

## **Theme: Follow Jesus**

### **Text: Mark 1:14-20 (EHV)**

<sup>14</sup> After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> “The time is fulfilled,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel.” <sup>16</sup> As Jesus was going along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” <sup>18</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup> Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> Immediately Jesus called them. They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

When you hear the term “follower,” what comes to mind? When the term “follower” is used in our day, most people probably think of social media. How many “followers” you have, and who you “follow” is a really important thing to many people. Having a ton of “followers” is a sign of popularity, of influence, and can even make you a lot of money. Do you know who the most “followed” person in the world is on social media right now? I would have guessed Taylor Swift, but it’s not (she’s currently in 4<sup>th</sup> place with “only” 533 million followers across all social media platforms). The most “followed” person in the world on social media right now is soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo with a whopping 894 million followers.<sup>1</sup>

That’s an astounding number—almost a billion followers! But that number pales in comparison to the One who has had the most “followers” in history by a longshot—and it has nothing to do with social media. I’m speaking, of course, of Jesus, the One who called out to His first disciples in our text, and still calls out to each of us in His Word, “**Come, follow Me!**” (v. 17a). In fact, that’s what the word disciple means: “follower.” Are you a “follower”—a disciple—of Jesus?

We all profess to be “followers” of Jesus, but how do you and I *know* that we are “followers” of Jesus? Well, to answer that question I’m actually going to have us look away from ourselves; to look outside ourselves and look instead to the One we are following: Jesus! Take a look again at the words of our text and answer this question for me: “Who was the one who did the making of these four disciples (or “followers”) in this text?” It was clearly Jesus, wasn’t it? He was the one who went through Galilee preaching the Gospel. He was the one who sought and found those four fishermen that day by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was the one who called to them, “**Come, follow Me,**” and He was the one who said, “**I will make you fishers of men**” (Mark 1:17). And that’s exactly what Jesus did for these men, as you can read for yourself in the rest of the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

In the same way Jesus has called to you and me, “**Come, follow Me!**” No, probably not while we were fishing like these four men, but in the same way Jesus used His Word to call us and make us His “followers.” If we look again at our text and see the message Jesus was preaching to the people of Galilee, including to these four disciples, we will see that it is the same message He has preached to us. The first two verses of our text tell us, **Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. “The time is fulfilled,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14-15).** “Repent” and “believe.” Jesus’ call to us and to all of His “followers” for all time has always been and always will be a call to **1. REPENTANCE** and a call to **2. FAITH.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/social-media-following> “Most Followed Accounts on Social Media (Jan 2024)”

Jesus' call to us through His Word leads us to **REPENTANCE**, which means to “turn,” to “have a change of heart.” His Word leads us to see our sins—to see the many times we’ve offended our God, who made us and loves us—and then have a “change of heart” and “turn” from those sins. This means being sorry that we’ve done them and resolving, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, to stop doing them.

But it also includes “turning” to Jesus in **FAITH** and finding in Him and in His great sacrifice on the cross the full and free forgiveness from all those sins against God and our neighbor that we commit every single day! It means believing that those sins have all been nailed to that cross—from our “littlest” white lie to our “darkest” misdeed.

Do you believe this? Then congratulations, you are a “follower” of Christ! But let’s keep one thing clear; just like the four disciples Jesus called and made His “followers” in our text, our calling to **REPENTANCE** and **FAITH** is completely His doing. He sought and found us. He brought us from the spiritual death of our sins to spiritual life in Him. We didn’t decide to be made alive any more than we “decided” to be born into this world!

In the same way, Jesus’ call to us to “**Come, follow Me,**” is completely and totally a call of His grace, His *undeserved love*, which He planned to do for us before we were even born—in fact before He even created the world! Paul writes in 2 Timothy, “**[God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began**” (2 Timothy 1:9).

So, now that we *know* that we are, in fact, “followers” of Christ, how do we *show* it? Let’s look again at our text to find the answer. Notice after Jesus had preached His message of **REPENTANCE** and **FAITH**, after He had called these four fishermen to follow Him what was their response? We read again the last verses of our sermon text, “**Immediately they left their nets and followed him.**”<sup>19</sup> **Going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat mending the nets.**<sup>20</sup> **Immediately Jesus called them. They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.”** (Mark 1:18-20).

Notice they didn’t ignore Jesus’ call or pretend like they didn’t hear Him. They didn’t make up excuses: “Yeah, uh, Jesus, we’re working right now so now is really not a good time. We’ve got to make a living, you know. Could you come sometime when it’s more convenient for *us*?” They didn’t put off Jesus call till later either: “Yeah, Jesus, I’ll follow you when I’m a bit older. Maybe when I’m a bit more ‘qualified’ to be one of your followers.” No, our text tells us that Simon and Andrew, “**Immediately...left their nets and followed him**” (v. 18). (Mark 1:18) and that James and John “**left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him**” (Mark 1:20). Based on their actions is there any question whom these men were “following”? Is there any question, when it came right down to it, whether these four were more interested in being fishermen or being “**fishers OF men**” (Mark 1:17). The answer is obvious, isn’t it? It’s obvious because of their response to Jesus’ call!

We should be the same way! Jesus’ call to us: “**Come, follow Me!**” has led us to **REPENT**, or “turn” from our sins. His call has brought us to **FAITH** in Him for forgiveness of those sins and has made us one of His “followers.” Now that we are His “follower” He has a role for us to play; a job for us to do. His call to us is a call to **3. ACTION!** We are called to go out and *show* that we are “followers” of Jesus by **DOING** what He has called us to do! He has called us His disciples, His “followers,” to “**Go and make disciples**” (Matthew 28:19)—more “followers” of Jesus. He has called us to be “**fishers of men**” (Mark 1:17), just like His first four followers! He has called us to share His message to “**Repent, and believe in the gospel**” (Mark 1:15), that “Good News” of forgiveness of sins and fullness of salvation in Jesus, our Savior. He is the One we “follow.” The One Who lived for us, died for us, and lives again so that we can now “follow” Him all the way to our heavenly home! Amen.