

Mark 1:14-20

Kid Talk:

Have any of you ever played "Follow the Leader?"

The rules are very simple. You choose a leader and you follow them wherever they go and do whatever they do.

- Play a game of follow the leader

Follow the Leader is a great game, but in our daily lives we play follow the leader too. In school, in Church, in sports, in any activity we are in, there are always leaders. Every day we are faced with making a choice of which leader we will follow. We must be sure to choose a leader that will lead us in the right direction.

One day Jesus was walking along the sea shore. He saw two fishermen, Peter and Andrew, who were throwing their fishing nets out into the sea. Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." The Bible tells us that they laid down their nets and followed Jesus. Jesus went a little farther and he saw two more men, James and John sitting in their boat mending their nets. Jesus called out to them and the Bible tells us that they left their boat and followed Jesus. (vs. 19-20)

Jesus is still calling people to follow him today. He has called you and me to follow him. What are ways we can follow Jesus?

- Pray for people
- Bring them food when sick
- Sit with them at lunch table
- Stick up for them when someone is calling them a name

These are all things Jesus did or would have done and we can follow the things that he did in our own lives!

When we see a fish, we can remember this story. We can remember that Jesus tells us that we can be fishers of men. That means we can follow Jesus can care for people like he did.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, you have called us to follow you. May we, like Peter, Andrew, James, and John say "Yes, Lord, I'll follow you—wherever you may lead." Amen.

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Adult Sermon:

We are now in the middle of our church season of “Epiphany”. Last week, Pastor Darrell told us that Epiphany is the season of Light. Which is true! Epiphany, however, is also the season of “ah ha” moments...moments or experiences that can change our lives in a split second.

Wisemen come from the east and follow a star to baby Jesus where they are overwhelmed with Joy! And “Ah ha!” It’s at that very moment that they realize that Jesus was the real deal!

Jesus is baptized and as he was coming up out of the water, the heavens were torn apart and the spirit descended upon Him and he was given a new identity, and “ah ha!” Jesus is who God says he was!

Philip and Nathaniel had their “ah ha!” moments and decided to follow Jesus, and this week it is Peter, Andrew, James and John’s turn to experience their “ah ha” moments as they leave their nets and follow Jesus.

These are all “ah ha” moments that we have experienced during this season of epiphany.

Have you ever experienced an “ah ha!” moment or an “epiphany” of your own? An experience of sudden and striking realization?

I had an “epiphany”...an “ah ha!” moment during the summer of my senior year. Like many people, I had grown up in the church, went to Sunday School, completed confirmation and then didn’t step foot back in the church for quite some time. In fact, after confirmation, I was somewhat against the church – against God – it was too many rules and regulations for me! I felt like God was constantly judging me! But when I was a Senior in high school, my cousin tricked me – literally tricked me – into going to a Young Life Bible Camp.

I spent the first 2 days of camp moping around, being extremely angry at my cousin, and showing nothing but bitterness towards the other campers and camp staff. On the 3rd day of camp, something happened. God used the speaker that week – a man by the name of Mike Yacanelli – to change my life...to speak to my heart and let me experience a sudden and striking realization...an Ephiphany...an “ah ha!” moment! All of a sudden I realized, God isn’t here to judge me! Christ isn’t basing his love on whether or not I screw up in life! Faith isn’t about rules and regulations! God sent Jesus because he LOVES us! And God forgives us!! It’s all about love...and forgiveness...and grace!! “ah ha! I get it!”. And even after going to church almost every week for 15 years, this was the first time in my life that I got this. And it was a life-changing “ah-ha” moment for me.

In our Gospel story today, Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John experience their “ah-ha” moment and it’s one that changes their lives.

Mark tells us that after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee and started proclaiming the kingdom of God. As Jesus passes along the Sea of Galilee he calls out to several fishermen and tells them to follow him, and, without any other prompting, they do.

For some reason, at that very moment, Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John leave what they were doing to follow Jesus and take on a new identity as a disciple of Christ. Without question. Without hesitation.

Would you have done it? Would you have left everything...your job, your employees, your family to follow this man? Put yourself in these disciple's shoes. What would it take for you to drop everything and leave everything you have known to follow something or someone? A million dollars? A great vacation? The promise of your mortgage, or your rent being paid each month? What would it take? How about the promise of eternal life? Eternal love? Eternal Grace? How about a man dying on the cross so that your sins are forgiven? What will it take?

Jesus calls us, just as he called his disciples. Jesus calls us not to walk away from our lives, but to live with a new identity. You see, Simon, Andrew, James & John – their identity was that they were fishermen. That's it. That's who they were. These disciples essentially had to start over to live into their new identity. What if we answer this call? What might that look like for us?

Well, when you are a fisherman, such as Simon, Andrew, James and John were...if that is your identity, you don't just fish, but you learn about fishing, you seek out fish, you know the waters, you bait your hooks, and up keep your rod. You live and breathe for fishing.

Likewise, if you are a fisher of men...or a disciple of Christ, you don't just come and sit in the pew on Sundays, and maybe attend an occasional meeting, but you come to learn, to prepare, to be around other fishers for support. You hear the Word and take the Sacrament and receive God's grace because all of it is a part of being a disciple. You are preparing your hearts by coming to worship today so that you can go out and be fishers of people....you are engaging in mission at the annual meeting today so that we as a church can show love and justice to our neighbors, family, and friends. "ah ha!!". That's what it's all about.

That's what it's all about...but it won't always be easy, and we might even fail at being a disciple.

Simon (Peter) sure did. Sure he answered the call that day, but throughout the rest of Mark's gospel, we find Peter questioning his faith in Jesus as the suffering Messiah, we find Peter forgetting to follow Jesus, and we even find Peter denying that he knows Jesus at all one night as he warms himself by the fire.

And it's not just Peter. On the last day, when Jesus is on the cross, these disciples – supposedly Jesus' closest friends - Peter, Andrew, James, and John are nowhere to be found.

Not to throw these guys under the bus, but it goes to show us that discipleship doesn't mean you have to be perfect. If the disciples who literally left everything to follow Jesus couldn't be perfect, there is no way that we can be perfect. But one thing we CAN learn from these disciples is that they didn't give up. When they failed, they didn't give up. They continued to follow Jesus, and continued to spread the good news of Him for all to hear, and Christ didn't give up on them either. Even with their short-comings, God continued to use these disciples to reach out to others, share the good news, and fight for justice. Just as He will continue to use us, despite our shortcomings and failed attempts.

Jesus Christ, and the grace that God has given us allows us to fail. And yet, Jesus Christ and the grace that God has given us calls us to not give up.

"Ah ha!". It's God's loving grace that will transform our lives and carry us through as disciples of Christ.

Jesus is calling out to you, "Follow me! I will be with you!"

Thanks be to God. Amen.