

Ordinary Times!

"Follow The Leading!"

Psalm 27: 1, 4-9,
1 Corinthians 1:10-12, 18-20,
Matthew 4: 18-23

January 26, 2020

Rerun of February 2, 2014

So, all He said to them was "Follow Me".

And they went?

They dropped what they were doing...fishing...and followed.

~I wonder how many people along the beach,
along the way,
He stopped and invited to follow.

~I wonder how many
He had to ask till He found those first two...who were not so caught up in their own nets...that they could follow.

I wonder of all the ones that possibly followed,

~how many dropped away...
you know, good intentions/tender heart

...but no staying power ...when the going gets tough, the tough go...shopping...for an easier sale.

~How many might have dropped away...
till there were only 12 and the women and children?

And we know, given Bible study with Borg and Crosson,

that it was NOT some idealistic fishing community on the sea...a romantic picture of folks google eyed following.

No. These fishermen were part of the oppressive economic regime of Rome...

taxed highly, unfair weights for the catch of the day that paid those taxes, oppressive mandates...

indentured on the waters as many were endured farming the land.

So, when He called, He was inviting these fishermen to be part of a movement that ultimately said:

NO MORE! to Rome and the ways of the world's power and bullying.

It was a freedom movement...holy freedom...and they were at risk as he was...

Peter showed their level of fear as he denied knowing Jesus at the campfire that Saturday night after Jesus was killed...

killed for the crime of not playing by their rules and standing up and dying for what He knew:

All humans deserve dignity and possibility.

That at our core is integrity and this integrity is nurtured by a direct access God who offers do-overs! Nothing can stop God in you and your integrity!

Meanwhile back on the shoreline and in fields,
and in villages and cities,

certainly, most everyone Jesus met was taken with him, at least that's what we take from the stories we have.

But to stop living the way you do and being who you have been, to follow a new way of relating to yourself, to others, to the world, to God

...not many of us humans would be able to follow,
no matter how taken we might be with him

...and yet we *easily* follow, give ourselves to so much in this world that is emptying, alone making, stress producing, competitively edgy--seems easier initially but in the end is so much harder on us!

He's still asking, you know.

We're still asked today...Jesus is asking you to follow...

but the ask has been modified, simplified...you don't even have to leave home,
these days, to do it...

and still...so many of us aren't able...or just simply won't...

**we're too caught up in our own nets,
fishing in all the wrong places for anything except the only thing
that will really help us find peace and joy in this life that is ours.**

We want to follow and often start out with him...

so many Sunday mornings we leave inspired and want to do even one thing differently/new in our lives.

And we can't seem to stay the course even one day,
yet alone as long as the 12 did.

Here's the question of you this day:

****Can you keep your eye on the target,
keep focused on the issues at hand/
core values of life**

without getting hooked by the distractions of
life...distractions that hold you back
from making those change reactions
that truly set you free?

Responding to the spouse/kids instead of yelling,
assessing the thing most needed/helpful in a situation instead of pushing your
agenda,

seeing more than one right way to do something rather than thinking it's my way
or the highway,

really reflecting on if how you're reacting in a situation brings you what it is you
really want from life...

As if doing things the way you've always done them, hoping doing them more or
trying harder will bring different results from the choices you make.

These are some of the ways we get distracted and fall into following paths that
take us nowhere new.

I know you want to follow Jesus!
I do, too.

How?

How, Oh My Gracious and Great and Powerful God, how do we do it?

~I think it has something to do with Paul's message.

It has something to do with being in active faith community regularly and
well...and going out to live into the rest of life together, connected to each other.

**We are made to need each other and help each other...
Jesus called the disciples in pairs!**

And we are reminded...wherever two or more are gathered, there also am I.

It's not a coincidence that AA works through pairs to bring life to individuals.

***Who are you paired with?**

Is he or she here this morning?

****The art of following may be spiritually linked to your developing right spiritual relationship with another...
a spiritual friend.**

Being able to follow has something to do with who you hang out with and how often!

...with letting someone help you along the way,
help you see clearly and keep your focus

where God calls it to be for your own good.
A spiritual cheerleader of sorts!

Paul says...be of one mind...we are to head toward the same horizon even by different paths,

never losing focus or taking our eyes off the target/the thing most needed/the more/
God's compassionate and strong love for us,

taking in the power of Christ...
being the body of Christ today...
and living as the body into an interfaith,
intercultural, world.

Paul says we are to be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

**We are not to be quarreling about matters that dilute our energy and water down
the power of our gathering
and helping each other on the way...**

Disconnected and arguing...right here...**you know**

...**matters like the color of the carpet in a church office, whose in and whose out,
whose right and whose wrong, which church hosts and which doesn't,**

who pledges what and when, which school opens and which closes...**as if this is**

what God would have our focus be!

...stuff that divides us and takes our focus from the thing most....helpful, needed.

You see, we follow little Jesuses all over the place...

maybe Pastor Kevan or I,
or your council members,
or a well-spoken advocate for a cause,
your boss,
your spouse,
your pocketbook,
your party's leader,
your kids' schedules...

follow, instead of following Jesus Christ.

We dilute the power of our faith by getting caught up in the net of human details and human power plays.

We get tangled in the net of deceit...usually deceiving ourselves, and no one else.

Jesus simply says, "Follow me."

Can you hear his voice above all the other voices competing for your attention?

***To me "hearing" has the feel of trusting that when you follow on the way, when you step off the edge or life pushes you over the edge, AND

you know that the ground will rise up to meet you.

This is not the same as denying or avoiding the consequences of the choices we make...

I am speaking of something quite different.

But you may not be able to see it (the new and holy ground offered and rising to meet your doubt)

and take advantage of it (live the new life) **unless you've cultivated an interior reality within you**

that expects meaning to be made

and forward momentum to be revealed.

The only people who have answered prayer are those who know they have answered prayers...

even if it wasn't the answer you were expecting or thought you wanted!

Who is it in your own life right now, in your family or friends or here at worship, who is called to follow right alongside you and make the way clearer and surer for you?

Will you let them?

Will you be there for them?

Or, will worship and faith only be a Sunday morning event in your life?

There's only one thing keeping you from following Jesus to a peaceful, joy-full life.
You.