never been exposed to the truth. The second reason that a lot of people don't believe is they just don't have a lot of information.

It's not so much they might have heard the name of Jesus, they don't know what he stands for. For some people, Jesus means judgmentalism. As you know, I spent time in the government and I worked as an anti-terrorist investigator and I worked with a lot of really good moral people.

And a lot of the old guys were recruited RCMP members who became with me. Basically, we were spy catchers, catching foreign spies and terrorists.

And these guys were moral people. But not many were church going people. And pretty much every senior guy that I worked for, of course this conversation is going to come up. They would have grown up Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, United, whatever.

But what killed pretty much every one of their faith was legalism. They had either their grandma or their dad or their uncle just beat them so bad with religion they didn't want anything to do with this Christianity.

[42 : 54] They're still moral, but they didn't want anything to do with that. And I put that under the lack of information. Sadly, they went to church, they went around people that were Christian, but they never heard the good news of the gospel.

They didn't know that Jesus really loved them. That he died on the cross to save them from their brokenness, which has led to their divorce, second or third divorce, or sometimes it was their financial troubles, relationship troubles, just complete series of brokenness.

things. So you have people who've never heard about Jesus, then you have people who lack information about Jesus, and there's two more, the last one we're going to deal with next week, but the third one is the belief that they do not have a lot of enough information.

Right? And we've met people who like that, and perhaps that's you, your story, perhaps that's where you are, maybe that's why you're coming to church. You want to hear more about Jesus, and you want more evidence to believe on him.

You know what? That's a good place to be. Searching is not a bad thing. It's a good thing. I spent eight years of my life as an investigator, which is all about asking questions, and I can tell you, anytime you do an investigation without covering all your bases, it's like mud on your face.

[44 : 20] You get everything wrong. And I get that. Some people ask a lot of questions, and there's some really good books. If you've ever heard of Josh McDowell, he wrote a book called Evidence That Demands Verdict.

He began his life wanting to disprove God, and he wrote the story of how he came to God while trying to disprove God. Then there's a more recent book called The Case for Christ, written by a guy, a journalist by the name of Lee Strobes.

He was a journalist living in Chicago. I gotta figure out this thing named Jesus. And he just started investigating, and he went and investigated people who fell away from Christ, people who didn't want anything to do with Jesus, but obviously pastors and other people, and it ended up coming to a faith in Christ.

But I wanted to tell you, you know who else who had a lot of questions about God? The apostles. Do you know that? Now this might freak you out a little bit, because sometimes we have this

romantic view of the apostles, that as soon as they saw and heard about Jesus, they automatically went and followed him.

But that's actually not what the text actually teaches us. All right, so Mark 1, this is like the one story that we read, and I'll just read it to you, it's Mark 1, 16, it says, Passing along the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting an end to the sea, they were fishermen, and Jesus said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

[45 : 41] And immediately they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother who were in their boat manning their nets. And immediately he called them and they left their father Zebedee on the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

So Mark does this complete, tight, concise view of what happened. And he's kind of jamming a lot of information in those verses. But we like to romanticize the story.

Wow, Jesus came by, follow me, and I followed. Right? The passage that David read about Matthew. Hey, follow me. He left everything behind and followed him. And we're going to learn a little bit more about Matthew and who he is.

Because his conversion story I think is absolutely fascinating about who he is and why he followed Jesus. And let me show you. So right now you might be questioning, BK, where are you getting this stuff from?

Do you know who these guys followed before Jesus? They followed John the Baptist. They had already been following John the Baptist. They had heard from the mouth of John the Baptist that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah.

[46 : 44] That's who I'm talking to. That's who you should go follow. What were they doing? Following Jesus or fishing? They were fishing. See, John 1, 18 tells us that, or it's John 1, or first, John 1, verse 35.

Sorry, got to slow down. The next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples. And this is going to be these men he's talking about. And he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, Behold the Lamb of God.

The two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. Jesus then turned and saw them following him and said, What are you seeking? And they said to him, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying?

He said to them, Come and you will see. So they came and saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour. Basically, they came to hear Jesus teach. He welcomed him wherever he was staying.

Hey, where are you staying? I want to spend time with you. And that's what Jesus invites us all to do. You know that? Come spend some time with me. Come hear my words. Come study under my book.

[47 : 52] Verse 40. One of the two had heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Peter. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, Hey, we found the Messiah, which means Christ.

He brought him to Jesus and Jesus looked at him and said, You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter. So first time, Jesus is even renaming him.

But you know what? They went, they left. They went and did their regular stuff. Next day, Jesus decides to go to Galilee. He found Philip, so obviously didn't stay with him. And he said to him, Follow me.

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael said to him, Can't anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said to him, Behold, Israel, and he gives him this kind of this prophecy in whom there is no deceit.

[48 : 51] Nathanael said to him, How do you know me? Jesus answered, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel. Jesus answered him, Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree.

Do you believe? You will see greater things than these. And he said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

Who doesn't want to hear that or see that, right?

But guess what? They didn't stay with Jesus. They went fishing again because it's now a year since that time.

With John the Baptist, all those things happen a year. And that story that David read for us in Luke chapter five, where he does the miracle, my guess, and I'm not going to, the scripture doesn't say this.

Notice in the text, it says Nathaniel makes the claim that Jesus was the son of God. We don't read James or John or Peter making that statement.

[49 : 59] But look what happens in Luke chapter five, when Jesus brings the fish to them. He said, you know, put into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

And Simon answered, master, we told all night. So they already, they know, they know something good about him. It took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to their other people, you know, they bring all the nets together. And notice the response. Simon Peter saw it. And he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, oh Lord.

Lord, he immediately finally understood that he was before the Son of God. Before he could have accepted it was a prophet or a holy man or maybe even the Messiah.

But the link wasn't made. For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

[51 : 08] And Jesus said to Simon, do not be afraid. Isn't that the greatest barrier for following Jesus?

We fear. We do not know where Jesus is going to take us. I've had discussions with people who, when confronted with the truth of Jesus, does that mean I'm going to have to be a missionary far away or do something that I do not like.

Right? I don't know why they think that. Maybe my husband won't love me anymore. My kids will reject me. My family.

Jesus constantly calls us to count the cost. And counting the cost means getting as much information as possible.

Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men. And when they had brought in their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

[52 : 24] Now notice what Jesus doesn't say. Follow me. I'm going to teach you for the next couple years. I'm going to die.

And then everything that I taught you, you guys are going to be responsible to taking all over the world. And I'm going to give you power to heal. Who wouldn't want the power to heal? Yeah, I'm all right with that.

Oh yeah, by the way, they're all going to kill you. The people that you bring, the greatest news in the world will hang you on a tree.

Some will be stoned. Some will have spears thrown through them. John will be ostracized on an island, on the Aegean, all by himself.

Who's following Jesus at that point? No one. And the reality is we don't know what the stories are, amen? But the stories that even Peter, and we're going to see it over and over, Peter was afraid.

[53 : 29] He was the most boldest of all the men, but he was also the first to deny Christ. So here are these disciples.

They heard the news from John the Baptist. They spent time with Jesus, went back to their own lives. Jesus calls them again. They went back to their lives. Jesus calls them again, and they walk forever in his footsteps.

I don't know what your story is, but it simply begins with believing and trusting Jesus, amen? And it also begins knowing that God is good.

God is not a horrible person who sits over us. If we grew up with this legalistic background where we think we're going to be hit or hurt because we do something to disobey us, the fact of the matter is Scripture teaches that God is love.

In his holiness, when we become believers, he does mold us and trains us to be more like him, and when we're more like him, we're less afraid of what this world offers, amen?

[54 : 49] I couldn't think of a better story than the story that Daniel shared with us today about the saints in Haiti. We think, get safe! No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Truth needs to be brought, and I'm going to sit here and I'm going to keep bringing this truth even if it kills me because I know the truth that I have is eternal and has a chance to live in someone else and save them eternally as well.

What about you? Do you have a need? Do you struggle to believe? The fact of the matter is it always begins with a short prayer. Do you trust Jesus?

If you don't, my encouragement is for you to keep coming and keep hearing the story of Jesus because we're going to be doing this all year long. The story gets better and better as we dig into it. We see the lives and I'm hoping at one point you may be able to identify and cry out to Jesus Christ and understand that you need him to save you as well.

[56 : 06] and it all begins with a cry of confession just as Peter did. Oh Lord, leave me for I am a sinner.

That's when you know you're in the good place. Totally, absolutely undeserving of the wonderful love and grace that he gives you.

and the fact of the matter is belief really is that easy but for some of us it just takes a little longer to work out than we thought.

I shared that story when I spent time as a spy when I went through university that was it. That was the life that I was going to do forever. I thought I was set for life. I grew up with very little money in the family.

I finally had security, pension but within that eight years God did something to my heart and soul that I wanted to proclaim the good news. Left it all behind and was able to go to seminary solely by God's grace and be able to pastor.

[57 : 10] I never thought it would be in Squamish, B.C. or anywhere. I was like, Lord, I don't know where you're going to take me but this is all I want to do is I want people to see the good news that's changed my life and the lives of those around me.

I don't know what your story is but it begins with, yes, I'll follow. Let's pray. Dear holy, heavenly God, you're big.

Bigger than we can imagine. Scripture, in fact, calls you awesome. That you are truly indescribable. But you give us these stories that we're able to relate to and we're able to see these truths, just the desperation of a father wanting a child healed.

The giving of, basically gave people from his household the truth. They got saved and they followed after you and they funded the ministry there. We see Peter struggling back and forth.

He's got the word from John the Baptist and then he's got the word from Jesus and then Jesus and then finally Jesus again. And whereas we're going to see he's going to need Jesus again working with his faith and you know what?

[58 : 27] That's us. It's us. We're afraid. We don't know where our faith's going to take us. We don't know the changes it's going to bring. But just as the miracles authenticated how great Jesus was, all the healings, all the mercy and compassion he showed.

Ephesians tells us that we are children of God when we become believers in Christ and that we get all the benefits of the household of God.

What it is to be a child of the king. We don't know what responsibilities we're going to be given. We don't know where God's going to take us, how relationships will change.

But whatever it is, it's going to be good because you are good. So Lord, if there's someone here who's at the beginning of their journey or have been on the journey for a while and just struggling with belief, I pray that they would continue to seek you out, continue to read the stories and the gospels, continue to read the gospel of John.

It specifically talks about to know Jesus so that you may believe. That is why these gospels are written. Jesus Christ is the most important person that ever walked on earth without a doubt.

[59 : 52] He's changed my life and he's changed so many more lives, even those that are within this building and around the world. I pray our prayers will be sincere and unto you that we would endeavor to seek and as the man who is freed of the demons would always seek to be next to you.

We ask these things in your most gracious and glorious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Mein