

Bay City Wesleyan Church
January 15, 2017

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Sunday Morning 01-15-2017

Launch a new year and a new series of messages with us as we hear Jesus' invitation, "Follow me."

<http://bible.com/events/154394>
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Our theme for 2017

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Our theme for 2017 is Jesus' invitation, "Follow me."

These two simple words will transform every person that accepts the challenge. I pray that in the next 12 months all of us in this place, as well as those who join us, will see Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Luke 9:23 NET

Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Jesus calls us to follow him not a list of rules.

God's grace values relationships over rules. So, Jesus can invite anyone to follow no matter what they believe about him or how they behave.

The biggest difference between what we expect and what Jesus does is revealed in these two statements. Religion says, "Change and you can join us." Jesus says, "Join us and you will change."

What is the ultimate benefit of following Jesus?

It's not to make us better persons, although...

It's not to take us to heaven someday, although...

It's not to give us problem free and painless lives.

There were three groups of people who followed Jesus during his life.

1. There were people from the town or area where he happened to be.
2. There were people who followed him everywhere from time to time.
3. There were his closest disciples that we often call the Twelve Apostles.

"Apostle" means "sent one." Apostles were messengers or ambassadors commissioned to deliver specific announcements.

At the beginning of the tenth chapter of Matthew's report of Jesus' life, Jesus chooses the twelve and immediately sends them out with his message.

That brings us to Matthew 10:16-31.

Matthew 10:16-31 NET

"I am sending you out like sheep surrounded by wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of people, because they will hand you over to

councils and flog you in their synagogues. And you will be brought before governors and kings because of me, as a witness to them and the Gentiles. Whenever they hand you over for trial, do not worry about how to speak or what to say, for what you should say will be given to you at that time. For it is not you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. "Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. Whenever they persecute you in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. "A disciple is not greater than his teacher, nor a slave greater than his master. It is enough for the disciple to become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house 'Beelzebul,' how much more will they defame the members of his household! "Do not be afraid of them, for nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing is secret that will not be made known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light, and what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. Even all the hairs on your head are numbered. So do not be afraid; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Sermon in a Sentence:

Do not be afraid WHEN problems and pain invade your life. There is a faith that OVERWHELMS all fear. You can experience its power.

Jesus calls us to develop a confidence in God that's so big it does not fear.

In moments where the situation looks so bad we're tempted to think God has forgotten us, we can trust him enough not to fear.

There are examples of this principle throughout the Bible.

Daniel 3:15-18 NLT

I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

There is a faith that says we know God can, but even if he doesn't save us, we will not stop trusting him. There is a faith that overwhelms all fear. You can experience its power.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 NLT

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord ! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights. (For the choir director: This prayer is to be accompanied by stringed instruments.)

There is a faith that says take everything away from us and we'll still have Jesus. He is all we need. There is a faith that overwhelms all fear. You can experience its power.

Isaiah 43:1-5 NLT

But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom; I gave Ethiopia and Seba in your place. Others were given in exchange for you. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west.

There is a faith that's thoroughly convinced of God's love, wisdom, and strength. There is a faith that overwhelms all fear. You can experience its power.

Mark 4:35-41 NLT

As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

There is a faith that's terrified by the power and authority of Jesus. There is a faith that overwhelms all fear. You can experience its power.

When you follow Jesus, you will go through situations that will build your faith. What ties your stomach in a knot? I know what does it to me. What does it to you?

A New Way of Looking at Life

We tend to fear people and situations that threaten our comfort and security. But, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid."

Do not be afraid WHEN problems and pain invade your life. There is a faith that OVERWHELMS all fear. You can experience its power.

How can we develop a faith that overwhelms our fears?

One more report of an event in Jesus' life gives us a great start.

Mark 9:17-24 NIV

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.

I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." " 'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Add this father's prayer to your tool box. "Jesus, I believe; help me overcome my unbelief."