

January 21, 2018 – Follow Me

Mark 1:14-20

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw the brothers, Simon and Andrew, casting their nets into the sea, since they fished by trade. Jesus said to them, “Follow me; I will make you fishers of humankind.” They immediately abandoned their nets and followed Jesus.

“Follow Me.” Jesus asked these fishermen to come and spend time with him and they went. What would that have been like? Think about it; they got to spend nearly every waking moment with Jesus. What would they have gained by being with Jesus all the time? How would they have grown by spending time with their teacher, their rabbi? *(give time for people to answer - hearing his stories, learning, praying, building a stronger connection with God, helping others, seeing the world)*

We talk about being with Jesus as well. Some of our favourite hymns are: *What a Friend We Have in Jesus, In the Garden, Jesus You Have Come to the Lakeshore, and, of course, Jesus Loves Me.* We know that Jesus is no longer with us in the flesh, so what does it mean when we talk about being with Jesus? What are we saying? *(leave time to answer... Christ Spirit, Spirit of Love, with God & in God)* We’re talking about being with God, aren’t we? Jesus’ humanity, his face and body,

they have become a way for us to connect to God. Jesus life, his stories, his teachings are also part of our story and are there to guide us still. So, for many of us, a big part of following Jesus is being close to him and therefore having a closer connection to the Christ Spirit, to God

Proceeding a little further along, Jesus saw the brothers James and John Bar-Zebedee. They too were in their boat, putting their nets in order. Immediately Jesus called them, and they left their father Zebedee standing in the boat with the hired help, and went off in the company of Jesus.

For the disciples, following Jesus meant leaving everything that they knew and loved behind. In this gospel story, Simon and Andrew "immediately abandoned their nets, and James and John "immediately... left their father" and "went off in the company of Jesus." For many of us, this is probably the most difficult thing to comprehend. How could they do that? How could they leave everything to follow this man?

In bible study this week we asked ourselves, "Did the disciples already know who Jesus was or was it possible that they left their nets to follow a stranger?" So we searched and found passages in the Gospel

of Luke that suggest that yes, they did know Jesus. In that book we read that Jesus had already healed Simon's mother-in-law and that all four fishermen witnessed Jesus guiding Simon to a large catch of fish. So they weren't following a total stranger. They knew who Jesus was; they had heard him speak and witnessed his actions. They followed him because they knew him, recognized the Holy Spirit within him and believed in his message of love.

Yes, they physically had to leave their jobs and their families and that is scary and hard; but we have to ask ourselves where were they going? I got thinking about the times in my life when I left things behind, when I left my family or my friends or my job or all three:

I did that when I left home for the first time to attend
university.

I did that when I left my job at IBM to begin my studies at
Emmanuel College.

And I did that when I left Toronto to come and begin my
ministry in Saskatchewan.

Each time I left my family or my friends or my job, I did it to follow my own heart. I did it to find myself.

Following Jesus can be scary. It can take us out of our comfort zone.

But it will not take us from ourselves. In fact, we know that we are

truly following God's call when there is peace in our hearts. I remember when I made the decision to leave IBM and study theology. I knew as soon as I made that first contact with Emmanuel College that I had made the right decision because I had a sense of peace and contentment in my body – in my heart and in my soul. Of course, there was also excitement and fear but those feelings also felt right and appropriate.

Following Jesus is not necessarily about a change in geography, or even a change in job. Many of us are called to follow while remaining exactly where we are. Our call may be to a new role in the church or in the community. Our call may be to school, to marriage or motherhood or fatherhood. We may be called to a task that stretches us and challenges us or to one that is comfortable and familiar. Our call may even be one of healing whatever it is that is causing us pain.

When Jesus says, "Follow me," he is calling us home to ourselves. He is calling us to be who we were created to be. When we do this, when we follow him, our hearts are filled with the peace and the love that allows us to become fishers of humankind. Our hearts are filled with the peace and love that makes God's reign on earth a reality. Our hearts are filled with the peace and love that creates heaven on earth.

I want to end today with a prayer based on today's scripture reading,
a prayer that was written by a pastor named Steve Garnaas-Holmes.
It is called *Follow me*.

Jesus,
you are not sending me off;
you are calling me to stay close to you,
you who go before me in my own life.

You are not asking me to do something strange,
but inviting me to be my true self,
to be who I am created to be.

You are not sending me to a foreign place;
you are calling me home.
The compass in my heart
already points to you.

Every moment you are going ahead of me;
you are right here.
Give me grace every moment to follow you
into this very moment.

[Unfolding Light](#)