

Isaiah 9:1-4 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-25

‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people’. ‘Jesus went about, teaching... and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Is there someone you admire that makes you think, they are worth following and by that I mean worth finding out more about, worth reading about or watching a documentary about. I’ve never been one interested in actors, tv or otherwise. But throughout my life I have admired people like Martin Luther King who fought for the rights of black Americans, or like Nelson Mandella who fought against Apartheid in South Africa. Or even Bp Michael Curry with his memorable speech at Harry and Megan’s wedding saying, ‘Love is our Way’.

Jesus calls out to Simon and Andrew to follow him. To follow or to be a disciple of someone in Jesus time meant far more than just physically following where the person went. It meant becoming a student, learning of their way of life, and modelling their life after their pattern and way of life. Rowan Williams puts it this way, ‘Discipleship ... literally mean[s] ‘being a student, in the strict Greek sense of the word, but it doesn’t mean turning up once a week for a course (or even a sermon). It is not an intermittent state; it’s a relationship that continues.’¹ Rowan

¹ Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*, SPCK, 2016, p. 2.

Williams gives the example of a student today compared to someone in Jesus time. He says, 'If you said to modern prospective student that the essence of being a student was to hang on your teacher's every word, to follow in his or hers steps, to sleep outside their door in order not to miss any pearl of wisdom falling from their lips, to watch how they conduct themselves at the table, how they conduct themselves in the street, you might not get a very warm response.'² For Simon and Andrew and indeed the many others who followed Jesus, the twelve who were closest to him, and the many other who followed Jesus whether publicly or privately for fear of the High Priest, pharisees and others, followed Jesus in this manner. To do what he did, to listen to Jesus words, to live as Jesus lived. And this certainly happens. The Acts of the Apostles written by Luke attests to the change in the apostles lives, going about sharing the good news of the Gospel, healing all who were oppressed or sick. For us today, it is a bit harder to grasp at what Jesus was truly like in person, face to face. Instead we are encouraged through scripture to believe. In the Gospel of John, Jesus replied to Thomas after he had seen Jesus hands and feet, 'Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

So what is it about Jesus did Simon and Andrew felt compelled to follow Jesus? Last week, our Gospel reading pointed us to

² Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life*, SPCK, 2016, p. 2.

John the Baptist as the one who pointed to Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah and Rabbi or teacher. In John's Gospel, in chapter 1, verse 41, Andrew exclaims to his brother Simon, 'We have found the Messiah'. The brothers Simon and Andrew became aware through John the Baptist that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. A very big reason to follow Jesus.

Blessed are the ones who have not seen Jesus and yet believe. Can you recall to mind what led you to follow Jesus? What was it about the story of Jesus that encouraged you to think, it's worth following Jesus? Who was it that shared the gospel with you? Who helped shape you into a person of faith? I recall listening to the stories of Jesus' life, how Jesus forgave people of their sins, welcomed strangers, welcomed those who were didn't quite fit in. Loved the children, spoke of love of God, to love one another and to embrace this way of being. It's not just what we do as Christians, that is ones who follow Christ. Being a Christian is far more about how we live out this call to love one another, and to love as Christ loved. It's about being a learner, 'in which we are looking and listening without interruption'. Rowan Williams says, 'it's a state of being'. Shakespeare coined that well-worn phrase, 'to be or not to be'. To be or not to be. In choosing to be a Christian, in choosing to follow Jesus Christ, the choice is to listen, and to look where Christ is at work in our lives, and in our homes and in our world. Being a Christian is about awareness. Awareness in the sense that we are waiting for something to break forth into our lives of

Jesus words. And that such waiting, listening and awareness bring change in our lives. Mother Theresa is credited with saying, 'I use to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know, prayer changes us, and we change things'.³ And prayer is the place we come to God to share our lives, our thoughts, our feelings, our hopes and our dreams, our fears and our failings. It is through prayer that we form a relationship with God and God in turn abides with us.

Jesus said to the fisherman Andrew and Simon, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of people'. I wonder what Jesus would say to you, 'Follow me and I will make you a gatherer of people, I will make you a loving presence for others, or I will make you someone who will bring the gospel to those around you'. Jesus said 'Follow me'. It's the call from the Teacher to the student, a call from the teacher to the disciple. Not just to follow the words and actions but to be in that state of being with Jesus. To listen through Prayer, through spending time with God alone, but also through bible studies and through being at Church. May I encourage you this year to take time to be. To be with God in prayer, perhaps it may be out in the garden, while walking, while driving. Where ever it is we find time to be alone with God, make it a regular time, so that we may follow and honour Jesus Christ in our lives.

³ <https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/prayer-changes-things.html>