



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Follow me and I will make you fish for people. Immediately, they left their nets and followed him."

I am dismayed. I'm dismayed with these first disciples of Jesus, Peter and Andrew, James and John, all gainfully employed as fishermen in this wonderful seaside bustling economy town. And mid-workday, all of a sudden, without any hesitation, without weighing the costs, without making sure that there's a pros and cons list, without planning or preparing, they just walk out.

They leave not only their jobs, but they leave their homes. They leave their families behind. They abandon their responsibilities to follow some newcomer in town. It seems irresponsible to me. And certainly not something that we future Christians should be emulating. I mean, follow me and I will make you fish for people, and immediately they left their nets and followed him? What about those smelly buckets of bait that are sitting there? Who's going to take care of that? Who's going to take care of all the maintenance that's required on a fishing boat? They just leave all their responsibilities and up and follow Jesus.

I am dismayed. And yet, I read a story about a twenty-year-old, a college student. She grew up going to her parents' church and did all the things that youth do in church, goes to the lock-ins, participates in mission trips, does acolyting and stuff. Just a normal youth doing normal stuff in her normal parents' church, nothing out of the ordinary. And then she comes home from college one weekend and she goes to her parents' church with her parents and they have a speaker there. And some guy is in and he's doing mission work in Africa and he helps the orphans and he came to get some money. So he gives a nice talk and he tells them, we'd really appreciate if you could support us through money and donations and bodies and we could use some help over there.

And she turns to her parents and she says, "I want to go to Africa." And they're like, "We're going to give a donation to this missionary. And she says, no, no, I really want to go. And they say, "It's dangerous, honey, and you're still in school and we're going to give even a bigger donation." And she says, "No, you don't understand." And they say, "Okay, you can go for the summer." But she shakes her head, "No, I don't want to just go and dip my toe in. I want to go. After my

spring semester, I'm going to go for a year at least. I have to go because God is calling me to do this."

And so her parents put her on a plane and at church the father comes tearfully to the pastor and says, "I can't believe this is happening. When we brought her up, we wanted her to become a respectable Christian. We didn't expect her to become a real one."

"Follow me and I will make you fish for people. Immediately, they left their nets and followed him."

Is that what real Christians do? They don't count the cost, but they just leave and go wherever Jesus may go. Why? Why is it that Christians follow Him? The answer can be found in my childhood home basement. Because down there we had an RCA Victor record player console. You remember those big pieces of furniture that you utterly regret having bought a long time ago. And they sat there and they're massive and they had a record player in there. And my parents had a couple of 45s that I really enjoyed listening to, and one of them was Peggy March's "I Will Follow Him."

I will follow him
I will follow him wherever he may go
There isn't an ocean too deep
A mountain so high it can keep, keep me away
Away from my love
He is my destiny

And then she launches into this simple refrain:

I love him, I love him, I love him
And where he goes
I'll follow, I'll follow, I'll follow
He'll always be my true love
My true love, my true love
From now until forever
Forever, forever, forever

Now, this song was not about Jesus, but I think it would've been less creepy because Peggy March was fourteen years old when she sang it in 1963. But I get it. I get that obsession that you have with someone you so deeply love. That you just need to be with them. You need to be wherever that person is, and nothing is going to get in the way of you hanging on to their every movement, their every word, their whole being.

Now as it turns out, this song was resurrected almost 30 years later in the movie *Sister Act* where Whoopi Goldberg leads a bunch of nuns singing, "There isn't

an ocean too deep, a mountain so high it can keep me away, away from my love. I will follow him. I love him." It's the only thing that makes sense to me. Why would these disciples leave everything and follow Him? Why do Christians follow Him? Why do you follow Him? Because the love that you have for Jesus is so deep. It is so real. It is so all consuming that you are willing to go wherever he goes.

And love makes jumping out of a boat and leaving an old life without Him to embrace a wild, wonderful, unpredictable, and amazing life with Him seem like an easy decision. Loving Jesus is about loving this man who came to save the world, and loving life that is now given to you fully and abundant, and eternal, and loving to live with hope, which is now everlasting and resilient and loving to live with peace, which is joyful and transcendent. Loving Jesus is so powerful, more powerful than loving any human being. And here's why. Because when you love Jesus, you're actually loving the Kingdom of Heaven.

You remember He said, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near"? He was literally talking about Himself. Repent, because I am near you. I am the kingdom of heaven. I have come to you. The whole kingdom of heaven is yours when Jesus is around you. The beautiful, full, robust, profound, healing way of life belongs to you. You don't have to pretend. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to count costs. You just get to embrace the Kingdom of Heaven and follow him wherever he may go.

Loving and following, they go hand in hand. And if you find that you don't love Jesus yet, well, you've come to the right place. How do you fall in love with the Savior of the world? Well, eat a meal with Him. He serves supper weekly over there. Talk to Him. Listen to Him. Read about Him in the scriptures. Listen to what His friends say about His work, His heart, His sacrifice, and His power, how their lives have been changed by Him. Fall in love with Jesus and you will find yourself following in His footsteps.

Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people. Immediately, they left their nets and followed him." The only other thing that's a little strange to me about these first disciples who followed Jesus is that He promises if they follow Him, He will make them fishers of men. Right? Fishers of people. And that's compelling to them. But is it compelling to you, fishing for people? How many of you like to fish? Can I see some hands? All right. We got some fisher people here.

Do you know who doesn't like to fish? The fish? Can you imagine what it's like to fish for people? If fish are so resistant, how much more people would be? I mean, is that something you want to do? Are you called to fish for people? You have to sit there and find a place that they're all going to be, and prepare the place and sort of get all your bait and lure ready. And then when they're

unsuspecting, go ahead and cast something out there, and grab a couple and try to lure them in as they're trying to fight you off. And the fear in their eyes - and then you bring them in and then you capture them with your net and they're like, what just happened? We don't know. And then you try to make disciples out of them and set them free.

Is that what you want to do when you follow Jesus? Most of us, when we see Jesus coming down the shore would just hold on tightly to our nets and say, please move on down. But see, Jesus knows that there is something in your heart that is waiting to burst free. Your hopes, your dreams for good, your deepest call to love those who need love, your longing for connection, your longing for belonging, this is all the stuff of the heart, and it is powerful.

I'm convinced that Jesus knew exactly what to say to Peter, to James, to John, and to Andrew because He knew what really spoke to them, what they really wanted. They really wanted to make disciples and baptize and teach. That was what was in their hearts. But what is in your heart may be different. And Jesus knows the desire of your hearts because He is the author of it. He is the one who's inscribed your heart with these things, with a pattern that makes you you. He knows the goodness that you desire in this world.

He knows what you are looking for and what you're seeking, and He looks at you in your boat and says, follow me and I will make the desires of your heart come alive. Follow me, and I will make you change the lives of many. Follow me and I will make you love the people who need love. Follow me and I will give you purpose and meaning in your life. Follow me, I will make sure you are never alone. Follow me and I will help you withstand your adversaries. Follow me and I will make justice reign down like water. Follow me and I will make the poor sing. Follow me and I will give you joy.

Of course, the disciples left everything to follow Him. Of course, they stopped mending the nets of their life in a calling that does not fulfill to seek the calling for which they were made. Of course, they followed Jesus. They followed Him, and they followed their own heart's desire. Will you do the same? Will you be like the disciples and that college student and respond immediately because you can't wait any longer when God is calling you? Will you be like Peter and Andrew and James and John and those singing nuns and follow Jesus because you love Him and there is no mountain high enough, there is no ocean deep enough to keep you from experiencing Jesus' perfect love for you?

And will you be like those fishermen and listen, listen to the call of your heart and do what you were called to do in this life and let Jesus make possible your own heart's desire? "Follow me and I will make you fish for people. Immediately, they left their nets and followed him."

Amen.