

Today is the first Sunday of Lent, and we're just kicking off a series called "Encounters with Jesus." And through this series, all throughout lent, we're going to be looking at stories in the Bible when people encountered Jesus and we'll see how their encounters changed them... and how Jesus wants to change us.

Jesus turned people's lives around, he flipped their lives upside down... and sometimes he just taught them something... but every time a person encounters Jesus, they walk away changed. And thanks be to God... the same is true for us today. When we encounter Jesus, we walk away changed.

Today we're going to look at the encounters Jesus had with the disciples when he first extended the invitation to them: follow me.

One of the core elements of being a Christian is following Jesus. Now, if we're being honest, outside of the church, following isn't often held up as a desirable trait. When you hear a parent lavish on about their child's best characteristics on the playground, you'll hear things like my son is so brave. He's so intuitive. She's so kind. She's got a curious mind. She's a leader.

But rarely ever do you hear a parent say – wow. My child is the best little follower. He does whatever his friends tell him to do.

But being a Christian means learning to be a good follower. And sure, I could preach a whole sermon that talks about how as Christians we need to lead others, but as Christians, our leadership happens under the guidance and under the authority of Jesus. We lead how he calls us to lead. We lead in the places he calls us to lead. First, we're followers.

To explore this idea of being a follower of Jesus, we're going to look at **Luke 5:1-11**, when Jesus calls Simon (who was later called Peter), and James and John to follow him. Let's see what this encounter tells us about following Jesus.

Luke 5:1-11 (1-5 first) says this. – *“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,^[a] the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.

I want to pause and point out that Simon was a good fisherman. He knew what he was doing. When he says, “Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything” he's demonstrating his skill. He's not a second rate fisherman, he's not the B-Team... he's good at what he does.

They fished all night because the fish they were trying to catch and the gear that they had was for night fishing... in fact, one commentator I read this week suggested that the net they would've been using would've been utterly worthless during the day... the fish would've been able to easily see it. So, Jesus is asking Simon and his companions to do the wrong thing.

It's like going to the doctor and the doctor saying – hey you need to get this procedure to stop the bleeding... and you say, well I saw on Facebook that if you dip a banana peel in apple cider vinegar and put it on there, that'll heal it right up.

When Simon says, “Master – we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything...” he's saying – look Jesus. You're a great preacher. But I'm a great fisherman. But the NEXT thing Simon says shows us what being a great follower is all about.

*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.
BUT because you say so, I will let down the nets.*

I'm not convinced what you're saying... I think I know the way... I think I know what's best... I have a good plan for my life... I like being in charge... BUT BECAUSE YOU SAY SO... I will follow.

Following Jesus means trusting that he knows better.

This is one of the fundamental elements of being a follower of Jesus. Trusting that he knows better than we do.

Even last week, Pastor Andy talked about miracles of provision and how God often uses his people to provide for others in miraculous ways. But that's got to start with trust. Trusting what Jesus says – “view others more highly than yourself.” “It's more blessed to give than to receive.”

That seems backward. That doesn't seem right. Receiving seems more blessed. The math doesn't work on that. Saving and investing seems like the more fruitful route. It seems to me that THAT's the more rewarding way... BUT BECAUSE YOU SAY SO JESUS.... I will be generous.

Following Jesus means trusting that he knows better.

And that's exactly what Simon Peter does. Picking up at verse 6-11.

⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” (In other accounts of this encounter, Jesus says, “Follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.”

¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”

It's pretty remarkable to me that Simon and his partners, James and John, just up and leave their jobs when they encounter Jesus. But sometimes we hear this story and think... come on... they were fisherman. It wasn't that great of a job to begin with.

But being a fisherman was an honorable job. Sure, they weren't high up on the totem pole, but it was a good job and they were good at it. And at least for Simon, he wasn't just a fisherman, he owned the boat. He was invested. His future was pretty clear and planned out.

But whenever we trust that Jesus knows better than we do, we follow him, knowing that **Following Jesus will cost you something.**

Jesus says in **Luke 9:23** – “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

In seminary one of my professors said something that was really helpful. He said, “following Jesus is not difficult to understand and easy to live out. It's simple to understand and hard to live out.

It's as simple as I'm a sinner and I need forgiven. And if I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, I'm saved.

But following Jesus is hard, because if we do what Jesus says, which is the basic definition of following, it's going to cost us. For Simon, James, and John, it cost them their jobs and the plan for their lives.

Following Jesus will cost you something.

If we're going to love God with our heart soul mind and strength... it's going to cost us something...

If we're going to love our neighbor as yourself, it's going to cost us something.

If we're going to live generously... if we're going to forgive as we've been forgiven... if we're going to bless the world around us...

Following Jesus will cost you something...

During the announcement, I shared that we have the opportunity to give financially to support people fleeing Ukraine by supporting Raising Hope Ukraine. A woman named Beth Valentine is our connection to Raising Hope Ukraine, and we got introduced to Beth this week through a series of God ordained connections... When I heard her story, I asked if I could film it and share it with you all this morning, because it's an inspiring story of how years ago, Jesus put a calling in her life, and he had far more for her than she ever planned or imagined... and she said yes. I interviewed her on Wednesday this week, so that she could share her story with you. Let's watch together.

VIDEO

Beth said yes to an invitation to put Jesus first in her life. She said yes to caring for two children who were in desperate need of a home... she said yes to quitting her lucrative job to give her kids the educational experience they needed...

And to do that, she first had to trust that Jesus knew better than she did... and she had to be willing to sacrifice.

The question for us to answer today is – is there an area of our lives where we need to say yes, and follow Jesus? It may not seem like the best plan to us... BUT... because you say so, Jesus, we will let down our nets.

I don't know what it might be for you.

Maybe you need to follow God's nudge from God to support Raising Hope Ukraine in a big financial way that will require some sacrifice.

Maybe you need to follow God's way of living life, if you've been living in a way that you know isn't his desire, but so far, you've decided to go your own way.

Maybe it's to follow God's pull on your life toward some kind of ministry... whether it's through a career change to pursue pastoral ministry or by stepping up to lead in an area where you know you're gifted.

If you're a Christian, you're a follower of Jesus. And wherever God is leading you, say yes. Because what he has for us is better than what we would choose for ourselves.

Next Steps

Encounters With Jesus – The Disciples

Read Luke 5:1-11.

Before Jesus asked Simon, James, and John to leave their vocation and follow him, what small thing did Jesus ask them to do (v. 3)?

There were crowds of people on the shore line listening to Jesus speak. How do you think the amazing catch affected their view of what Jesus just taught them?

If Jesus called you to leave your job and income to follow him toward an unknown future, what would be exciting about that to you? What would make you hesitate to say yes?

Following Jesus means trusting that he knows better. What evidence is there in your life that you trust that he knows better?

Following Jesus will cost you something. What have you sacrificed in your life as you've chosen to follow Jesus?

How has “doing what Jesus says” blessed your life?

Is Jesus calling you to follow him in an area of your life today? What is it? What is the cost of saying yes?