

Matthew 4:18-22

“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.”

Why would or did the disciples so easily follow Jesus? What was it about Jesus, which caused men and women to just follow Him? These men and women were committed to go wherever Jesus would go, but why.

Jesus, in our passage this morning, had already been tempted for forty days, and He had started preaching around Capernaum which was located on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It was here Jesus called His first four disciples. But notice how He did it, notice what Jesus did and said; more importantly look at what he did not do and say. As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting their net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" All Jesus did was to walk up to the shore and say, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" And they did; they left everything and followed Him. Then they went a little further and He did and said the same thing with the brothers, James and John.

Did anyone notice what Jesus did not ask these men to do? Did anyone notice what Jesus did not ask these men to say? All Jesus said to them just as He says to us today is "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" In

case you missed it Jesus never asked these men to accept Him into their hearts. It is not us who does the inviting. Jesus didn't say "Would you like to follow Me?" Jesus didn't say "If you're not too busy would you like to accompany Me for a few years." Jesus did not pose this so much as a question but more as a statement. As I see it Jesus was offering more than just an invitation here He was giving them a choice, the choice. The same choice we have today, "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" I think we got it wrong.

It should send up a red flag to all of us that nowhere in Scripture is anyone ever told to "ask Jesus into their heart" or "invite Jesus into their lives!" Yet this is exactly what is done by multitudes of professing Christians and worse is the belief they have been given eternal life as long as they said they believed, recited a particular prayer, raised their hand, signed a card, and walked an aisle, they believe their salvation is eternally secure.ⁱ I think we got it wrong.

Jesus never asked anyone to pray this prayer or that prayer. Jesus never asked them to raise their hands and confess their sin to Him, pray any prayer, fill out any card, or to come down to an altar.

All Jesus said to these men just as He says to us today was “*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” Nothing else just “*Follow Me!*” Again, I think we got it wrong people.

It's not about us asking Jesus into our hearts. Jesus came into this world and gave Himself to us freely and unconditionally. Nothing we have done, are doing, or will do will change that fact. Jesus is the Son of God regardless whether or not anyone of us accepts Him as God's son. It does not change the fact He is God's son if we do or don't. We got it wrong thinking we do the inviting of Jesus. Jesus is the one calling us to Him not the other way round. The problem as I see it is we make everything about us first. Jesus is the son of God and nothing is going to change that fact. Again, I think we got it wrong!

Do you know what else I find interesting about this text? These men could have said NO! They could have said “no way, we need to be fishing,” or they could have tried to follow Jesus and continue to do what they had always done. But they didn't they left their current lives for a life of following Jesus.

I'm no fool I know there are those who don't really want to be here, and who don't want to listen to me or to the authority from this old book. I know some would rather be doing something else. You'd rather be doing something with your family, maybe home cooking, maybe home watching TV, maybe at some restaurant eating, or at some ball game, or playing golf. Are you willing to be a follower of Jesus? Or does it mean more to you to continue doing what you're doing rather than following Jesus?

In Luke 12:13 Jesus said "*My message is for you.*" People, and I mean everyone, this message is for you and me. Is a personal relationship with someone in the way of you following Jesus? Is your job in the way of you following Jesus? Is your family in the way? We need to change our way of thinking.

The great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book entitled "*Cost of Discipleship*" and in it Bonhoeffer calls what most people have is "cheap grace." He calls it cheap grace because it is discipleship without any cost. Any relationship that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. Listen to that one again and let it sink in, "Any relationship that costs nothing accomplishes nothing."

Being a real follower of Jesus Christ is going to cost you something. It might be money, it might be your precious time, it might be your control, it might be your family, and it might be any other number of things. You might be asking right now, “What am I supposed to give up?” Well, you have to look to Jesus to find the answer to that one. I can tell you this; anything which keeps you from a close personal relationship with God needs to go.

So do you want to be a real follower? Have you heard Jesus’ call, “*Follow Me?*” Matthew 7:13-14 is something all followers need to hear again and again “*Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*” In other words, there is a wide religious road which is very inviting and all inclusive. This road is a nice smooth, comfortable, attractive, and accommodating road. This road requires only a one time decision, you don’t have to worry about any of those ole commandments, you don’t have to be concerned with any standards, and you don’t have to worry about sharing any of the glory you can keep it all for yourself.

As it is for many today they believe their ticket to heaven is punched all because one time way back when they said they believe. Any self-indulgence or self-gratification will be tolerated all because they said they believe way back when.

Charles Blondin was a famous French tightrope walker. Blondin's greatest fame came on September 14, 1860, when he became the first person to cross a tightrope stretched 11,000 feet (over a quarter of a mile) across the mighty Niagara Falls. People from both Canada and America came from miles away to see this great feat.

He walked across, 160 feet above the falls, several times... each time with a different daring feat - once in a sack, on stilts, on a bicycle, in the dark, and blindfolded. A large crowd gathered this one time and the excitement grew along both sides of the river bank. The crowd “Oohed and Aahed!” as Blondin carefully walked across – one dangerous step after another – pushing a wheelbarrow holding a sack of potatoes.

Upon reaching the other side, the crowd's applause was almost louder than the roar of the falls! Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience: “Did you believe I could push this wheelbarrow back across?” The

crowd screamed yes we believed. He then asked “Do you believe I can return pushing this wheelbarrow carrying a person?” The crowd screamed yes even louder. The crowd enthusiastically yelled, “Yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. We believe!” “Okay,” said Blondin, “Who wants to get into the wheelbarrow.” As far as the Blondin story goes, no one did!ⁱⁱ

This unique story illustrates a real life picture of what real belief in someone actually is. The crowd watched all Blondin’s daring feats. They said they believed with their mouths, but ... their actions proved they truly did not believe.

Similarly, it is one thing for us to say we believe in God. However, it's true belief, true faith, when we believe God and put our faith and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Just saying I believe is not enough. It takes more than just saying I believe, your whole life must change. Everything stops being about us, about you, and is all about God.

Today as you come to this altar to commune with God, ask yourself “am I really ready to follow Jesus?” Are you ready to “*Follow Him?*” As you receive the bread and fruit of the vine remember what He did for you. Are you willing to follow Him or are you content with cheap grace? If so, remember we got it wrong it takes more, a lot more than just saying I believe.

ⁱ David Platt, *Follow Me ... A Call To Die. A Call To Live* (Tyndale House Publishers; Carol Stream, Illinois, 2013) pp. 6-18

ⁱⁱ <http://www.inspire21.com/stories/faithstories/CharlesBlondin> accessed August 2013.