

Epiphany 2 1/14/18  
John 1:43-51 B

*[JESUS] FOUND PHILIP AND SAID TO HIM, "FOLLOW ME."*

This morning, we see Samuel following God. In our Gospel reading, we see Philip and Nathanael following Jesus. So, guess what? You are going to get a sermon about following Jesus. Which none of you are going to argue with, especially in church on a Sunday morning, when it's nice and warm in the church, and you are going to be here for all of one hour.

Right?

Kind of like the day of your confirmation. There you were in your white gown and flower, Grandma was so proud. And the pastor asked you,

Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, words, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?

Do you intend to continue in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?

And you said, "Sure," because that was the thing to do and, besides, the pastor told you what to say, right?

"Follow me," Jesus says to Philip and that's what He says to you this very day. And, we pray that we would respond in faith, so that we do not follow Jesus this hour in church, or the day of your confirmation, but with every thought, word and deed of our lives.

You know how it happens in your life. You follow Jesus, but you insist on doing it in the way that pleases you, according to how you want to live your life, only when it is convenient for us. You want to follow Jesus when you are on your deathbed; you want Jesus there to take you, dying, to be in heaven with Him forever.

But, there are those times and places when you want follow Jesus only on Sunday morning, or the day of your confirmation. At work, talking to your supervisor about a co-worker, and you defame their good name and reputation, cutting them down, so that you look all that much better in the eyes of the boss. Rather than loving your neighbor, you harbor bitterness and anger, even towards a parent or sibling, refusing even to talk to them. You know you should return more to the Lord for His work, to help your neighbor in need, but you horde more and more for yourself, because there is just so many toys to buy. When God doesn't fit your lifestyle or your wants or your whims, sure; sure, you follow Jesus – one hour on Sunday morning, the day of your confirmation.

Jesus says, "Follow Me," not one hour on Sunday morning; not just on the morning of your confirmation; not just when it is convenient for you. "Follow Me," living with every breath as the new creations that God has made you in Christ.

But, being by our very natures, sinful and unclean, we have no strength or ability in and of ourselves to follow Jesus.

So, God the Holy Spirit works through the Word we hear to create faith in us so that we may respond in faith. God's Word creates what God demands. At creation, God said, "Let there be..." and there was. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus spoke, "Lazarus, come out!" and that Word of God breathed life into Lazarus and He came forth from the grave.

In our Old Testament lesson, we are told "the word of the LORD was rare in those days," because the people of Israel were not holding the Word of God sacred and gladly hearing and learning it. So, the LORD called Samuel and Samuel responded in faith, "Speak, for your servant hears," because that Word created faith in Samuel.

Jesus speaks and calls to you, “Follow Me,” through the hearing of His Word and in the Sacraments. And, through these means, He gives you faith so that you may follow Him.

“Follow me,” he says to you in the word of absolution. “Follow me,” he says to you in the water and the Word of your baptism. “Follow me,” He says to you as You eat His body and drink His blood.

Last week, as we celebrated the Baptism of our Lord, we are comforted that Jesus took our place and went to the cross carrying all of our sin, died the death of our sin, was buried, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, God the Father raised His Son to life again, bringing life and immortality to light. He lives to breath His life into you. He breathes His life into you through the hearing of the Word. In other words, He calls to you “Follow me” and that word creates faith in you, so that you have the desire and the ability to follow Christ.

III. In our Epistle, Paul talks about following Jesus with our body. “The body is not meant for sexual immortality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body ... so glorify God in your body,” he says (1 Cor 6:20).

Paul first wrote the words of our epistle reading to the Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. Those Corinthian Christians were surrounded by a godless society that said when it comes to sex and marriage, anything goes. The sin of practicing a homosexual lifestyle was even more accepted in Corinth than it is in the United States today. Prostitution was so common that it was part of the “worship” at pagan temples. The vast majority of Christians in the congregation had come out of that culture. And, there was confusion. Some were wondering, “Can I still live the lifestyle of the day and be a Christian?” Others, hearing of the forgiveness of sins that is our in Christ Jesus, thought it was no big deal if

they lived like their pagan neighbors because – well, because they could be forgiven.

And, that message wasn't just for 1<sup>st</sup>-century Corinthians, it is for you today. The same Jesus who said, "For God so loved the world;" the same Jesus who said, "I am the resurrection and the life;" the same Jesus who said, "Follow Me;" is the same Jesus who said through the apostle Paul, "flee from sexual immorality".

That is a message that we need to hear because we are sinners in a sinful world and the perversity of the world is ever before us. No, there are not pagan temples where you "worship" by fornicating with prostitutes. Instead, the internet brings pornography into our homes and indecency is flaunted on TV, movies, and in music. Hamburgers are sold by scantily clad women. Our young people think it's funny, it makes you popular, to send nude pictures on their phones. This world and her citizens think the mere idea of chastity before marriage is antiquated, a joke.

The Bible teaches clearly – [and I invite you to join us for Bible class to study the Scriptures together as the body of Christ](#) – that God has created us male and female for marriage. And all sexual activity outside – homosexuality, as well as adultery and fornication, the use of pornography, and you laughing at off-color jokes – is a sin.

My Brothers and Sisters, the Good News of the Gospel is that when this vain world has offered us forbidden pleasures and the evil one has worked harm with his tempting treasures, Jesus calls us to repentance. Daily, we return to the water of our baptism, to drown that flesh which wants to follow Jesus on Sunday morning, when it's convenient for us, that we may daily rise to new life in Christ, to follow Him.

The green paraments of Epiphany remind us that God has appeared to us in Christ, and that every day, we die to sin and grow more like Christ, so that we may be Christ to the world.

“Follow Me,” Jesus speaks to you today. Through the Word that Jesus speaks, He creates faith in our hearts, so that we may follow Him. We follow Him, walking by faith in Him through every temptation and joy and sorrow of this present age, because faith knows and trusts and rejoices that Jesus leads us through this vale of tears to life with Him in heaven, where He will wipe all the tears and we will dwell with Him forever and ever, without end.

Amen.