Followers

Lake Erie Church

2023

Follow Me

April 30, 2023

(Matthew 19:16-30)

Someone came to Jesus with this question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep the commandments.” Which ones?” the man asked.

And Jesus replied: “‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself. I’ve obeyed all these commandments,” the young man replied. “What else must I do?” Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked. Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible. Then Peter said to him, “We’ve given up everything to follow you. What will we get?” Jesus replied, “I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.

Introduction:

Let’s begin with a great question--

**What does it mean when we say we are followers of Jesus?...**

Here’s another question equally important…

**What does it cost to be a follower of Jesus Christ?**

It is a BIG decision to follow Jesus.

Pastor David Platt, a pastor in Alabama writes …

When Jesus came on the scene in human history and began calling followers to himself, he did not say, “Follow certain rules. Observe specific regulations. Perform ritual duties. Pursue a particular path.” Instead, he said, “Follow me.” With these two simple words, Jesus made clear that …**his primary purpose was to invite his disciples into a personal relationship**. He was not saying, “Go this way to find truth and life.” Instead, he was saying, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” The call of Jesus was, “Come to me. Find rest for your souls in me. Find joy in your heart from me. Find meaning in your life through me.” (Follow Me, pg.54)

Let’s start by recognizing how we come to **Jesus in the first place?**

Jesus found twelve men and invited them to follow Him. As Platt suggests, they were invited to a relationship with Jesus,

* not a church
* not a set of rules to keep
* but a **personal relationship** with Jesus Christ.

**We do not find Jesus—He finds us**.

(Mark 3:14)

Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

In reality, Jesus did not calling these men to be disciples because of **WHO THEY ARE**

But **IN SPITE OF WHO THEY ARE**!

The same is true of you and me…God is not at work in you because of what YOU ARE but in spite of WHAT YOU ARE!

We must understand that **our sin is not something that exists outside of us**.

Sin is ingrained into the core of our being.

**We don’t just sin; we exist as sinners**.

When Jesus went to the cross to die, he was not just taking the payment of sin, as if our sin is something separate from who we are.

He was not just dying for our lusting or our lying or our cheating or any other sins. Instead, **Jesus was paying the price that was due us as sinners.** He was dying for us, in our place, as our substitute.

Isaiah 53:5… “But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”

Ultimately **WE ARE SAVED TODAY** from our sin because Jesus willingly laid down his life and was crucified on a cross for us!

* To be a follower involves more than coming to church
* To be a follower is more than being baptized in water
* To be a follower is more than giving in the offering, visiting a sick person or going on a missions trip.

**To be a follower of Jesus** is to realize that in your sin, you were separated from God’s presence, and you deserved nothing but God’s wrath. Yet despite your darkness and in your deadness, the light of God’s love shone on you and his voice spoke to you, inviting you to follow him and you have chosen to give and invest your entire life to Jesus Christ!

I want us to take a deeper look at what it means to follow Jesus and my prayer is that in our discovery we will fall that much more in love with our wonderful Savior.

To be a follower of Jesus Christ starts with…

**An Absolute Conviction that Jesus Is The Christ!**

(Matthew 16:13-18)

When Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his followers, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They answered, “Some say you are John the Baptist. Others say you are Elijah, and still others say you are Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Then Jesus asked them, “And who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered, “You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because **no person taught you that. My Father in heaven showed you who I am**. So I tell you, you are Peter. On this rock I will build my church, and the power of death will not be able to defeat it.

* This realization/revelation of who Jesus truly is does not come naturally to us. It comes by the work of the Holy Spirit—God at work in us.
* So there is no other way to get to heaven than through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!
* Jesus is not **A** way but **THE** way.
* The Holy Spirit brings us to a spiritual awakening that Jesus is the Christ of the world, sent by God our Father to be our Savior…by faith (belief) we accept that and are saved.

**Followers of Jesus Possess An Unwavering Commitment to Obedience**

* Throughout the Bible, the theme of obedience is tied to our relationship with God…

(Deut. 11:26-28)

Look, today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse! You will be blessed if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today. But you will be cursed if you reject the commands of the Lord your God and turn away from him and worship gods you have not known before.

* The Greek word for **obedience** means *to bring yourself under the authority of another—to surrender*.
* **Biblical obedience** is **to hear God’s Word and obey it.**

(John 14:15)

If you love me, obey my commandments.

(John 8:51)

I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!”

(1 Samuel 15:22-23)

Samuel replied, What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.

* There is nothing God values more than obedience from those who choose to follow Him!

**Obedience Is An Act Of Worship**

True Christian obedience flows from a heart of gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord:

(Romans 12:1)

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

**God Blesses Obedience**

(Genesis 22:18)

And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.

(Luke 11:28)

Jesus replied, But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.

(James 1:22-25)

But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

In what areas of your life are you struggling to obey God?

Conclusion:

There’s a difference between calling yourself a Christian and being a truly devoted follower of Jesus.

(Mark 8:34-38)

…If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

God, I am a sinner

I’m sorry for my sins

I believe Jesus died for my sins

I believe Jesus will forgive my sins

I choose Jesus