

Livin' the Life
Following Jesus, part 8
John 1:43-51
November 12, 2017

We are in our series in the Gospel of John, "Livin' the Life" looking at what life in Jesus means for us today. John wrote to convince us to believe in Jesus for eternal life and to strengthen the faith of those who already believe in Jesus. Today we are looking at Jesus as he continues to gather disciples, Following Jesus, 1:43-51.

Jesus Gathers More Disciples (43-46)

Last week we saw first two gather his first two disciples. The next day Jesus decides to go to Galilee. He found Philip and invited him to become a disciple with the invitation, "follow me (43)." This is probably not Philip's first contact with Jesus. Philip has heard Jesus and is responding to the invitation because of the work of God in him (1:9-13; 3:3). Religion is man's attempt to do something to be acceptable to God but Christianity is God making us acceptable based upon what Christ has already done for us. So, Philip takes him up on the offer and becomes Jesus' disciple. Last week I described the three characteristics of the disciple - teacher relationship in the time of Jesus. Do you remember them? First, the disciple learned from their teacher. Second, the disciple sought to become like their teacher. And third, the disciple sought to faithfully represent their teacher. So, in simple terms, a disciple follows Jesus, is formed by Jesus, and is faithful to the mission of Jesus.

Almost immediately Philip found Nathaniel and tells him that "we found him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (45)." John wants us to see the connection between following Jesus and pointing others to Jesus. A disciple is faithful to the mission of Jesus. Grace comes into our lives because it is flowing toward others. Nathaniel is Jewish so Philip points out that Jesus is the Messianic hope of the Old Testament. But in the book of Acts, when Paul is speaking to Gentiles he uses a very different approach. He appeals to their religious bent and the philosophies of the day (Acts 17:22-28). Everyone has a view of the world, a narrative that has been shaped by their life and it guides how they interpret the world. If we are to share the gospel then we need to understand how others view the world, the narrative they are living by so we can find common ground by which to share. Nathaniel's response is less than enthusiastic, "can anything good come out of Nazareth (46)?" It was inconceivable in his mind that the Messiah could come from Nazareth. The irony is that Jesus is not from Nazareth from heaven (1:1-4). But Philip does not let this dissuade him, he invites Nathaniel to "come and see (46)," that is, come and learn from Jesus and see for yourself.

Jesus Overcomes our Resistance (47-51)

When Jesus sees Nathaniel coming, he says, "Behold an Israelite indeed (truly) in whom there is no deceit (47)."¹ By calling him a true Israelite (see 4:42, 6:14, 7:4), Jesus is calling Nathaniel a man of faith (Ps 32:2; Zeph 3:13), remnant of those really looking for the coming Messiah among the nation of Israel (Rom 9:6-9). Jesus is gathering the remnant to form his Messianic community, starting with the twelve disciples who represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Surprised, Nathaniel asks, "how do you know me? Jesus tells him, before Philip even approached you, I saw you under the fig tree (48)." Jesus has supernatural insight into his heart and circumstances. Nathaniel responds, "Rabbi, you are the son of God, you are the King of Israel (49)." Philip's testimony that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, combined with Jesus' supernatural knowledge arouses faith (50). Nathaniel recognizes something Messianic about Jesus which Jesus will continue to unpack as his ministry progresses. Learning from Jesus is a means of God's grace in our lives, sustaining and strengthening spiritual growth (2 Pet 3:17-18). Following Jesus is putting ourselves in the place of learning from Jesus. As we following Jesus, He forms us so that we become like him. Do you remember from last week the three primary means or ways God pours grace into our lives? The first means of grace is the word of

¹ This is probably a play on words. Jacob, the Father of the nation of Israel, whose name means deceiver (Gen 25:24-34) and whose life was characterized by deceit. Nathaniel is the opposite.

God, where we hear God's voice. The second means of grace is prayer, where we have God's ear. And the third means of grace is belonging to his body, where we experience God's people in community. Your spiritual life is the most fundamental aspect of your life which requires us to be intentional and deliberate in strengthening it. To neglect your spiritual life is foolish. Grace is your life line so it is critical to build habits of grace into your life –hearing God's voice; having God's ear' and being with God's people - to sustain and strengthen your spiritual life.

Jesus counters, "because I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these (50)." The you is a plural pronoun so Jesus is now speaking to the growing community of disciples. The greater things are described as "you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man (51)." This is an Old Testament reference to the Patriarch Jacob's dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder (Gen 28:10-22). Here Jesus is the ladder so that the angels ascending and descending on Jesus. Jesus is the mediator of the greater revelation given to Jacob. The revelation from heaven, God, God's presence, and God's glory is tied to Jesus, through the signs he will do but ultimately through crucifixion and his exaltation. The path to discipleship is seeing and savoring the glory of God in who Jesus is for us and what he has done for us.

Take Aways . . .

- What evidence is there in your life that you are following Jesus?
- Who has God put into your life to share Jesus with?
- Do you see the glory of Jesus?

Questions for Life Groups:

1. How did you come to follow Jesus?
2. What are the three adjective David used to describe what it means to be a disciple?
3. Describe each adjective in your own words.
4. How are you doing in each: following Jesus, being formed by Jesus, and faithful to the mission of Jesus?
5. If Jesus forms us, then how do we participate in the process? The habits of grace.
6. Are you being intentional and deliberate in your spiritual life?
7. Do you enjoy Jesus? How?
8. In what ways can we invite others to come and see Jesus or bring them to Jesus?
9. Is there someone in your life right now that you can invite to come and see Jesus or bring to Jesus that we can pray for tonight?
10. What do you see in Jesus that is glorious to you, that draws you to him?