

Epiphany 2 1/14/24
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, "Ya, sure, you betcha," because that was the thing to do and, besides, the pastor told you want 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.

But, you know how it happens in 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 don't really want Jesus around. Like in your marriage, your wife fails you; she doesn't meet your expectations, so you tell her she can't do anything right. And she counters that she certainly didn't do right when you married a Neanderthal like you. And, it's game on. The words fly from your mouth, words you don't want Jesus to hear.

Or at the Christmas party or the football watching get together. And you enjoy a beer or 6 or 8 and the jokes get quite risqué. Or you're at the coffee table, and the comments about your neighbor just get mean and nasty. And you, you want to be liked, you want to be popular—not so much with Jesus at those times – but with your neighbors. You just don't want Jesus around. So, you laugh and join right in.

You cheat on a test. You lie to the patrolman. You worry and stew and fret, because you don't believe God is going to take care of you. 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; but, there are those times you just don't want Jesus around.

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 creation 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, alive, 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.

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 3rd day, God the Father raised His Son to life again, bringing life and immortality to light. He lives to breath His life into you.

III. He breathes His life into you through the hearing of the Word and in the Sacraments. 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.

"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.

That is what we do – with every beat of our hearts; with every step we walk by faith in the valley of this shadow of death.

Which brings us to our Epistle reading this Sunday. Paul talks about following Jesus with our body. He says this, *The body is not meant for sexual immortality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body ... so glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6:20)*.

Paul first wrote these 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, 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. This is the society and culture that the Christians in the congregation had come out of. And, there was confusion. Some were wondering, “Can I be a Christian and still live like my pagan neighbors?”

The answer is, clearly, “No!” We who have been called to follow Jesus have died to sin and all unholy desires in the waters of our baptism. The Christian life is the life of 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 this Epiphany season remind us that every day, we die to sin and grow more like Christ, so that we may be Christ to the world. That means, yes, especially when it comes to marriage, we glorify God with our body. We don’t worry or cross our fingers for good luck, we fear, love, and trust in God to take care of us. We hear and learn God’s Word and believe its promises. We don’t let the sun go down on our anger, but forgive as God has forgiven us in Christ. We put the best construction on everything when it comes to our neighbor’s words and actions. And, we are content with what God has entrusted to us.

“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 Him forever and ever,
without end.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.