

Encountering Jesus

Luke 5

Part 2: "Come, follow me."

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. (5.11)

Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him. (Luke 5.27-28)

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1.16-20)

- ▶ Simon, the expert fisherman, encounters a superior fisherman.
- ▶ Simon and Andrew immediately leave their livelihood to follow Jesus into a different vocation; their colleagues do likewise, leaving their father, employees, and business. Levi also, literally and immediately, walks out of his business when Jesus invites him to, “Follow me and be my disciple.”
- ▶ The invitation of Jesus is to a life of “fishing for people.”

A life-altering perception—

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.” (5.8)

- ▶ When one truly encounters God, a life-altering understanding occurs; no longer do I perceive with a self-flattering perspective. Instead, there is clarity about the absolute holy nature of God and my own moral and spiritual deficiencies and dereliction.

(1) An encounter with Jesus always exposes the lies I believe about self and life.

- ▶ Spiritual blindness and self-deception is the default setting of human understanding.

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (2 Corinthians 4.4)

- ▶ We have not had an authentic encounter with Jesus until we have become deeply aware that we have no place and no compatibility with Jesus.

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

(Isaiah 6.5)

- ▶ The most valuable moment in one's life occurs when one understands the truth about himself in light of God's truth and the absolute need for a life-altering change.

Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent." (Luke 5.31-32)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1.14)

- ▶ Theologically, “glory” is the sum of God’s infinite perfections—the totality of all that is unalterable truth and righteousness.
- ▶ In Jesus, the truth about God’s holiness and justice toward sin is revealed; through Jesus, God’s grace toward sinners is demonstrated.

- ▶ When we have an authentic encounter with Jesus, our understanding is enlightened to the inestimable worth of Jesus over every option and choice in life.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him . . . (Philippians 3:7-9a)

The unaccommodating Jesus—

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. . . . you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.” (Luke 9.23; 14.33)

- ▶ We falsely believe that God is “added value” to our lives: we add him to everything else that is important to us and he brings blessing, or added value—affirmation, success, a better life. In calling us to follow him, Jesus completely repudiates this perspective. With Jesus, it’s all or nothing.

Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.

(Luke 9.23-26)

“you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything”

KJV: “forsaketh” (apotasso): *apo*, from; *tasso*, to place in order

In the NT, it is used only in the middle voice, meaning literally, *to say adieu*: to take leave of, dismiss, renounce.

In Luke 14.33, *apotasso* carries the notion of setting something aside to prevent it from becoming a hinderance or gaining excessive control.

(2) An authentic encounter with Jesus always confronts us with what is really most important to us.

- ▶ Jesus' qualifications for following him are not at all accommodating; in fact, they are severely unaccommodating: one must give up everything else to follow Jesus.

A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. But don’t begin until you count the cost. . . . you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.” (Luke 14.25-28, 33)

- ▶ In following Jesus, we must acknowledge his right to require that we give up everything to follow him—just as he gave up everything, including his life, to save us from our sins— “No servant is above his master.”

- ▶ Giving up everything is a principle: a follower of Jesus must be *willing* to give up everything.
- ▶ The implementation of that principle is that I must give up what matters *most* to me. This is literal, not theoretical and is what the rich young ruler experienced, and failed in doing, when he encountered Jesus.

- ▶ Until I give up, dispose of and disassociate myself, from what matters most to me, something else matters more to me than Jesus—and that is what I am following.

The reality is that we have not truly encountered Jesus until we are faced with the hard choice of giving up everything in our lives that is important to us and disappointing the expectations of those who are most important to us.

- ▶ The fact is that not all whom Jesus calls to follow him will see the surpassing value of complete surrender to his expectations and worth.

He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9.59-62)

How do I know I am following Jesus?

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” (Luke 5.10)

- ▶ Jesus called people to follow him, learn from him, and engage with him in his life’s purpose: the salvation of sinners. Am I following Jesus to become what he wants me to be: a “fisher” of people?

(3) An authentic encounter with Jesus gives me, above everything else, his heart to see people reconciled to his Father.

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. . . . For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5.11, 14-15)

- ▶ A simple inventory will determine whether we are truly following Jesus: what does my prayer list for unsaved people look like?

Have I really encountered Jesus and
am I truly following Jesus?