



Follow Me

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We're continuing to look at our vision to be a gospel-centered, city-renewing church, and today we're honing in on mission. We've seen the light of Christ beams socially, spiritually, and culturally into the city, but at the end of the day all of that is about *personal renewal*. It's about people encountering Christ in such a way that it transforms their relationships, their work, their faith, everything. How does that kind of renewal happen? Through people who bring the hope and life of gospel into other people's lives. How do we live like that? Matt 28.

Follow Me

It's difficult to bring the life-renewing gospel to other people when we're consumed with ourselves, our views, preferences. It's like living on an island where only the people who agree with us can come ashore. Living on the island means our life mission is about us. As long as we stay there, we won't be a conduit of renewal for others. How do we get off the island? One way is to come back to Scripture and ask: *Who am I? What has Jesus called me to be?* When Jesus invited people into his ministry, he typically said: **Follow me**. Peter and Andrew, James and John. Follow me. And to do that, they had to leave the island. Stop following their own interests and start following Jesus' interests. They arranged their lives around his teaching and presence, and as a result they ministered to thousands. And Jesus called them not Christians but *disciples*, used 269 times xn, 3. Why? It's a fundamental category. It's how we're meant to conceive of ourselves. LGBTQ community gets this. For many of them sexual orientation is an identity. It's how they see the world. It just doesn't just affect their sexuality but their relationships their community the businesses they support the people they vote for how they view justice. They see everything through fundamental category. Similarly, a disciple sees everything through Jesus. He's their identity. Jesus says, [A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master](#) (Mt 10:24). [A disciple doesn't belong to himself; he belongs to Jesus. She isn't above her master; she's below him, underneath, yielded, off island.](#) A disciple sees Jesus sailing toward the island, and instead of insisting he come ashore, they shout and wave their hands desperately *to join him, to go where he goes, to follow him* the rest of their lives. Follow me. Who are you following? Self or Savior? Now, what might that look like? [Three examples](#). At

one point Jesus' **disciples** hear Jesus say he's going to die, so Peter says, *Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same* (26:35). What does discipleship look like? *Total commitment*. But within hours when Jesus is arrested, *all the disciples left him and fled"* (26:56). *Betrayal*. Swearing allegiance one minute and running away the next. When the **Marys** discover Jesus has risen from the dead. They're filled with *fear* and *joy* repeated twice (5, 8). Both an angel and Jesus tell them not to be afraid. Then, when the remaining eleven disciples encounter the risen Jesus, *they worshiped but some doubted* (19). Worship and doubt. What are we to make of this? On the left side of the ledger they're a total mess: fearful, doubting, betraying. The people Jesus handpicked, personally mentored, hands his mission to? How should we respond? Not, whew, I'm glad I'm not like them but *Whew, I can identify*. Duplicitous, check. Unloyal check. Fearful check. Doubting check. Betraying, check. Unimpressive men and women are *his* disciples...and Jesus loves them, the unimpressive, the mediocre, the fearful, doubting, back-stabbing sinners. *This is who Jesus dies for, who he calls, who he works through*. Do you struggle with doubt, fear, betrayal? Jesus knows and loves you still. Jesus Christ: kind, loving, merciful, patient, gracious, righteous, death-defeating, eternal, infinite, glorious Son of God. *He* says follow me. But if you're not honest, if your response is: *Whew, I can't identify*. You think of all the good you've done, how you're trying to better society, how you haven't fallen to porn, how other people don't really get it, that you've got the inside track, it's your job to get everyone else on your island, that's standing over Jesus not under him. It's saying the disciple is greater than his master. See, when we lose touch with how impressive Jesus is, we become enamored with how impressive we are. Jesus calls unimpressive people. As long as we don't admit that, we lack the experiential resources of his long-suffering grace, patience, and love to give to others.

On Mission

Now there's a danger in just identifying with the left hand of the register. The *unimpressive*. It's not enough to say, *Whew, I can identify*, and keep on living in fear, doubt, and betrayal. No, the disciples were also marked by obedience, joy, worship. For all their faults, they followed Jesus. Not Rome, not the Zealots, not the Pharisees, Sadducees, not the Progressives or the Conservatives. They followed Jesus. Consider the **Marys**. They

remained in close proximity to Jesus when he was arrested; were present at his crucifixion; observed his burial, and returned to his tomb on the third day. They were laser focused on Jesus. And guess what, they were the first *witnesses* of the resurrection. An angel descends from heaven, goes to the tomb and rolls away the stone and says to them: go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee (7). *Go and tell*. The first *evangelists*. Do you know what they did? They went, quickly. They didn't linger and make excuses. They embraced the mission. They went. With fear, yes: Will people believe me? What will the Roman and Jewish authorities do to me if I get caught? I'm sure many fears flew through their minds as they ran, but they ran, and they ran with *joy*. Why? Laser focused on Jesus. Then, mid-flight, they're interrupted by the risen Jesus: Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me" (10). Now why did he interrupt them? He doesn't add any new information to what the angel told them. It's redundant, inefficient. They're already on mission! Two reasons. First, **to assure them** I am Risen. He met them, in person said, Greetings, which is the word, rejoice. Why? I am for you and with you now and forever. I have conquered the left side of your character, triumphed over your deserved death, and stand before you in shimmering proof of what one day you will be. And so he is with us, *Lo I will be with you even to the end of the age*. Go and tell. The second reason for Jesus' unnecessary appearance is **to elevate the Marys**. He wants all of Christian history to see, in this account, exemplary discipleship. Women working through fear, with joy, on mission because they are laser focused on Jesus. Exhibit A. They don't stand in Jesus' presence; they fall. They don't remain trapped in fear of what ifs, but throw themselves at the feet of what is. They are below him, not above him. He speaks; they obey. Christ is their all-defining category. Disciples. Will you be? Will you embrace his mission? Not the right or the left but kneel down in worship. *That's what keeps us going when mission gets hard, throwing ourselves at his feet. Leaving the island for his presence*.

The Commission

This brings us to the end of the chapter. Where the eleven disciples worshipped but some doubted. How? They are beholding the risen, glorified Christ. They doubt because seeing isn't believing. My wife sees planes take off and land all the time, but when it comes to

boarding a plane she often doesn't believe it will land. The only way she can truly know is to board the plane, trust the pilot, follow him. And when she believes, every single time, she has seen it land. Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing. When you trust Jesus (fears, hopes, doubts), you see his grandeur, trustworthiness, grace. Will you believe? Will you follow? He gives us three ways: Go, Baptize, Teach. Briefly. **Go**: it's a command. A disciple is a sent to make more disciples. It's his mission. Pick one person from work school neighborhood. Pray for them. Take them to coffee/beer. Go! Sent in the authority of Christ. Next **Baptize**: baptize people into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This assumes we're going and telling. When we go down to Barton Springs and baptize people, we lower them into the waters in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They emerge a new creation, baptized into a new worshipping community. Ask God for the privilege of baptizing that person! Go and baptize. Finally **teach**. Not just that Jesus died and rose to forgive sinners and make all things new, but teaching to observe all I have commanded. Teaching others to *follow* Jesus not just believe. Invite them into a discipleship group? Start a discipleship group? Get the book. Read it together. Go, Baptize, Teach all that Christ commanded. If you do, you'll see more of Christ and so will the world. George Fox was the founder of the Quakers, and when asked about his ministry he frequently said, "*I took men to Jesus and left them there.*" Will you or will you remain on the island? Let's throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus, bring others with us, and leave them there. Let's make disciples.