

## 13. The Gospel of John—1:45-51

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### *“The Invitation of Jesus” Pt.3*

(1/7/18)

If you are new with us, we have recently started a study thru the gospel of John here at Calvary on Sunday mornings.

We are currently in a section in chapter one of John’s gospel where Jesus is beginning to invite or “call” men to follow Him by becoming His disciples.

We have called this section from verses 35-51— **The Invitation of Jesus**—subtitled, “*The requirements of discipleship*”.

#### **John 1:35-38 (NKJV)**

<sup>35</sup> Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"...

When John the Baptist introduced his two disciples, John and Andrew, to Jesus as the Lamb of God (Messiah)—we read in verse 37 that they started to follow Jesus.

Now when Jesus turned and saw that they were following Him, He said to them “**what do you seek?**”

In other words, “*Why do you want to follow Me? What are you looking for? What do you hope to get from following Me?*”

Many follow Jesus, not because they love *Him* and want to serve *Him*—but because they love *themselves* and look at Jesus as a means to an end—the end being earthly blessings and material prosperity.

Look, it's not wrong to ask the Lord to meet your needs, heal your body or bless you and your family.

The problem comes when people *only* follow Jesus for what they can get from Him—the temporal blessings they think will make them happy.

There are many people in churches this morning spread throughout our country who are 'following Jesus' and yet have no clue what's really involved in that decision or what the ultimate cost will be for doing so.

Jesus would later lay out the cost and requirements of true discipleship in Matthew's gospel chapter 16—

**Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> ... "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his (or her) cross, and follow Me.

In this one verse Jesus teaches on the kind of commitment it takes to be a true disciple of His.

*First* of all it begins with a *desire* to follow Him—"If anyone desires to come after Me".

In other words—it's your choice, God isn't forcing you to do anything.

*Second*, it involves self-denial—"Let him deny himself".

Self-denial, as Jesus taught it, does not involve denying yourself *things* as much as it does denying your own *authority* over your life—which is the idea behind the statement, “*and take up his (or her) cross*”

A cross is not having an unsaved husband, nagging wife, or domineering mother-in-law—nor is it having a physical handicap or suffering from an incurable disease.

To **take up** one’s **cross** is simply to be willing to pay any price for Christ’s sake—it is the willingness to endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom for His sake.

One pastor said it well—

*“Christ does not call disciples to Himself to make their lives easy and prosperous, but to make them holy and productive. Willingness to take up his cross is the mark of the true disciple... Those who make initial confessions of their desire to follow Jesus Christ, but refuse to accept hardship or persecution, are characterized as the false, fruitless souls who are like rocky soil with no depth. They wither and die under threat of the reproach of Christ (Matt. 13:20–21). Many people want a “no-cost” discipleship, but Christ offers no such option.”*

True discipleship is following in the steps of Jesus by living the life He lived—

**1 John 2:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

**Matthew 7:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

**John 10:27 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Now, I don’t know what was in the hearts of John and Andrew that day when they started to follow Jesus and He turned to them and asked, “**What do you seek?**”

We know they responded in verse 38—

**John 1:38 (NKJV)**

...**"Rabbi"** (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), **"where are You staying?"**

As we pointed out last time in our study of John's gospel—it was their way of saying, *"we think we want to make a commitment to You and officially become Your disciples but we're not sure yet, can we follow You home and talk to You about it."*

So, they asked, **"where are You staying"**, to which Jesus responded, **"Come and see..."** (v.39).

**John 1:40-42 (NKJV)**

<sup>40</sup> **One of the two who heard John  *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** <sup>41</sup> **He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).** <sup>42</sup> **And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).**

As we have already said, Andrew was Simon Peter's younger brother—and a real soul winner.

Simon (whose name means 'shifting' or 'unstable')—Jesus now renames 'Cephas' (Aramaic for 'stone')—a name that Peter would eventually grow into.

**John 1:43-44 (NKJV)**

<sup>43</sup> **The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."** <sup>44</sup> **Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.**

Bethsaida was a Jewish city located on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee—it was a fishing town, so much so, that the very name 'Bethsaida' means *"House of Fishing"*.

Of course, the process of disciple making starts with a person getting saved—which is essential if we ourselves are someday going to become *‘fishers of men’*.

Now, let’s finish the chapter and we’ll make some final applications about becoming a disciple of Jesus—and why it’s the most important thing in life, containing everything that makes life worth living.

**John 1:45 (NKJV)**

<sup>45</sup> **Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."**

It’s significant that as soon as Philip decides to become one of Jesus’ disciples—the first thing he does is to go and find his friend Nathanael and witnesses to him about Jesus.

One author put it this way—

*“Philip wanted to share his new-found joy with someone else, so he went and found Nathanael. New converts are the best soul-winners. His message was simple and to the point. He told Nathanael that he had found the Messiah who had been foretold by Moses and the prophets—Jesus of Nazareth. Actually, his message was not entirely accurate. He described Jesus as being the son of Joseph. Jesus, of course, was born of the Virgin Mary and had no human father. Joseph adopted Jesus and thus became his legal father, though not His real father.”*

Let me make another correction to what Philip said—in verse 43, Jesus finds Phillip and says, **“Follow Me,”** but in verse 45, Philip says, **“We have found Him.”**

According to Romans 3:11, we don’t find God—*He finds us.* (Elaborate)

It was a good thing for Philip (and all of us) that God doesn’t require us to be theologians and have all the right answers before we can be saved—a child’s faith will do. (Elaborate)

The “**Law and the Prophets**” was a common title for the entire Old Testament (Mt 7:12; 22:40; Lk 16:16).

This is Philip’s testimony as a witness of Jesus Christ—he declares that He (Jesus) is the Messiah and Savior predicted in our Old Testament (the Jews have no Old Testament only the Jewish Scriptures known as the *Tanakh*).

There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that speak of Messiah’s first coming—I’ll give you two of them, one from Moses and the other from the prophet Micah.

**Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear...<sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. <sup>19</sup> And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him.

**Micah 5:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth *are* from of old, From everlasting."

Nathanael, although a good man, expresses his doubts that anything *good* (i.e. ‘great’) could come out of Nazareth—especially the Messiah!

One pastors summed it up—

*“Off the beaten path, Nazareth was forgotten and forsaken economically, unimportant militarily, and insignificant politically.”*

I mean, Nazareth was so insignificant that it wasn’t even mentioned in the OT!

Nathanael was no doubt thinking—*“Surely the Messiah would come from Jerusalem, Hebron, or some other prominent city—anywhere but Nazareth!”*

Now at this point Philip refuses to do something that many new believers engage in when challenged by unbelievers as they present the gospel—he doesn’t argue with his friend, he simply responded, “**Come and see**” (v.46).

Today, we would say, ‘**come and see**’ by inviting them to church so that they could hear His Word being proclaimed and see for themselves the transformation Jesus, thru the Holy Spirit, has accomplished in the lives of His people.

**John 1:47-51 (NKJV)**

<sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

The reason Nathanael responded with such astonishment and praise for Jesus was because—he was nowhere near Jesus for Jesus to see where Nathanael was sitting.

Here Jesus exercises the gift of the Word of Knowledge. (Explain)

But in saying this, not only did Jesus tell Nathanael *where* he was sitting, He also told him *what* he was doing under that tree.

The Lord Jesus told Nathanael he was reading a scroll of Genesis (what is recorded in our modern Bible as 28:12)—the story of Jacob’s ladder.

You see, Jacob was out in the wilderness running away from his brother Esau, feeling alone and cut off from his family.

And in that place of isolation, fear and uncertainty—he lays down on the ground with a rock for a pillow, falls asleep and has a dream...(Genesis 28:12-15)

When Nathanael read this, he no doubt started thinking about how wonderful it would be to have a real ‘ladder’ that would stand on the earth and extend up into heaven so that a person could use it as a way to come and meet with God—but of course that’s the stuff dreams are made of and not reality.

Perhaps Nathanael, being a student of the Jewish Scriptures, had Job in mind at this point.

You see Job was going thru the worst trial of his life, and even though he maintained his innocence—his friends kept accusing him of not being right with God.

They maintained that Job was experiencing a judgment from God—and that God only judges’ sinners, which in their minds proved that Job was guilty of wrongdoings against God.

Their advice to Job was, *“Just plead your case to God, confess your sins and your problems will be over.”*

Job accuses them of being ‘miserable counselors’, who were unjustly accusing an innocent man of wrongdoing.

And then he says to them, *“Besides, there is no way I can meet with God and plead my case to Him because—God is in heaven and I’m stuck here on earth and there is no bridge (ladder) that exists by which I can climb up into heaven and meet with Him.”*

Now, here in John 1:51 Jesus says that Jacob’s dream about a ladder that bridged the gap between heaven and earth and would allow people to have access to God—was really a prophecy of Himself and His work of redemption for fallen sinners. (recite John 14:6)



Jesus is saying, “*I am the Ladder, I am the Bridge between heaven and earth; between God and mankind—the only way to the Father.*”

The only way a person can have access to and fellowship with God is thru Jesus, our great High Priest.

The Latin word for “priest” is *pontifex*, which means “bridge-builder”.

As our High Priest, when Jesus offered Himself on the cross—that cross in effect became a way, a bridge that bridged the gap that sin had opened separating man from God. (Isa. 59:1-2)

Many today think it’s unfair that God has provided only *one* way for people to be saved—unfair!?

Tell that to Jesus who was *innocent* of any sin or wrongdoing against the Father—but died on behalf of guilty sinners to provide the way for fallen man to once again have fellowship with God.

Others refuse to believe it and claim there are many roads that lead to God—(church marque that read, “*God is too big to be the God of only one religion*”)

But God has only provided One Mediator—a mediator refers to one who intervenes between two estranged individuals to restore peace.

**1 Timothy 2:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus,

For Jesus to be the Mediator between God and man He had to become the God-Man. (Explain)

So, the path of discipleship is laid out in the last few verses of John 1 and are as follows—

### **“Come and see” (v.39)**

‘**Come**’ is of course the invitation itself—and means to make a conscious decision to check out Jesus and ‘**see**’ for yourself Who He is and if what He taught is true.

### **“Follow Me” (v.43)**

To ‘**follow**’ Jesus means to make a decision to commit your life to Christ—to make a ‘directional change’ in the way your life is going.

In other words, to turn around (repent) and start following Jesus. (John 10:27)

A person must decide for him or herself if they want to believe in, receive, and start following Jesus as their Lord and Savior—no one can force them against their will to become a Christian or proclaim them without their consent a Christian as in infant baptism. (John 1:12-13)

### **“You will see greater things than these.” (v.50)**

The result of every follower of Jesus—your eyes will be opened, and you will see God work in powerful and incredible ways.

#### **Jeremiah 33:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you ['you will see'] great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

God always wants our greatest days for Him to be yet future—(talk about Caleb in Joshua 14:6-15).

Earlier I said that becoming a disciple of Jesus (becoming a Christian) is the most important thing in life.

I say that because of what Jesus went on to say about being one of His disciples in Matthew 16—

**Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?  
(Comment)

But listen, as we have just entered a new year and with it new hopes that often accompany a new year—primarily, the hope of a better and more meaningful life.

That is exactly what being a disciple of Christ here on earth is all about.

When Jesus approached men fishing and invited them to become fishers of men—He was offering them a life that transcended the temporal and mundane and would be used by God to impact people's lives for eternity.

But not only that—living a life of discipleship by being Jesus' servant will result in the kind of joy and purpose and fulfillment in life that so many are seeking but can't seem to find no matter how many material things they acquire or pleasurable experiences they pursue.

We are going to see in John 13 how Jesus told His disciples that true joy in life was a by-product of a person being one of His disciples and being used to serve others—primarily to save them thru the preaching of the gospel.

Becoming a disciple of Christ, although not an easy life, is the only thing that makes life worth living—commit yourself to being a faithful disciple of Jesus—you will never regret doing so.