

## Sermon Notes



**Kid's Sunday**

**Sermon: Follow Me**

### **John 21:15-19**

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’”

#### **Monday: Read Acts 11:1-18**

Think for a minute about some of the times in your life when you were a guest, when you were new, when you were a stranger, and you were made to feel welcome, wanted, and appreciated. It seems to me that the key to good hospitality, to really being welcomed, is that the host changes for the guest, not the other way around. Peter doesn't just welcome Cornelius into the church: “You can join the church, provided you are circumcised, and that you follow the Jewish law, and that you only eat food that is kosher.” The kind of welcome that God calls Peter to offer means *Peter* has to change *his* ways – Peter has to change in ways that really challenge what Peter has done, thought, and been his whole life. How has God called upon you to change in order to be more welcoming? How have you struggled with that? How have you been blessed by that?

*Prayer: Loving God, help me to offer your grace and hospitality to all people.*

**Tuesday: Read Acts 16:13-15.**

Many of us have a hard time listening. Sometimes we don't pay attention. Sometimes we focus in only on that which we want to hear. Sometimes we are too busy thinking of what we will say next. Sometimes we are listening only to find something to disagree with. We are told that "the Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to listen eagerly" to Paul's preaching. What does it mean to listen with an open heart? What kinds of things do you do to keep your heart closed? How might you be able to open your heart more fully to hear God's word?

*Prayer: Help me, O Lord, to listen to you with an open heart.*

**Wednesday: Read Acts 20:7-12**

Paul arrives with Luke in Troas. On the "first day of the week," that is, Sunday, they join other Christians for worship. "First day of the week," echoes Easter. The congregation meets to "break bread" and to "hold a discussion" (v. 7). This is the very first and very oldest description of a Christian Sunday in all the New Testament, and it is a reminder that every Sunday is Easter, another day of resurrection. As Paul was preaching an apparently very long-winded sermon, a young man named Eutychus (which is Greek for "Lucky") was sitting in the window sill. Lucky falls asleep, falls out the window, and falls three stories to his death. Paul stops, goes downstairs, takes him in his arms, and says, "Don't worry, his life is still in him." Paul gets back in the pulpit and preaches until dawn, while Lucky is taken home...alive. Lucky's resurrection seems to Paul just a little hiccup, a blip, an interruption... "and now back to our regularly scheduled programming." Death and resurrection are just another day at the office for Paul. After all, it's the first day of the week. Why treat it as a surprise, an anomaly, a mystery, a miracle? This is the church of Jesus Christ; raising the dead is what we do. How have you been surprised by stories of new life? In what ways do you need to shift your expectations of what God is doing in your life, and in our world?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, help me to never lose sight of your power to bring new life.*

**Thursday: Read Romans 5:1-5**

In this passage Paul is making a fairly complex theological argument. He tells us that we are justified by faith. Put another way, this means we are set in right relationship with God. Like the prodigal returning home, our relationship with God is reconciled. This is not our doing: justification does not happen because of anything we are able to do. Justification happens because God chooses us. In Jesus Christ, God seeks us. That's what grace is – you can't earn it or explain it or even make sense of it. Because of this grace, because God in Christ chooses us, we are at peace. What is more, we also have hope, and that means that suffering is never the last word. Paul isn't saying that our suffering doesn't matter or isn't painful or anything of the sort. Instead, Paul is reminding us that we should see our suffering for what it is. Because God's love has been poured into our hearts, we know that suffering is never the last word; the last word belongs to God. This is the "peace that passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). How does this peace help us to live differently? What helps you get through times of great suffering? What do you need to do to remind yourself of this truth when times are difficult?

*Prayer: Help me to remember that you hold the world in your hands, gracious Lord, so that I am able to live at peace.*

**Friday: Read Romans 16:1-2.**

Elsewhere Paul writes that in Jesus Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Galatians 3:28), a radical concept in the male-dominated culture of the first century. That Phoebe served as a deacon and leader of her congregation shows that the early church tried to practice what they preached. Yet, in other letters Paul struggles to treat women equally, writing about hair and silence and submission (cf. 1 Corinthians 11 & 14, Colossians 3, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2). Paul seems to be pulled in one direction by his times and culture, and in another direction by the equality and liberation of the gospel. In what ways do you feel the tension between following Jesus and following the demands of our culture? How is the gospel calling you to grow in equality and empowerment of those on the margins? What can you do to more fully embrace the truth that "all are one in Christ Jesus?"

*Prayer: Loving God, help me to welcome all people in the name of the Lord.*

**Saturday: Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24**

This is another passage in which we see the tension between the demands of culture and the demands of the gospel. Here, Paul takes for granted a world in which slavery exists, and we have to put aside that problematic issue for a moment so we can hear what Paul is trying to say. While elsewhere Paul writes about the freedom we find in Christ Jesus, here Paul is writing about calling. In the church, most of the time when we talk about calling, we are thinking about our spiritual gifts, e.g. "Where in the world can I best put my God-given abilities to work for good?" We most often talk about our calling as an answer to the question, "What am I supposed to do with my life?" Yet Paul recognizes that we don't always have the ability to drop what we are doing and start over; we have jobs and families and responsibilities and commitments. And so he reframes the question here as, "How do I live out my faith in this life that I have?" The difference is subtle but important. For Paul, our calling as Christians is universal and does not depend upon our context or circumstances; we are *all* called to discipleship, no matter who we are or what we do. So when Paul says you've been called, what he means is you've been chosen – in your baptism, God chooses you, claims you as his own, and calls you to follow him, calls you to live a life that reflects your calling. He writes about circumcised and uncircumcised, slaves and free, and we see that he is most certainly not saying "it doesn't matter whether you are a slave or not." In fact, he says if you can get your freedom, then by all means do it. What he *is* saying is that slave or free, Jew or Gentile, woman or man, no matter your circumstances, you can still live out your calling as a servant of Christ. No matter who we are or what we do, we each have a calling to faithful discipleship. How can you more fully live out your calling as a follower of Jesus in your life? How have you let your circumstances get in the way of your discipleship? What can you do about that?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, help me to follow you faithfully, no matter what.*