

Last time...the restoration of Peter...Matt 5:4
This time...Follow Me...discipleship

v18-19a young...old...what death:

Jesus restored Peter, three times telling Peter to serve Him and others...
and not himself
Jesus continues.

“When you were young, you were independent and self-willed.
When you are old, you will be dependent and will deny self-will.
You will stretch your arms out and be bound, against your will.
(on a cross and die to the glory of God.”

Church tradition: Peter was crucified in Rome, upside down (his choice)

Ps 116:15

God often uses the death of His saints for greater glory than their lives

- Stephen (Acts 7 vs Acts 6)
- Jim Elliott (salvation to tribe post-death)
- Whitney Houston (her funeral)

We can apply Jesus' words to our own walks as well

When we are young in our walks...immature believers/disciples...
we tend to be independent and self-willed...

”I will serve the Lord as I choose, when I choose, if I choose.”
In so saying, we are more devoted to Self than to Jesus.

But as we mature in the Lord, decrease as He increases...2 Peter 3:18...
we become increasingly

- dependent upon Jesus
- willing to go wherever and do whatever He so desires

We become increasingly devoted to Lord vs Self...God is our center vs us
I am not my own, I have been purchased with a great price!
I have no right to myself...I have no rights.

Jesus wants us to...grow up!

1 Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood
as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a
man, I put away childish things.

But we vigorously resist growing up!

Do a “maturity check”: Have you grown up in the Lord...
or have you willfully remained a child?

v19b Follow Me:

Jesus' invitation is to discipleship...to be a follower/learner
Jesus invites us to follow Him, to go where He is going.

Why should we?

What is involved with following Jesus? (an "ominous" start here)
We had better know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus!
We must count the cost...and then choose to follow or not.
It is anything but easy...humanly impossible...only by faith

Jesus usually spoke of discipleship with an "If"

Meaning...we decline, we can disobey, we can say,
"No...I won't do that.
Following You is too hard and costs too much.
I am not willing to go any further with You."

3½ years of following Jesus started with these same words...Matt 4:18-20
It will continue unto death and beyond

Matt 16:24

John 13:15-16, 36

John 15:18-20

(Matt 5:10-12)

John 16:22

The invitation is to follow Jesus...in every situation
WWJD...or WWJHMTD?

What would Jesus have me to do? (Acts 9:6)

The answer to WWJD is conceptual, but the answer to WWJHMTD is
interactive with God (ask, hear, do), leaves no room for excuses,
and involves continuous, lasting change.

Too often, we ask the wrong question because we don't like the answer to
the question we should be asking...we don't want to do/follow

Most of us only have ears for what we intend to agree with...

thereby unconsciously maintaining lordship over our lives

Jesus came to clean out our ears...he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Therefore...the degree/extent/measure to which God

- works on me...conforming me into the image of His Son
- works thru me...uses me in His work of Redemption

depends on

- me and not God!
- my willingness to follow Jesus in EVERY situation
 - great willingness – great maturity (forward march!)
 - "I trust Him only, wholly, now, forever."
 - little willingness – little maturity (2 step fwd, 1 back)
 - "I trust Him sometimes but not always."
 - no willingness – no maturity (standstill, "grow roots")
 - "I trust my self."

Understanding this Biblical truth (Phil 2:12-13) comes only by obedience

To follow Jesus...being a disciple...requires the whole person...

100% of me, 100% of the time

Anything less than 100% is

- NOT really following
- NOT like-mindedness, being in one accord with Jesus
- NOT servanthood to a Master but “volunteer-ism” to a cause
- self-willed and half-hearted, having a divided-heart

Rom 12:1-2 takes 100% of me, 100% of the time

Foreshadowed in OT by

- the continual burnt offering on the altar
- the daily offering in addition to the continual burnt offering

When we are born-again, our personalities remain intact...

as does our free will

But now...we have a continual choice to make –

God's will or my will be done?

From God's perspective, the only correct answer is...100%

Because Father knows best!

But what is the reality in our lives?

What % of our choices are to follow Jesus?

What % of our choices are to tell Jesus to follow us?

Most likely our response to all these things thus far is...Ouch!

From my perspective, I wonder if “church” is Jesus

- shepherding sheep who know His voice and follow Him
- herding cats

Neither one is complementary to our self-esteem

But to follow Jesus means no self-esteem and all Jesus-esteem

Good men cannot follow Jesus...

only godless and weak and broken and sinful men can

It is never our sense of goodness that brings us into touch with
God, but our sense of unworthiness (humility vs pride)

With humility of mind, to follow Jesus is to follow Him into eternal life

Life requires death...death to Self so Christ can live in us

My “rights” must die if the righteousness of God is to dwell in me

To follow Jesus is to sign my rights over to Him and to be His
bondservant...rejoicing that He would even have me!

To follow Jesus is to disavow my “declaration of independence” and
my “bill of rights”

In so doing, I am made free (John 8:32, 36)

Reality: The Almighty has His own purposes.

It is not given us to question or dispute or demand any explanations...

it is given us to obey – immediately, completely, unconditionally

The Almighty shreds us with His Word...then heals us with His Word
(Heb 4:12) and His Spirit

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ...

- Jesus being your All-in-all...
- denying Self...everything that is un-Christ-like
- smelling like Jesus wherever you go...

is humanly impossible...Jesus' baptism with fire, God the Holy Spirit,
is absolutely essential

Only by the power of God upon us can we follow Jesus

We must relinquish our “power and control” to embrace His

Until we let go, Jesus will not say “Let’s go!”

Who in their right mind does not want to be where Jesus is going?!

Well then...let go...of everything except Him

v20-22 what is that to thee:

Hearing of his calling to follow Jesus, Peter was

- thinking of himself...dying on a cross?!
(inward...self-centeredness...is a miserable place!)
- looking at John...comparing and competing
(outward is a discouraging place!)
- not thinking of or looking at Jesus
(upward is the peaceful place!)

Jesus' response to Peter:

“I AM the Lord.

I will build My church My way.

You are My workmanship.

I have ordained good works for you to do.

Do not compare or compete...just be faithful to your calling.”

Peter would die for his faith in Jesus.

John would

- survive multiple assassination attempts
- survive banishment to a forsaken island
- live another 60-ish years and die of old age
- receive this Gospel and The Revelation of Jesus Christ
(the “NT Daniel/beloved”)

Notice that Jesus is talking only to Peter...

Jesus does not make disciples in crowds...He makes them individually.

Discipleship is a personal matter vs a corporate matter

We gather corporately for feeding and encouraging and edifying...

we walk individually on what we eat/believe

We each have our own path on which to follow the Good Shepherd...

your path is your path, my path is my path

The Lord has His all-seeing eye on every detail of our lives, He has a perfect plan for my life and a perfect plan for your life

Those paths/plans intersect and are even parallel for a while as we walk together, but they are distinctly different

I am to follow my Good Shepherd on the path He ordained/chose for me, the path of His perfect plan

So I will not covet another path...it would be inferior to mine for me
I fear straying from my path or digging my heels in...I do not want my
Lord waiting for me

For me to be envious of your path (or another pastor's path) is to despise that which the sovereign God has chosen for me for His glory... woe that I should despise anything God has chosen for me!
I need concern myself with only one person's faithfulness and obedience – mine!

Had any other path/circumstance been better for you/me than the one in which we are, God Who has our best interest at heart would have put us there.

We are placed by the Almighty Who has His own purposes in the most suitable circumstances...

- to conform us into the image of His dear Son...
- to bring out the family likeness to Jesus Christ...
- for our eternal good and His glory

Yet we, like little or spoiled children, cry out in agony so easily in our

- circumstances
- unmet expectations...

forgetting

- nothing comes into our lives but that which God allows
- all trials are common vs unique, God faithful and provides way of escape
- the test: will we run to Jesus or run from Jesus

Our impatience and fear/worry

- mask pride and unbelief
- are indicators of NOT following Jesus

Who are we, the clay, to dictate anything to the Potter?!

Our lives are His design formed by His hands

We are His...all we are, all we have, all we ever hope to be

He does not interfere in our lives...our lives are His!

As in a Bridegroom and a Bride – everything He has is hers and everything she has is His (no pre-nups with God!)...2 are 1
Jesus did not come just to save us...He came to save us into Himself, the Body of Christ...of which He is the Head and we are the members obeying the will of the Head

Matt 16:24

We do not get to choose the cross we must bear, God in His loving omniscience picks it for us

Spurgeon: It is not made of feathers or lined with velvet, it is heavy, a wooden cross but not an iron cross so a man can carry it.

The path chosen for us is not always lit with bright sunshine...sometimes the path is covered in darkness and battered by fierce storms

The best of God's children must taste the bitterness of following Jesus... in order to know the fellowship of His sufferings...the purifying that must take place before we enter into glory

It is a light affliction

Rom 8:18

Ours is to cheerfully accept the cross and path sovereignly chosen for us, remembering that His yoke is easy...we cast our cares on Him.

Jesus does all the heavy work, we just follow and learn of Him

He has given us His Word and the Holy Spirit, the power of God

Therefore, we need not fear or despair or pout or murmur

Following Jesus will mean hardship in this life...

hardship unbelievers do not have

- being passed over for promotion because of Jesus
- being mocked and ridiculed for your faith
- being imprisoned as a threat to the world's agenda
- being executed for your faith in Jesus Christ

In this brief life, Biblical Christianity is a continuous fight with a wild, fierce animal that never stops attacking

Following Jesus is not letting those things and that fight distract or discourage us

Victorious living is following Jesus, defeated living is Self-navigating

Discipleship...following Jesus...is not letting anything or anyone get between you and Jesus Christ

Note: Where is Jesus in the “Follow Me”? Heb 13:5b
We are NEVER alone...so everything is OK

Discipleship is a work of the Holy Spirit as we stop striving for our will
Do not charge off into a “good cause” and ask the Lord to bless it and you...
Follow hard after the Good Shepherd and obey His direction as He works to accomplish His purposes

The God who knows everything has a perfect plan for each of us...

Therefore His plan is better than ours
But His execution of the plan is a test of faith

- Heb 11:8...to walk where God walks
- mysterious...revealed over time, one step at a time

Jesus will not dazzle us with some miracle and then ask,
“Now will you follow Me?”
He will work supernaturally naturally and invite us to follow
Him step by step
He wants us to choose with a clear mind, not when we are in some hyped-up emotional state

It is a walk of faith...going, not knowing where you are going but knowing Who is leading you

We walk cheerfully because we know we do not walk alone or in vain

Following Jesus is walking in the Spirit and not the flesh,
Discipleship is 1 Cor 2:2

Discipleship is Luke 14:26-33
If I am a disciple, Jesus is my Master. Period.

Jesus Christ is the last word on God, on sin, on death, on life, on heaven and hell...we either bow down or we will be cast down
Following Jesus is the most rational thing a person could ever do.

So...Follow Jesus...the simplicity of Jesus
Truth...no room for deceit
Humility...no room for haughtiness
Gentleness...no room for bullying
Meekness...no room for cowardice
Boldness...no room for fear or timidity
Love...no room for self-absorption
Holiness...no room for compromise or hypocrisy,
without which no man can see the Lord

And follow, come what may!

When he boarded the ship bound for the English colony of Georgia, George Whitefield said, “God give me a deep humility, a well-guided zeal, a burning love, and a single eye, and then let men or devils do their worst.”

v23-24 this disciple should not die:

Oh, it is so much easier to talk than to listen!

All listening, but especially listening to the voice of God, needs ears trained to hear
Ears trained to hear the voice of God come by faithful obedience...
by following Jesus

We know this testimony is true because Jesus Christ is exalted
(John is “invisible” in this Gospel)

Self is deaf to the voice of God because of sin
Sin breeds discontentment...a deafening roar of

- the misery of an self-centered inward focus
- the discouragement the comparing and competing of a selfish outward focus on “success”
 - Husbands...jobs, vehicles, “toys”
 - Wives...husband’s jobs, homes
 - Ministries...size (#, facilities, staff, etc)

The deafening roar of sin makes listening very hard work...
especially listening to the small still voice of God that requires a self-less upward focus

v25 Amen:

In Hebrew "Amen" is spelled using exactly the same root that is used in the Hebrew verbs for

- "to believe/to rely on"
- "to be confident in"
- "to be steadfast in"
- "to trust someone who is reliable"
- "reliable"
- "trustworthy"
- "faithful"
- "believer"

So when we say that simple "amen" at the end of our prayers, we are saying...

- "God, You are faithful."
- "You are reliable"
- "You are trustworthy"
- "I believe in You AND rely on You for everything in my life"
- "You are everything to me, and without you I have nothing"
- "I am completely dependent on You alone"

So...the Gospel of John

Jesus said...

- I AM
- I AM the Bread of Life
- I AM the Light of the world
- I AM the Door
- I AM the Good Shepherd
- I AM the Resurrection and the Life
- I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life
- I AM the True Vine

Jesus said...Follow Me.

Do you?
Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?
The decision is for all eternity.