

## 12. The Gospel of John—1:35-42a

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### *“The Invitation of Jesus” Pt.2*

(12/17/17)

If you have been with us the last few weeks, you know that we are studying the Gospel of John on Sunday mornings.

We are currently in a section in chapter one where Jesus is beginning to invite or call men to follow Him by becoming His disciples.

We have called this section from verses 35-51— **The Invitation of Jesus**—subtitled, *“The requirements of discipleship”*.

#### **John 1:35-39 (NKJV)**

**<sup>35</sup> Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" <sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).**

In those days, a disciple (‘a learner’) was a person who lived with their rabbi so that they could learn and absorb everything they could from his life.

When John and Andrew asked Jesus where He was staying—it was their way of saying, *‘We might want to be Your disciples, can we come home with You and hang out for a while (‘check You out’)?’*

Of course, the ultimate goal in becoming the disciple of a teacher (rabbi) was to so study his life that his heart would ultimately be reproduced within the disciple.

We know that later on, Jesus told His disciples the whole purpose for which He had come to the earth—He said, *“I have come to seek and to save those that are lost.”* (Luke 19:10)

The whole purpose of Jesus coming to the earth, the whole reason He died and rose again was so that people could be saved.

Jesus started the work of saving the lost (on a world-wide scale) but now He has given it over to His Church to continue that work on the earth (Great Commission)—*“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone.”* (Mark 16:15)

When we talk about being disciples of Jesus, those with His heart—we must understand that first and foremost His heart is all about reaching people with the gospel.

I think that the modern church in America has gotten confused about its purpose in the world.

- If you were to ask the average church goer what they believe the purpose of the church is—many would answer, *“to give people a sense of community”*.
- Others would no doubt say, *“to provide necessary services like baptisms, marriage ceremonies, and funerals.”*
- Still others would see the purpose of the church as that of a social agency—*“to help the needy and feed the hungry”* or *“to work to bring about social justice”* or even *“to help save the planet from global warming.”*

But Jesus said clearly that the reason He came to earth was to seek and save the lost—and if that was and is *His* heart then it must be *our* heart’s desire and the main purpose of His Church.

This begs the question, “*Why aren’t we doing a better job at saving the lost than we are?*”

I think it’s because we’ve stopped focusing on saving the lost as our primary mission as Christians, and we’ve shifted the focus of the Church to serving ourselves.

### **A Life Saving Station**

*“On a dangerous sea coast where ship wrecks often occur there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea.*

*With no thought for themselves, they went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, and new crews were trained. The little lifesaving station grew.*

*Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.*

*Now, the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely because they used it now as sort of a club also.*

*Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life saving missions, so they hired life boat crews to do this work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club’s decoration and there was a liturgical life boat in the room where club initiations were held.*

*About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half drowned people. They were dirty and sick and some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was in chaos.*

*So, the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of ship wrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.*

*At the next meeting, there was split in the club’s membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club’s lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club.*

*Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all those various kinds of people who were ship wrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life saving station down the coast—so they did.*

*As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club and yet another lifesaving station was founded.*

*History continued to repeat itself and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Ship wrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.”*

The person who wrote that little story wrote it as an allegory of the church and how that the church started out with a very simple mission—to seek and to save those that were lost.

That was our mission because our leader, Jesus Christ, stated in Luke 19:10 that that was His mission on the earth and then commissioned us to go and do the same.

This meant that He had called His Church to be a *lifesaving station*.

As the church was founded in the book of Acts it consisted of mostly poor but extremely dedicated people who were determined to carry out their mission no matter what the cost.

But sadly, over time so many churches have lost sight of that mission.

As God has blessed them and they have prospered—they have built large, beautiful buildings with elegant furniture and décor.

Often, they contain food courts and coffee shops and so many amenities that Christians can stay at church for hours on end fellowshiping and enjoying each other's company.

The tragic result is that more and more Christians see their Christianity as merely a social outlet, a form of entertainment and not as part of a spiritual rescue team going out into a shipwrecked world seeking and saving the lost.

Because of this more and more Christians are looking to others to do the work of rescuing the lost while they remain in a place of comfort and complacency.

The result is that more and more people are dying and going to hell as the Church, for the most part, stands by seemingly unconcerned.

It's not that Christians don't want to see people saved, it's just that many apparently don't care enough to roll up their sleeves and make the sacrifices necessary to actually do the work.

I'm not talking about everyone being an evangelist or a missionary—but we can all pray and give and serve in one of the many ministries in our church.

Paul the apostle said in Ephesians 4 that when the whole Body (every member in the local church) uses their gifts and works together, everyone doing their share—the church is able to function as God designed it and the work of God gets done.

Which of course means the lost are saved and the saints are strengthened (built up).

And yet, the general attitude in the Church today seems to be, *“Let someone else do the work”* while they continue *“socializing for Jesus.”*

And because of this, many Christians now look at the church as a business offering products and services that will enrich their lives—in other words, church is all about making them satisfied, happy and fulfilled.

Chuck Colson in his book *The Body* says that the Church is going through an identity crisis—we have forgotten what we are and what our purpose is:

*“The roots of the church's identity crisis are found in the consumer mentality so pervasive in our culture....Ask people what they look for in a church and the number one response is “fellowship.”*

*Other answers range from “good sermons” to “the music program” to “youth activities for the kids” to “it makes me feel good.” People flit about in search of what suits their taste at the moment.*

*It's what some have called the “McChurch” mentality. Today it might be McDonald's for a Big Mac; tomorrow its Wendy's salad bar; or perhaps the wonderful chicken sandwiches at Chick-Fil-A.*

*Thus, the church becomes just another retail outlet, faith just another commodity. People change congregations and preachers and even denominations as readily as they change banks or grocery stores.*

*What many are looking for is a spiritual social club, an institution that offers convivial relationships but certainly does not influence how people live or what they believe...Spiritual consumers are interested not in what the church stands for but in the fulfillment it can deliver.”*

Look, as long as Christians see their personal happiness as the chief goal of life and the church as a place to help satisfy that goal;

As long as Christians choose a church the same way they choose a vacation destination—based on all the amenities and opportunities for fun, social interaction and entertainment;

As long as their Christian life is more self-centered than Christ-centered—they will continue to miss the real purpose for Jesus saving them.

And without any real *eternal* purpose for living their Christian life—they will eventually begin to drift away from God—because they’re “*not getting anything out of church and Christianity*”.

I think the basic underlying problem that has led to so many people leaving churches and going back to the world or getting into New Age mysticism or even into witchcraft or other forms of occultism—is that they’re coming to Jesus for the wrong reasons in the first place.

Let’s look at this for a moment by looking at our passage a little more closely.

When John the Baptist introduced his two disciples, John and Andrew, to Jesus as the Lamb of God (Messiah)—we read in verse 37 that they started to follow Jesus.

Now when Jesus turned and saw that they were following Him, He said to them “**what do you seek?**”

Listen, I believe every pastor, evangelist and Christian who comes across someone who is thinking about following Jesus—we need to ask them, as Jesus did with John and Andrew, “*what is it you’re seeking?*”

In other words, “*Why do you want to follow Him? What are you looking for? What do you hope to get from following Jesus?*”

I say that because, truth be told, many would no doubt say that they were looking for happiness or for fulfillment or for Jesus to save their marriage or deliver them from drugs or alcohol.

In fact, many pastors and evangelists are encouraging people to follow Jesus because He will heal their diseases or bless their finances or prosper their businesses.

Look, I’m not trying to minimize the emotional hurts or physical needs that people have that make them so desperate for help that they come to Jesus.

And often the Lord will meet those needs and help these people with whatever it is they’re going thru because He loves them and as Paul the apostle said, “*The goodness of the Lord will often bring a person to repentance and salvation.*” (Rom. 2:4)

We see this in the gospels with the woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years (Matt. 9); or the man who had a demon possessed son that no one could help (Mark 9); or the vast majority of people that came to Jesus that He might heal them of sicknesses or demonic possession or blindness, paralysis or some other physical malady.

It doesn’t matter what brings a person to Jesus for help—but if they decide they want to follow Him permanently (become one of His disciples)—He would ask them ‘*why*’—what are they ultimately seeking from Him?

Is it that He might continue to bless them and be at their beckon call—looking at Jesus as their Divine ‘Butler’ and prayer as a little bell that they ring so that He can bring them another pillow to make them ever more comfortable in their life?

As we read the gospels, it becomes clear that many of Jesus’ disciples followed Him because they wanted positions of prestige and power in His administration when He established His Kingdom on the earth.

In fact, they had a running argument among themselves thru out Jesus’ earthly ministry as to who was going to be the greatest in the Kingdom.

James and John even sent their mother to ask Him if her boys could sit one on His right hand and the other on His left in His Kingdom. (Matt. 20:20-21)

This is nothing more than selfish ambition—people using Jesus for their own selfish purposes.

Many follow Jesus, not because they love *Him* and want to serve *Him*—but because they love *themselves* and look at Jesus as a means to an end—the end being earthly blessings and material prosperity.

Look, it’s not wrong to ask the Lord to meet your needs, heal your body or bless you and your family.

The problem comes when people *only* follow Jesus for what they can get from Him.

I don’t know what was in the hearts of John and Andrew that day when they started to follow Jesus and He turned to them and asked, “*What do you seek?*”

I do know that most of the people in this world have no idea what they're seeking in life—even some who follow Jesus.

One author put it this way—

*“What are you looking for in life? What are you pursuing? Many people aren't even sure themselves. For many, life is all about making money, buying things they need and many other things they don't need but want. With some of that money they take nice vacations. But if you were to ask them what ultimate goal they were seeking, besides all the mundane and superficial things in life they seek after—if you were to ask them what in life were they ultimately seeking, they wouldn't be able to answer that because they haven't asked themselves that question.”*

However, that is a question that Jesus is always asking people—especially those who are contemplating following Him.

**John 1:38-39 (NKJV)**

**<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" <sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).**

Once again, when Jesus asked John and Andrew, who started to casually follow Him without making a formal commitment to Him—after the Lord asked them what they were seeking, they said, **“where are You staying”**.

And again, it was their way of saying, *“we think we want to make a commitment to You and officially become Your disciples—but we're not sure yet, can we follow You home and talk to You about it.”*

So, they asked, **“where are You staying”**, to which Jesus responded, **“Come and see”**.

The Lord Jesus never discourages honest seekers and will always invite them to come to where He is if they want to know more about Him in the hopes they will decide to make a commitment to Him and become full time disciples (Christians).

Today, the *'place where Jesus dwells'* (primarily) would be the local church.

If you want to be used by God to win the lost to Him—invite them to church so they can see for themselves the difference Jesus has made in the lives of His people.

And the first place to start is with your own family—

**John 1:40-42a (NKJV)**

**<sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus...**

I believe soul winning should start with your family and close friends—and that could be as simple as inviting them to church.

The Lord Jesus doesn't mind a person 'checking Him out' before making a commitment to Him—in fact, He actually encouraged that when He challenged potential disciples to first "*count the cost*" before making a commitment to follow Him.

But make no mistake about it—Jesus isn't looking for a perpetual, casual 'dating' relationship with you—He's looking for a commitment (marriage).

Some people are satisfied to simply 'date' Jesus but are not interested in taking their relationship deeper by making a commitment to Him, to love Him, serve Him, and stay with Him in sickness and health, in good times and in hard times—for the rest of their lives.

This is the kind of commitment Jesus is looking for from those who are thinking of following Him—but some people aren't interested in entering into that level of commitment.

(Just like some men who want to keep dating a woman but don't want to commit themselves to her in marriage).

Jesus would later lay out the cost and requirements of true discipleship—in Matthew's gospel chapter 16—

**Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

In this one verse Jesus teaches on the kind of commitment it takes to be a true disciple of His.

We'll look at that next time as we finish up the chapter.