

## “Come, Follow Me”

Covid-19 has completely upended our worlds! We used to be in such a hurry. Not all of what was “normal” was good. We should stop and think, and pray, and ask Jesus how we should follow Him in this new world. None of those old external things was ever our refuge and strength, anyway. Let’s ask the Lord what He’s saying to us now: by speaking with Him, observing again what He said and did when He was on this earth. Spiritual disciplines help, not by turning our gaze inwards, but by making room for Him afresh in our lives. He’s lovely, and we need his likeness in us: personally, as a Church, and in all our missional activity, too. This world needs us to look like Jesus.

The Lord gave us lots of word-pictures to describe what following Him was like: *“The kingdom of Heaven is...”*

(i) **An outstretched hand, and the invitation “Come, Follow Me”. (Matt 4 v 19)**

This is for you! The Lord invites us to be His companions on a journey through this world. To ***come and be the person God intended you to be***. He chose some very ordinary people, as diverse a group as you could have imagined. They were fascinated by Him, hungry to know more, and a bit in love. The whole of Christian life is about “Come, follow Me”. To follow the Lord Himself! He is not reluctant to have you as a follower. He offers His hand.

(ii) **The Good Shepherd. (John 10)**

Following Jesus is not just about us making enormous efforts to measure up. We have a Shepherd, who guides us from His heart. He knows us backwards, knows about human frailty and daftness; and ***His response is total commitment to us***. He leads, calls, feeds, protects, and at night sleeps in the doorway to the pen to protect us. If you attack His sheep, you attack Him, as Saul of Tarsus found out. We are in amazingly good hands. Jesus’s hands.

(iii) **The Yoke. (Matthew 11 v 28-30)**

A yoke is a wooden thing you place across the shoulders of two animals you want to pull together. Often, a more experienced with a less experienced animal. Jesus is offering to be yoked with you! He can keep you on track, stop you rushing ahead, keep going when you’re tired. Watch Him. Watch, learn, copy: ***do it all His way***. Look at the Gospels: how did he live, sleep, pray, treat different sorts of people? Do it His way. Until His way becomes yours. Because He is meek and lowly of heart: and the Scripture says, you will find rest for your soul.

(iv) **His Friends. (John 15 v 5)**

In a way, this is the most astonishing. “I have not called you servants...I call you ***friends***”. Really? A friend of the Lord of Glory? An intimate of the greatest Man ever? Jesus had a very human set of disciples, who were seldom reliable. But He loved them to the end, washed their feet, said He would send the Holy Spirit on them in all His warmth and light. That the world would never accept them as His friends, but that He would never, ever, leave them. That their society must be quite different to this world’s: full of love, and mutual esteem. He speaks to them intimately about His coming death, and how it will make them feel. And then He prays His High Priestly prayer over them, commending them to His Father. His Friends. Amazing stuff.

**Discipleship is fellowship** with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A real, excellent Father who runs to you: a wonderful Lord Jesus, who shepherds and cares for you personally and corporately: and a close Friend in the Holy Spirit, who knows every nook and cranny of your spirit.

In the passage in John 21, the breakfast by Lake Galilee, several of these themes come out.

Peter is restored – much to his surprise. Jesus just asks 3 times if he loves Him. He’s full-hearted and a bit sad. Then Jesus said **“Follow me”**! He tells Peter he will die a martyr’s death. Peter looks around, finds John, and asks what John should do: and the Lord gently tells him to mind his own business. Follow me, Peter. Yourself. Each day. We are a people of cross and crown: we go where the Lord leads.

Then **sheep** creep in! Jesus tells Peter to feed His sheep 3 times. He cares for us with all His heart.

**“What is that to you ?.....you must follow Me”**.

**Some questions:**

**(a) Which of these word-pictures appeals most to your heart ?**

**(b) Is it wrong to have earthly role-models ?**

**(c) What do you think following Jesus in this new world looks like for you ?**

**(d) Can we really be close friends of God ?**

MGC

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