

Jesus Invited Followers

- A. As we rifle through our mail every day, we quickly throw out the junk mail, but if we get an invitation we pause and take a closer look, because that's something special.
 - 1. When God wanted to invite us to know Him and to receive His benefits, He didn't send a card—He sent His Son.
- B. Over the past few weeks we've been talking about what it means to live like Jesus.
 - 1. From the beginning we saw that He lived with a sense of His Father's purpose.
 - 2. And to fulfill that purpose He had to prove that He could overcome the temptations of the devil.
 - 3. But the next thing He did was to invite people to follow Him.
 - a. Jesus loved people, He wanted to be with them and influence them.
 - b. For thousands of years, people thought that a holy man (righteous and wise) should isolate himself from the world, separate himself from the weak, and live above the common man.
- c. But here came Jesus, no one holier, "handing out" invitations to all kinds of people to follow Him (Mark 1:17-18; John 1:38-39; John 1:43; Matthew 8:22; 9:9; 8:22; 11:28; 16:24; 19:21)
 - d. This shines a spotlight on a significant spiritual fact or truth.
- C. To have a living and obedient faith in Christ, we truly need to build friendships that are based on faith in Christ.
 - 1. Living a life that pleases God doesn't occur in isolation, but within genuine relationships with other Christians.
 - 2. In Acts 2, 3000 were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins and they were brought into a relationship with God, but then what did they do? They continually devoted themselves to the fellowship of one another.
 - 3. In the New Testament – "church" – was not an event you attended, but a "people" to whom you were devoted.
 - 4. And Jesus modeled the necessity of building relationships in the church (local), from the very beginning.
 - a. Now that doesn't mean that He had hordes of friends; He had very few.

- b. Jesus wouldn't have boasted about how many Facebook friends He had.
- c. What mattered to Him was keeping people close enough that HE could teach and encourage THEM - and near enough that HE could be encouraged by THEM.
- d. If we're not building friendships in the church, we're probably struggling with our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

[If Jesus saw the necessity of surrounding Himself with people who valued the Kingdom of God, we should follow His example.

But what exactly did He invite people to do; for what purpose did He invite them (us)?]

I. THE PURPOSE OF JESUS' INVITATION

A. To teach caring: to have concern and empathy for others (Mark 1:16-20).

1. Like fishermen care about fishing.
 - a. Up early
 - b. Repair the boats
 - c. Fighting the elements
 - d. Mending the nets
 - e. Too weary to rest

- The world says, "Live for yourself!" But the Lord's invitation is about living for the good of others.
- And not just for the external person, Jesus mainly taught us to care about the internal person.

2. Like Jesus cared about souls.

- a. The fishing metaphor He used indicates that the world is a large unruly sea, and people, like fish, are separated from God and floating around aimlessly.

- So the purpose of Jesus' invitation is not just about caring for people, it's about a relationship to God.
- His invitation calls followers to a superior mission, far greater than any earthly trade or profession.

3. Like Paul cared about souls.

2 Corinthians 4:11-12

11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So **death works in us, but life in you.** ...14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. 15 **For all things are for your sakes**, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

[The invitation of Jesus is about learning to care about someone other than ourselves.

The second purpose of Jesus' invitation...]

B. To change ourselves (Mark 2:13-17).

Mark 2:13-17

13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. 14 As He passed by, He saw **Levi [Matthew]** the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 15 And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many **tax collectors and sinners** were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "**It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**"

1. Immoral people need to change.

a. A lot of people think that if they wait long enough God will turn them into what He wants them to be.

- But the Lord's invitation is a call to change yourself; He called that repentance (Mark 2:13-17).

2 Peter 3:9-10

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for **all to come to repentance**. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Acts 17:30-31

30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, **God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent**, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

- But this change is not just for the sinner's benefit, repentance serves an even greater purpose (cf. Matt 5:13-16).

2. Moral people need to change.

a. The RYR was a very religious and moral man (Mark 10:17-23).

- But the Lord's invitation is not about calling moral people into His service, it is about calling both the immoral and the moral to CHANGE.

John 9:35-41 (Healing the blind man)

39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that **those who do not see may see**, and that **those who see may become blind.**" 40 Those of the **Pharisees** who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains. [They could not accept the Lord's invitation, because they were unwilling to change.]

- When the 12 accepted Jesus' invitation they left family, friends, earthly ambitions and sinful appetites.
- So to accept the Lord's invitation we have to be willing to leave one way of life for another, so that we can become what the Lord wants us to be.
- After all, that is what Jesus did for us.

[All this changing, repenting, comes at a high price.]

3. Changed people pay a high cost.

- a. People can hardly believe that Jesus said what He did about His invitation.

Luke 14:25-27 (Discipleship Tested)

25 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "**If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** 27

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 33 So then, **none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.**

Frances Havergal
"I Gave My Life For Thee"

My Father's house of light, My glory circled throne
I left for earthly night, for wanderings sad and lone;
I left, I left it all for thee, hast thou left aught for Me?
I left, I left it all for thee, hast thou left aught for Me?

[Let me close with some encouragement as to why we should answer Jesus' invitation.]

II. REASONS TO ACCEPT HIS INVITATION

A. No one knows you like Jesus.

1. Being Divine, He can see the potential for His Kingdom in every person.

- a. He could say to Simon, “One day you’ll be as solid as a rock; I’ll call you Peter.”
- b. He could say to Nathanael, who just dissed on Jesus’ hometown, “Here comes an honest man.”

John 1:48-51

48 Nathanael said to Him, **“How do You know me?”** Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” 49 Nathanael answered Him, **“Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”** 50 Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” 51 And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

- 2. No one knows you better than He does (John 2:25).
 - a. You may be able to know what your husband or wife is thinking right now.
 - b. But no one knows what you’re thinking ALL the time, except for Jesus.
 - c. He knows you so perfectly that He knows exactly what you need in your life to please God.

- d. We need a Person like that on our side.
- e. His word has the power to strip away our self-deception so we can see ourselves as He sees us, as we truly are to God.

B. No one can help you like Jesus.

1. Remember how Jesus filled the boats with fish, after a fruitless night fishing.
2. It was after that miracle that He invited them to “follow Me.”
3. Sooner or later in life you’re going to find yourself in need, and no one will be able to help you like Jesus can.
4. Now if think you’ll handle your needs like everybody else does, just wait until you’re lying on bed that you’ll never get out of.
 - a. At that point, no One can help you except Jesus.
3. But, the one who issues the invitation is Lord over all creation; that should give us great confidence to follow Him.

C. No one can save you like Jesus.

1. Alright, so no one knows you like Jesus, and no one can help you like Jesus.
2. But, ultimately the help we need is to be cleared from the guilt of our sins.
 - a. That's the reason we need to accept His invitation to come and follow Him.
 - b. And that's reason we want everyone within the sound of our voices to obey the gospel (Rom 1:16).

John 1:29 (John the B)

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, **"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

John 1:36

36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, **"Behold, the Lamb of God!"**

3. That's all the disciples had to go on at that point, John's testimony of Jesus, and they followed Him anyway.
 - a. Think about all the proofs we have.

John 20:30-31

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples (seven), which are not written in this book; 31 **but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;** and that believing you may have life in His name.

Acts 2:22-24

22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: **Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—** 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 But **God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death,** since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Acts 2:36

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that **God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."**

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Peter said to them, **"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;** and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[There's lots of people who can know you and help you (in one way or another), but there is no One who can save from the condemnation of sin but Jesus.]

CLOSING

- A. Let's look at His invitation again.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 "***Come to Me***, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 ***Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me***, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

1. Come and find rest (the peace that comes through God's forgiveness) for your soul.
2. By learning from Me.
3. By working (yoked) with Me.
 - a. His words become our teacher!
 - b. His words become what we teach.
 - His invitation is our invitation to others.
 - That is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27)