

Hillingdon Park Baptist

Commitment Sunday

“Come, follow me” Jesus said

9:30am Service

Philippians 2:1-13

I want to remind you of five words this morning. They are quite simple but will have the most profound effect on your life in 2024. They are first found in Matthew 4:19.

Quite simply

“Come, follow me” Jesus said

In Matthew 4:19 he called Peter and Andrew; In Mark 2:14 Matthew is called; in John 1:43 Philip is called to ‘Follow me’. Elsewhere we find Jesus went about calling people to follow him.

And they did. At times great crowds followed him but many of them lost interest and left him. In the end he was alone - although a few faithful women, and John were at the crucifixion.

Why did they follow him? They had various reasons and some of those changed as time went on. I have a list of 10 reasons people followed Jesus.

Why do you ‘follow Jesus’? Here is my list:

1. He did amazing miracles – healing, exorcising demons, raising the dead.
2. He provided instant food -- feeding 5000 and 4000
3. He was good entertainment – do some miracles here!

4. They hoped he would overthrow the Roman occupying forces.
5. He spoke with authority - not as the scribes
6. He had the words of eternal life – to whom shall we go?
7. He laid down his life for their sins. “God demonstrates his love to us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8
8. He rose again and returned to heaven
9. He sent his Holy Spirit to guide his disciples.
10. He loves you!

So which of those applies to you? It matters a great deal as it will affect what happens in our lives day by day. Many of those who followed him were disappointed because the excitement of miracles was not enough; it was clear Jesus was not going to be a supermarket; He was very challenging and many gave up following him because they couldn't stomach his teaching; It became clear he was not a political agitator or militant extremist; but his authority; his words of eternal life; his sacrifice on the cross; His rising again from the dead and ascending into heaven; the pouring out of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost ; and the clear evidence that he loves you attracted a growing number of people which in the last 2 millennia has grown to millions and millions.

Re-prioritize you life.

Now I know you are thoughtful people so lets understand why Jesus was so challenging.

In Mark 16:24 or Luke 9:33 Jesus challenges his disciples and us to ‘take up your cross and follow me’ In the context of which that was said it was very offensive. It was the Romans who crucified people; it was a hideous punishment only meted out to the lowest class of people, slaves and the like. Yet Jesus calls us to follow him to death, even crucifixion. Ouch!

Invest in heaven.

But worse for our minds listen to Jesus in Luke 12: 32 *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*³³ *Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*³⁴ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Or listen to the conversation between Jesus and a wealthy young ruler. In Luke 18:18

¹⁸ *A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

¹⁹ *“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.”*²⁰ *You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.’”*

²¹ *“All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.*

²² *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Jesus calls us to follow him and it will affect our pockets and our bank accounts! That is enough to put anyone off who hasn't discovered the words of life.

So Jesus is calling us to invest in heaven by following him. He went on to say: John 8: 12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Following Jesus maybe troublesome but you have eternal life and you have the Holy Spirit to give light in dark places.

Peter understood this and when Jesus had offended a lot of his followers because they did not understand him. Jesus challenged his disciples John 6:67 *"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.*⁶⁸ *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*⁶⁹ *We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."*

If you want to step into 2024 with confidence then put your confidence in Jesus, follow him and you will not only see your way through 2024 but the rest of your life on earth and for ever in heaven with him in glory.

In following Jesus love = obedience

We are called to respond to the love of God in Christ Jesus. God loves us! He sent Jesus who died for us to take away our sins. He calls us to repent. Repentance always involves a change of heart and a change of action.

We follow Jesus because he loves us and we respond to his love in love and thankfulness. Jesus was quite clear what that meant.

In John 14:15 Jesus said ¹⁵ *“If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth.I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.*

To love and to obey are synonymous in Jesus talk. They mean the same thing. 1John 5:1 says *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

² *This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world.*

We do not do what Jesus says to win his favour, he has already demonstrated his love to us in that while we were still sinners, he died for us. No, we obey his instructions because we love him.

Following Jesus means imitating him!

Which brings us to the passage in Philippians 2. We often concentrate, quite rightly, on the worship hymn about Jesus in verses 6-11 . But I want to draw your attention to the context of the passage. The key point is in verse 3:

⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

What Jesus did in coming to this earth and dying on a cross was amazing and wonderful. But it affects the way we think. And that affects the way we act. so Paul who wrote Philippians started off by appealing to them about the blessings they have received:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

It is the reason why worshipping together is important to us it is about encouraging one another in our faith. It is the reason why communion is important to us. It reminds us of what Jesus has done and therefore what we have in Christ. And we are called to follow Jesus. To have the same mindset as Jesus. That is to think in the same way he thought. To do that we need to read or listen all about what he said and did. If we do that we will be

like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,* ⁴ *not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

If you want homework, go through these verses and note down episodes in Jesus' life where he did exactly that. For example: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition* is demonstrated in the temptations of Jesus. I leave you to do the rest!

I want to finish with those last verses:

¹² *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.*

Notice that there are two people at work in your life, You and God. Working together to perfect your Christian life. That's encouraging! You are not alone in this following Jesus way of life. God is at work and we need to go along with the promptings of the Holy Spirit and change the way that we think to be more like Jesus in both thought and words and deeds. That way we *work out your salvation with fear and trembling* - that is not to say that somehow our salvation requires us to do good works but that having been saved we work out our love for Jesus in the way we think, speak and act.

Jesus said “Come, Follow me”

Five words that will transform 2024.

It means

- changing the priorities in your life
- investing in heaven
- obeying Jesus because you love him and loving Jesus by obeying him.
- imitating the way he thought , spoke and behaved.

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