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Follow Me
John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴ *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* ⁴⁵ *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.”* ⁴⁶ *Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”* ⁴⁷ *When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”* ⁴⁸ *Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”* ⁴⁹ *Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”* ⁵⁰ *Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.”* ⁵¹ *And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, ^[m] you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”*

Before this happens, ***John the Baptist***, a man with his own disciples, proclaims that Jesus is *the Lamb of God*. And after that, some of John’s disciples start to follow Jesus, including Andrew.

When Jesus sees them following him, he asks them, *What are you looking for?*, and they ask, *Where are you staying?* And Jesus says simply, ***Come and See***.

That’s when ***Andrew finds his brother Simon Peter***, and urges him to come and follow, saying *We have found the Messiah!*

The next day Jesus goes to Galilee and calls Philip to follow him. Then, ***Philip finds Nathanael*** and says: *“We’ve found him—the one the prophets wrote about—Jesus of Nazareth”*. And that’s where ***Nathanael*** just blurts out, *can anything good come out of that little town of Nazareth?* To which Philip says, ***Come and See***.

In this short little story we don't just see Jesus calling his first disciples,
We see him calling--- ALL of us!

In this story we learn that ***discipleship is so much more***
 than just ***BELIEVING*** in Jesus as Lord and Savior,
 it's about ***FOLLOWING*** Jesus.
 It's about turning our beliefs into ***ACTION***.

We can't just say, ***I believe in Jesus Christ***.
 That is the ***first step***—but Jesus asks for more.
 We have to ***get up and follow***—wherever Jesus leads!

Sounds simple, ***but it's far more complicated***, isn't it?

Because following Jesus requires ***PAYING ATTENTION to the voice*** of Jesus—
 in the Scriptures and in our lives.
 And we have to ***learn his voice*** before we recognize it!

And following also means ***SHARING the good news***
 by ***inviting others*** to ***Come and See*** Jesus---
 the one who has called us!

It's so easy to ***stay up here (in our heads)***,
 with knowledge about God,
 and ideas about why we believe in Jesus Christ.

But life with God doesn't really begin until we ***FOLLOW Jesus***.
 And we ***INVITE others*** to join us for that journey!

This means we have to ***PAY ATTENTION—to God's voice***.
 Unfortunately, we are far too ***distracted***—by the world, by activities,
 even by our own friends and family.

Our lives get ***so chaotic*** that we can barely imagine
 having an evening like Samuel did
 when he was silent and still, hearing the voice of God.
How often can WE say that we are truly listening—for the voice of God?

We have so much ***noise in our lives***—
 the television, internet, computer, phone, and people—

how often are we truly listening for God?

How do we make time to really listen?

What needs to change in our lives, to help make that happen?

And what about ***FOLLOWING—leaving people or things behind,***
to follow Jesus?

Can you imagine those first disciples, just dropping everything?

Seems crazy to us, because ***we're so busy*** doing what seems so important!

But there's even more reasons why we don't follow Jesus.

We all have our own ***PRECONCEIVED ideas*** of God's call.

The young Samuel assumed that the voice he heard
was his mentor, Eli.

He thinks this until Eli wisely tells him to go back, and say,
Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

Nathanael almost missed the opportunity of a lifetime

because he couldn't see anything good coming out of small town Nazareth!

When have you been quick to judge someone—based on where they are from?

It happened in the Bible,

Samaritans were hated just because they were from Samaria!

We also miss out on the joy of discipleship

because we don't pay attention to the BIBLE.

John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the *Lamb of God*—from the prophets.

And Philip told Nathanael to

Come and see *the one that Moses and the prophets wrote about!*

How are we paying attention to God's Word?

How are we making time to read and learn from it?

What new practices this new year, can keep us in the Word?

I know how helpful it is to have some ***Bible apps*** on my phone,
giving me new verses and devotionals each day.

It helps keep me on track with my quiet time with God
in the morning over coffee.

How can we stay connected with God's Word this year?

Sometimes we also miss out on discipleship
because we don't pay attention to the **WISE COUNSEL** of others.
You know, sometimes **God sends a sign** for us
or speaks directly to our hearts.

But most of the time, **God uses OTHER PEOPLE to talk to us.**
Who are those people *in YOUR life?*

It was **John** the Baptist who brought Andrew to Jesus,
And then **Andrew** brought Simon Peter.
Jesus called Philip,
And **Philip** brought Nathanael!

Discipleship involves INVITING other people to join the journey of faith!
Who are we inviting?
It can be as simple as saying—*Come and See.*
Come and See what God is doing in my life!

Discipleship is so much **more than JUST BELIEVING** in Jesus Christ.
It is about **paying attention.**

Listening.
following.
And **inviting others** to join the journey.

And perhaps the **greatest IMPEDIMENT to all of that---is US.**
In order to follow Jesus as disciples,
we have to get beyond ourselves.
Because our natural inclination is to **do our own thing.**
Martin Luther King, Jr. called this our "*Drum Major Instinct*".

In a sermon he delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, in 1968,
He talked about this instinct.
To do our own thing,
Make our own plans,
Get **attention** for ourselves.
That we want to be **first.**
To be **recognized.**
To **be followed**....more than to follow.

And Dr. King said that *gets in the way* of us following Jesus Christ,
And finding the real path of life with God.

Our *Drum Major Instinct*—that instinct to desire *distinction and recognition*,
Is the reason we *join* organizations, so we can feel important.
It's the reason we *buy* things we don't need, so we can feel special.
It's the reason we join *exclusive groups*,
That exclude other people,
Or we even *put other people down*
So that we can feel better than them.
The Drum Major Instinct is ultimately the reason behind *racial prejudice*.
We see ourselves as *superior, and others as inferior*.

*King said, .. the final great tragedy of the distorted personality is the fact that
when one fails to harness this instinct, he ends up trying to push others down in
order to push himself up.*

*... a lot of the race problem grows out of the drum major instinct? A need that
some people have to feel superior. A need that some people have to feel that they
are first, and to feel that their white skin ordained them to be first.*

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/drum-major-instinct-sermon-delivered-ebenezer-baptist-church>

To follow, *we need to focus on Jesus, not ourselves*.

And we all know that *Jesus welcomed EVERYONE to follow Him,*
No one was excluded.

When we follow Jesus, we're all in it together, as equals.

Which is amazing, isn't it?

At the end of our story today, *Jesus says something interesting*.

He says to Nathanael: "*Very truly, I tell you,^[m] you will see heaven opened and the
angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*"

What does he mean?

Most likely, Nathanael would have known what Jesus was referring to.

It's the story of Jacob (also known as Israel),

and his dream of a *ladder to heaven*,

with angels ascending and descending upon it, in Genesis 28:12.

In that vision *heaven and earth were connected*,
and Jesus tells Nathanael that will *happen again—in him*.
In other words, *the kingdom of God that Jesus announces, is IN HIM*.

Which is pretty *incredible*.
The idea that *heaven and earth can meet in the person of Jesus Christ!*

But it's what he taught us in the Lord's Prayer:
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Heaven and earth do meet,
whenever we are **paying attention** to Jesus,
whenever we are **following** Jesus,
whenever we are **inviting others** to join the journey.

Martin Luther King, Jr. knew this to be true.
And he preached often of a world where God's kingdom would reign.
and heaven and earth would meet.

In his famous *I Have a Dream* speech at the March on Washington in 1963
he said:

" . . . one day .. every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low . . . and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

" . . . one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. . . my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream" Speech. August 1963. March on Washington
<http://www.usconstitution.net/dream.html>.

And from a *Birmingham jail*, he would write:

"Human progress . . . comes through the tireless efforts of (persons) willing to be co-workers with God . . ."

And, " . . . The time is always ripe to do right. "

Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." April 1963
http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us that following Jesus means
WORKING WITH God, for justice,
not just BELIEVING the right things,
but putting our *faith into ACTION*.

King helped us see that heaven and earth could meet,
And that one day **ALL God's people would be welcome**,
and God's love would reign supreme.

This week, as we celebrate **King's legacy**,
We remember *our Savior Jesus*,
Who calls us to *pay ATTENTION, to LISTEN, to INVITE others*,
and to **FOLLOW**.

Follow Him.

That is the Good News of the Gospel today:
True life in Christ is found in the following.

And for that gift,
all God's people say, Amen.