

SERMON: "LOOKING TO FOLLOW"

TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT PSALM 40:1-11
NEW TESTAMENT JOHN 1:29-42

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INTRODUCTION

I am calling an emergency meeting of the Personnel committee to deal with a problem on our church staff. Last week in our staff meeting, Randy Darst, our communications director, admitted in front of everyone that he was kind of pulling for Ohio State against Georgia in the College Football Semi-finals.

You see how serious this is? Ohio State?

I reacted calmly and asked how this might be. Randy explained saying "I'm not pulling for Ohio State. I'm pulling for the Big Ten, for the region." I understand the logic ... and being the forgiving sort, I forgave him for rooting against the side of goodness that is the Georgia Bulldogs.

You may be wondering

Yes. I did get Randy's permission to share this true story. And yes, I am kidding about the need to call a Personnel committee meeting. Pulling for Ohio State against the Dawgs ... a written reprimand is sufficient

I don't want to get anyone in trouble. I do, however, want to highlight Randy's logic. It actually makes sense. I do the same thing – pull for my team, then my conference, then anyone playing against Florida

The other thing I like about the logic he used is that it does show some thought And in so doing raises the question about the choices we make, the logic we use. How do we decide who or what to follow? What are we looking for when we look to follow?

That is the question that comes to mind when I hear these brief stories in the bible about Jesus calling his disciples. What made them want to follow? Some of the call stories are very matter of fact. Jesus says "Follow me" and they follow. Just like that. Some give more reasoning a miracle like a healing or catching lots of fish

In this story from John we get a bit more detail.

And it helps us see the logic they used and that we might use What were they looking and listening for? Were they looking to follow? And to bring it round, what are you, are we, looking for? Why follow Jesus ... not just believe in, but follow

INTRODUCING ...

Our New Testament lesson links two stories that are meant to be linked
In the pew bible it is verses 29-34, under the heading 'The Lamb of God'
and verses 35-42 under the heading "The First Disciples of Jesus"
The two stories fit together. First an introduction ...

**The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared,
"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

That is the nametag that is meant to stick, 'Lamb of God.'
Two passages from the Hebrew bible, our Old Testament, would come
to mind to those hearing John introduce Jesus in this way
One is from the prophet Isaiah about the suffering servant
whose life would be an offering for sin

The second and most familiar would be the story of the Exodus
How the blood of a lamb was spread above the door of Hebrew homes
so the last plague, the death of Egyptian children, would pass over them
The Passover ... the deliverance of the people out of Egypt

The images from Isaiah and Exodus are combined. This man, Jesus,
is that sacrifice. This man, Jesus, will deliver the people (all of them)
and do so by way of his sacrificial love. John says it succinctly,
"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

Don't you think Jesus' future disciples were looking for that Lamb of God?
Not just someone who might take them away to a better life,
like so many leaders promise, but one who would take away their sin.
Isn't that what we are looking for in the one we follow?

It's a competitive world. We find ourselves quite often looking for lions
Someone or something powerful, even fierce.
But while lions have their appeal ... so too does the Lamb
Because this Lamb takes away the sin of the world

I remain convinced that the truest measure of love is not
Whether or not something is worth fighting for
It is when something or someone is worth suffering for
That is what this Lamb has done for us.
Still does ... daily mercy to go with our daily bread

John the Baptist knew good and well what needed to be said by way of introduction
to those who are looking to follow someone worth following ...
"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

COME AND SEE

The passage says John was there with two of his disciples,
two people who were following him, one of whom was Andrew.
Jesus' future disciple, Andrew, was already a disciple.
Aren't we all? Aren't we all following some leader, some guide.

You may not have thought it through to the extent some college football fans have
Who you follow and why. First my team, then my conference,
then my region, then whoever is playing against my rival.
We all are following somebody's lead. We are all looking to follow.

That introduction as the Lamb of God is followed by a simple invitation.
It begins with looking first. Then with following

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see."

Jesus asked what they were looking for and then said "come and see"
That is the invitation. Not a hard sell, an invitation.
Jesus is constantly doing that ... inviting
Doing that inviting in the stories of scripture and in our stories

He is not alone in doing that inviting. Plenty of others are doing so too
Think about social media, the language we use ... influencers, followers
It's always been that way even before we had social media
Back when aps where things like potato skins and other appetizers
And all the way back to Jesus along the lakeshore

Jesus question then is a very good question now, an inviting one,
always has been and always will be an important and inviting question
"What are you looking for?" Who are you looking for?
Are you looking for Jesus?

I so hope and pray you are on the lookout for Jesus
And not just here in this church, but in this community, in this world
He is you know, very much, on the loose.

As you look for Jesus, intentionally look for Jesus
Might I encourage you to be open to surprises,
Jesus showing up in all sorts of places and predicaments

SUMMARY

With Christmas and New Years Day on Sundays last year
we made the decision to have worship downstairs in the Fellowship Hall
No bulletins, sitting around tables, less formal. I liked it

What I really liked was New Years Day. I did my benediction from Micah
And when I got to the part where I say "God has shown you what is good"
the time when J'Kalein would often add an "amen" when he was here
I heard a healthy handful of "amens" from several people. I liked that

Aren't we all looking for someone to show us what is good?
They show us what is good ... and we follow

Simple truth – Jesus, more than anyone else, shows us what is good
God has shown you and keeps on showing you what is good!
Come and see!