

Come, Follow Me

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Our lives are dotted with invitations. We receive invitations to attend a birthday party. We get invitations from friends to visit or share a meal. We receive an invitation to attend a Christmas program or a Pre-School presentation at a child’s or a grandchild’s school. Jesus spoke to people he loved. He invited them with the simple words, “Follow Me.”

Let’s look first at the man who gave the invitation. Jesus was their friend. He had shown over and over again that he loved people, and he had some very close friends. They saw just how much Jesus cared for them, and how he did miracles to help people and heal people when they were sick. If someone invites you to “Follow me,” it’s easy to say YES if the person who is doing the asking is a kind and loving person.

But Jesus was also their teacher. We know that when a teacher asks us to do something, we have to give our teacher special attention. We owe our teachers obedience, and we will learn more and be happier students if we listen to them carefully and then do as they ask.

Jesus was a very good teacher. He was called “Rabbi” – an honored teacher, who not only knew what was important to learn, but he was very good at teaching what his students needed to learn. He often used great stories and examples that were easy to remember.

Much to our surprise, the Bible tells us that even Jesus was not always successful with his students. They didn’t always learn the lesson he was teaching. And even when they learned the lesson, they were far from perfect when it came time to put the lesson into practice in their daily lives.

So Jesus was their friend, and Jesus was their teacher, but most important of all, Jesus was their Lord. He was their master. The things that Jesus taught and then lived in front of them made a powerful impression on his students.

One of the people Jesus invited to follow him was Matthew, the tax collector. In his gospel, Matthew tells us:

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. (Matthew 7:28-29 ESV)

The close friends that Jesus made, the ones who heard his wonderful teaching, the ones who knew him as Master and Lord came to be known as “disciples.” A disciple is a follower – one who is convinced what the master said is truth – worth remembering, worthy of trusting.

Jesus, who invited his followers to follow him, said boldly: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Today, there are literally millions of invitations and opportunities extended, not only by false prophets and self-appointed leaders, but people with fame and fortune who invite people from across the globe to “Follow me” on Twitter, because apparently we have something to gain, even if it is only our relentless curiosity, by following them. It’s true of course, that Christian organizations, including congregations, have Twitter accounts and invite people to follow them, informing people of opportunities for worship and fellowship and service opportunities. Their goal is to witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and to reach people through a 21st century media channel as long as it remains useful and popular. Twitter is one of those “neutral” tools that can be used for good or for no good.

If someone is going to follow Jesus, they will have to go His way. His way doesn’t become a dead end, but rather a living end. He tells us that what he says is true. He tells us that he is the **ONLY** way, not **ONE** of the ways. He points to himself and says that other paths don’t lead to life in heaven. His path does. He invites boys, girls, men and women to follow him on His way, because His way leads to life. It leads to new life while we are breathing air on planet earth, and His way leads to eternal life in Heaven with our Heavenly Father. What he expects from his students is that they listen to him because

he not only speaks truth, he IS truth. He invites his students to walk on His way, because it is life. And it is all a gift.

I have been blessed to visit many places in this world filled with beautiful things and fascinating people. Many places have guides leading groups of people who are visiting and don't know the local language. It's pretty important that the followers don't lose sight of the guide and get lost. Many guides carry a long stick, or a flag, or an umbrella, and some of them put something bright or funny at the top – like a teddy bear or a funny hat. No matter how many people are in a crowd on a busy street, when that guide holds that flag or stick or umbrella up high, it's possible for all the followers to see where the guide is, so they can follow, and have fun, and be safe.

When Jesus invites people by saying “Follow me,” he doesn't use a flag on a stick or a hat on an umbrella. Instead, he uses a cross. He invites us to look to the cross, because something happened on the cross that changes everything. When Jesus lived on earth, crosses were used to put criminals to death. They were used to end the lives of people who had committed very serious crimes, and people had to pay for what they did wrong with their lives. No one was ever happy about being put on a cross, because it hurt. It was no fun for Jesus either.

Jesus had the power to stay off the cross, but he didn't use it. He could have had angels come and take him down from the cross before he died, but he didn't. He was on the cross to pay for sins – not for his sins, but for mine. Not only for mine, but for yours. Not only for yours, but for every girl, boy, woman or man who has ever lived.

The cross of Jesus is raised high. We have reminders of the cross on which he died in our church, in our cemeteries, and even around our necks. Jesus died for our sins. It is the truth. Believing in him, trusting in Him is the Way to go to the Father. He says:

“No one comes to the Father except through me.”

There are many people in our world who think that is not a nice thing to say. Many people in our world are looking for peace, and acceptance, and life in

heaven with the Father, and they think that they have to find their own way. Many religions in our world insist that there are many ways to heaven, and that all people are going to end up in heaven. Even though Jesus says He is THE way, many people don't honor the teacher who says that, or they refuse to believe it is true.

The Bible tells us:

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

We learn while we are very young that strength and power make a difference. If one of our young friends wants something from us, and we don't want to do it, we test their power and strength. We compare it with ours. We may even say, Oh Yeah? Make me! What happens next is a test of who is stronger, who has more power.

When Jesus invites people to follow him, some people want to look him in the eye and holler “Oh yea! “Make me!” He has the strength and power to do it, but once again, he doesn't use it. Instead of forcing us to do what we don't want to do, he uses his love to invite us: Follow me.

Jesus wants a relationship with you that is not based on force, but rather on his love, and the gift of faith. He has the power to make us believers, but instead he shows us what he has done for us, and invites us to believe in Him, and to put our trust in Him. By following Him, by going His way, by following His truth, we will enjoy the new life he is ready to give you as a gift.

We have heard the invitations of “Follow Me” given to his friends and disciples. He gives you the same loving, generous, invitation. He won't force you to be a believer, but he wants to convince you, by the working of the Holy Spirit, that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All who come to the Father come only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Philip Tesch
May 14, 2017
North Highlands, California