

Following Jesus – Mark 2:13-14

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Long Held Ideas

1. Have you ever had a belief or idea that you held for years, only to discover it was wrong, or at least not quite right?
2. That happened to me recently regarding my ideas about *discipleship*.
 - a. I thought I knew what being a disciple was and had a pretty good handle on what discipleship was all about.
 - b. then I listened to a message by Ray VanderLaan my sister sent me.
3. Ray studied in Israel and got a thorough education on the Judaism of Jesus' day.
 - a. he's the most sought after tour guide for trips to Israel because of the incredible insights he has.
 - b. James Dobson was so impacted by Ray's ministry Focus on the Family produced a series of videos of Ray's talks at various sites around the Holy Land.
4. My sister had a chance to hear him give a talk at a large church in Illinois and sent me the CD.
5. It was on discipleship at the time of Jesus and was Titled, "Follow The Rabbi."

B. Today

1. I say all of this because a good portion of what we'll be looking at today comes from this new understanding of discipleship.
2. Some of what we're taking a look at today may be completely new to you and you may wonder where it came from – I wanted you to know.

II. TEXT

A. V. 13

13 Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.

1. Jesus had been in the city of Capernaum on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee.
2. The verses just before this tells us about a roof being torn apart so some men could lower their paralyzed friend into Jesus' presence.
3. The crowds trying to get near him are so great, they're destroying personal property and Jesus didn't want anyone to suffer loss because of Him.
4. So he left the city and went out along the lakeside.
5. You may remember some recent news events that saw huge crowds of reporters and lookie-lous crowding into a neighborhood.
 - a. the neighbors of OJ Simpson, Scott Peterson, & David Westerfield were furious
 - b. because their flower beds were trampled, people used their yards as toilets, and just generally trashed the entire block.
6. Much the same thing was happening in Capernaum, so Jesus took the crowd outside the town where they wouldn't be damaging anymore property.

B. V. 14

14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax

office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.

1. As Jesus was moving along the lakeside, he came to a little building occupied by a man named Levi, aka ‘Matthew.’
2. Capernaum was located on one of the most important Roads of the ancient world – the *Via Maris*, or Way of the Sea.
3. Israel was part of the land bridge between 3 continents; Asia, Europe, and Africa.
4. Because of this, several important roads passed through the nation with all of them converging in Galilee.
 - a. it was said that “While Judea was on the road to no where, Galilee was on the road to everywhere.”
 - b. this explains why Jesus spent most of His 3 years of public ministry in Galilee.
5. The Via Maris began in the caravan city of Damascus and traveled all the way to Egypt.
 - a. on it’s way it passed right by Capernaum.
 - b. because of where Capernaum was located in Galilee, it was the first real city travelers would encounter as they came to Israel.
 - c. so it was a prime location for collecting customs duties; import and export taxes.
 - d. that was Levi’s job, to collect the 2-3% tax the rich caravans from Syria & Arabia had to pay to ensure safe passage.
6. As a customs agent, Levi worked, not for the Romans, but for the brutal tyrant Herod, the ruler of Galilee.
 - a. because of this, Levi was *despised* by the common people.
 - b. like all tax collectors, he was *hated*.
7. Yet as Jesus passed by that day, He saw Levi sitting there in his office, and said to him, “Follow Me.
8. That’s all it took for Matthew – he dropped what he was doing and went after Jesus.
9. And this is where we need to take a closer look at the whole idea of discipleship and following Jesus.

C. Rabbis & Disciples

1. The whole idea of rabbis who had an official group of disciples was something *unique to Galilee*.
2. The Hebrew word for disciple is “*talmid*”; the plural is “*talmidin*”.
3. There were 2 kinds of rabbis; **1) torah teachers, & 2) s’mikah rabbis**.
 - a. Torah teachers, or *scribes*, as they are called in the NT, were men who had memorized the entire *Tanach*, the OT, and what many of the great rabbis had said about the scriptures.
 - b. rabbis had also memorized the Tanach, but they had demonstrated the ability *to speak with authority about the scriptures* and the things of God.
 - c. this is what s’mikah means = authority.
 - d. rabbis had s’mikah, torah teachers did not.
 - e. as well, while torah teachers had *students*, only rabbis had *talmidin*,

- disciples.
4. In Galilee, **all** children, both boys & **girls**, sat under a Torah teacher and memorized entire books of the OT.
 - a. this schooling went on until they were 12 to 13.
 - b. at that point education ended for the girls.
 - c. for the boys, if they had proven themselves skilled at memorization, and shown a mind for study, they would go on to another level of work with the Torah teacher.
 - d. those who didn't pass to this level began their vocation, usually working in the family business or entering an apprenticeship.
 - e. for those boys who **did move on** to the next level of education with the Torah teacher, the lessons became more intense,
 - f. the **entire** Tanach was memorized, along with the teaching & commentary of notable rabbis.
 - g. if after a few more years of this the young man **still** demonstrated a superior level of skill in his studies, then he would graduate from the Torah teacher to following a Rabbi.
 5. He would carefully consider the rabbis currently around and which he most wanted to be like.
 6. You see, that was the essence of discipleship – a disciple aspired to be **just like the rabbi**.
 - a. that was the goal, the singular aim of being a disciple.
 - b. and that's why disciples were always **with** their rabbi.
 - c. they wanted to watch him as closely as possible, observing how he responded to different situations.
 - d. they wanted to know what prayer he prayed when he sat at the evening meal,
 - e. how he greeted people he met in the marketplace,
 - f. how he reacted when given bad news.
 7. So as a young man considered which rabbi to follow, he would ask himself who He wanted to and **could** be like, for his discipleship would see him become **just like his rabbi**.
 8. Once he picked a rabbi, he would go to him and begin following, but at that point, he wasn't an official disciple yet; he was letting the rabbi know he **wanted** to be a talmid.
 - a. after several weeks of just following him around the rabbi would acknowledge the young man and begin to quiz him on his skill with the Word of God.
 - 1) "Quote the law of the Nazarite."
 - 2) "How many times did Ezekiel see the Lord?"
 - 3) "What is the middle word in the Scroll of Isaiah the prophet?"
 - b. this kind of quizzing would go on for days.
 - c. and then, after all this, the rabbi would **usually** say to him something like, "Look, you are a bright young man. Go home, get married, have children, and love and serve God as a fisherman. Have a nice life."
 9. **Most** young men were **turned down** by the rabbis. Only the cream of the crop were allowed to become official talmidin.

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10. Where was Matthew when Jesus found him?
 - a. sitting in his tax-office.
 - b. Matthew was a young man who'd grown up like the rest of the children in Galilee, memorizing the Scriptures.
 - c. but he'd not proven himself *skilled* in his studies, and had gone into the family business – tax-collector.
 - d. his torah teacher had told him he didn't have what it takes to be a disciple –
 - e. so he went the route most of his peers did – into a regular vocation.
 - f. the problem is, the business his family was in was despised and hated!
 11. As he's sitting there one day, he looks up to see a huge crowd coming toward him.
 - a. they all seem to be following the man who's in front.
 - b. he realizes this must be the new rabbi everyone's been talking about and who'd been making such a stir lately – Jesus of Nazareth.
 - c. as Jesus arrives in front of Matthew's tax booth, He stops, looks Matthew in the eye, and simply says, "Follow Me."
 12. Matthew understood exactly what this meant – it was the invitation of a rabbi to a new disciple.
 13. His boyhood dreams, crushed by the rejection of his torah teacher a few years before, have been restored.
 14. Matthew immediately dropped what he was doing, and went after Jesus.
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15. In ch. 1 we find that when Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John, their reaction was the same.
 - a. they dropped their fishing nets, and left their boats to follow Jesus.
 - b. there wasn't a moment's hesitation – when Jesus called, they went.
 - c. like Matthew, they'd not had what it takes to be a disciple according to their torah teachers so they had followed the path that was expected of them – the family business of commercial fishing.
 - d. but unlike their torah teachers, Jesus didn't look at what they were in themselves – He saw what they would become by the work of His Spirit in them.
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16. Remember, *the goal* of discipleship is to become *just like the rabbi*.
 17. So when a young man began his discipleship, he picked a rabbi to follow by asking, "Who could I be like?"
 - a. when he began following a rabbi, he was saying, "I think I can be just like you."
 - b. but most of them were turned away by the words, "You *can't* be like me!"
 - c. when Jesus said to Peter & Matthew, "Follow Me" He was saying to them – "*I know* that YOU can be *just like Me*."

D. Discipleship

1. What Jesus said to them, He says to you and I.
2. We did not choose Jesus – He chose us!
3. He came to us while we were going about our lives in this world, and He showed us there was a whole new way to live.
4. We didn't go to Him and plead with Him to let us follow Him.

5. We never *dared* to think that we could be like Him.
 6. No - He came to us and said, "Follow Me - & I will make you *just like Me*."
 7. That's what the Spirit is doing in us – He's making us just like Jesus.
 8. As it says in Romans 8:29 – God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son.
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9. Disciples in Galilee followed their rabbi for 15 years, until they turned 30, then if they had accomplished the task of becoming like him, they became rabbis in their own right.
 10. But after only **3 years** of training the 12, Jesus sent them forth to make disciples of the whole world.
 11. In Matthew 28 He said . . .
 - 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.**
 12. Jesus took the narrow doors off of what it takes to be a disciple.
 - a. before He came, only an elite few were disciples, based on their skill, talent, & intelligence.
 - b. Jesus based the invitation to discipleship, not on our ability, but on His.
 13. He comes to men and women who have been beaten down by sin, to those rejected by the authorities, crushed by parents and teachers who have told them they'll never amount to anything –
 14. And He says, "Follow Me, and I will make you just like I am."
 15. Then, even more, He entrusts His mission to us & tells us to go & make disciples who will be just like Him.

E. The Condition

1. There is one condition though – one necessary thing we must do.
2. Like Peter, Andrew, James, John, & Matthew – we must drop our current identity & occupation if we're going to follow Jesus.
3. Peter couldn't follow Jesus and fish at the same time.
 - a. to be a disciple meant forsaking fishing.
 - b. he had to drop his nets and leave his boat.
4. Matthew couldn't follow Jesus and collect customs duties at the same time. To be a disciple meant leaving his tax-booth.
5. There *is* a condition on our discipleship too – if we would follow Jesus, then we must turn our backs on our *identity* as sinners and drop the things that make for sin.
6. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said –

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.
7. See, the invitation is open to all – "**If anyone**" Jesus said.
8. But the condition to following Him is to die to self so that Jesus can live in and through us.
9. It's this indwelling of Christ that brings the power to change us so that we become just like Him.
10. Being a Christian today does *not* mean quitting your job and moving into a church.
 - a. we follow Jesus *in the midst of* our careers and vocations and family lives.
 - b. what we *leave behind* to follow Jesus is the old man, our identity as people

who defined themselves by the things of this fallen world.

F. The Invitation

1. Jesus invites you to be His disciple today.
 - a. he doesn't invite us to be His *student*. The invitation isn't even to be a *Christian*, or a *deeply religious person*.
 - b. the invitation is to *follow Him*, to be with Him, every moment of every day and night.
 - c. He invites you to become just like He is and to enjoy the closest possible relationship with Him.
2. It doesn't matter what's happened to you in this world.
 - a. it doesn't matter what sin you've managed to immerse yourself in.
 - b. it doesn't matter that others have told you you're *a loser*, that you'll never amount to anything,
 - c. Jesus stops before you today as He stopped before Matthew's tax-booth, He looks you in the eye, holds out His hand and says, "Follow Me."

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Company

1. There's one more thing I want to look at here.
2. So far in Mark's story we've seen Jesus call 5 to be his disciples;
 - a. Peter, Andrew, James, and John – all 4 were commercial fishermen.
 - b. these were "salt of the earth" kinds of guys.
 - c. the 5th disciple Jesus called was a despised tax-collector.
 - d. he was the kind of guys fishermen would *loathe* with every ounce of their being.
3. As we read on we find Jesus selected **12** men to be His disciples who were not the kind of guys who would pal around together.
4. As they followed Him they fought with each other and had heated debates over such important things as which was the most important among them.
5. They were a contentious lot, a motley crew before Jesus' death & resurrection.
6. After they received the Holy Spirit and were born again, a dramatic change took place – they became a band of brothers that no difference could alienate or divide.
7. The Book of Acts shows the Apostles as a tight knit company that was in one accord.
8. What forged this solid sense of oneness was Jesus; He became the common-denominator of their lives.
9. And the love that had *so marked Him* took root in them and changed the way they saw and related to one another.
10. They had become just like Jesus!

B. Our Company

1. So here we are, modern day disciples of Jesus who are the fruit of those *first* disciples' faithfulness to go and make disciples.
2. And just as they were called to follow Jesus **TOGETHER** – so are we.
3. The Body of Christ embraces men, women and child of all colors, backgrounds, and social levels.

4. And when we're called to follow Jesus, it's in the company of others – many others.
5. Our common bond is our relationship to Jesus, and that relationship erases all other distinctions.
6. As Paul says in Gal. 3:28,
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
7. Updating that a bit we could say, in Christ there is no Caucasian, Hispanic, African, or Oriental.
 - a. there is no distinction between La Colonia & Spanish Hills; Rose Park & The Keys, The Avenue and The Estates.
 - b. there's no distinction between ravers, skaters, Goths, surfers, punks, waxheads, preps, minis, silents, jocks, nerds, & geeks
8. I want to share something that has troubled me for some time – and that is the lines of distinction that have been drawn between the cities of Ventura County,
 - a. not the actual borders, but the attitudes people have towards others who don't live in their City.
 - b. there's an attitude of competition and status that exists between Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, & Santa Paula that has crept into even our fellowship here.
 - c. over the years we've talked with dozens of people who said they loved our church but they didn't want to go to a church in Oxnard.
 - d. some even had the audacity to ask that we relocate more toward Camarillo or north of the River.
9. Folks, following Jesus means we'll go where ever *He* tells us to.
10. But we won't move our location just to fit someone's preferred social status.
11. Calvary Chapel of Oxnard will never aim our ministry at one social group, we'll never target one neighborhood or kind of people.
12. As we follow Christ, we invite all, whatever their background, color, or ethnic group – to come follow with us.
13. And in Christ we are one.