

BELPRES CHURCH

Jesus says, "Come! Follow Me"

Luke 5:1-11

Speaker: Ian Cheng

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Well, today we have a guest preacher. Pastor Ian Chang is the Pastor of Seattle Chinese Covenant Church, which meets every Sunday in our building just down the hall there in Room S150, and he's been a partner of ours for a couple of years. I've invited him to preach and he's agreed to come and bring the word and hear a little bit about what God is doing in Chinese Covenant Church, which we are just blessed and privileged to have as part of our larger family. So would you please welcome Pastor Ian.

Thank you. Thank you, Pastor Scott. Thank you for everybody's support for Chinese Church, and we are so blessed to be part of you under this same vision of building a multicultural community here in Bel Pres. So good morning, everybody.

Good morning.

Today, we are going to examine how Jesus had called the first four disciples and do that to understand the true meaning of discipleship. I would like to invite you to recall your personal experience of becoming a believer or any of your encounters with God if you are not a Christian yet. In other words, ask yourself, how did you become a Christian? And then ask yourself, in what way do you follow Jesus? Let's talk about some bigger information before we get into the text. Four disciples were involved in this story, two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, John and James. Jesus didn't meet his four disciple for the first time in this account in Luke chapter five. Jesus met Peter and Andrew in the very beginning of his ministry when they were still John the Baptist's followers.

They began to follow Jesus since then for almost one long year, but yet not with a disciple relationship even though they still had many opportunity to observe Jesus' ministry. Remember in the previous chapter, four, Jesus would be invited to Peter's mother-in-law's house to heal her fever. So they knew each other already pretty well before the event happened in Luke chapter five. So let me read for you Luke chapter five, one to 11 right

now. "One day Jesus was standing by the Sea of Galilee. The people were crowding around him listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats left there by a fishermen who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to pull out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When they have finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Go out into deep water. Let down the nets so you can catch some fish.'

"Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything but because you say so I will let down the nets.' When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets begin to break. So they signaled their partners in other boats to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees. 'Go away from me, Lord,' he said. 'I am a simple man.' He and everyone with him were amazed at the number of fish they had caught. So were James and John the son of Zebedee who worked with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid. From now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore and then left everything and followed him."

Today's text teaches us that we need to realize three main points in order to become a true disciple of Jesus. Number one, God calls out first, number two, we are sinful, and number three, we need to obey radically. The first one, realize God called us first. People are not born to be a disciple of Jesus immediately. Who is going to make the first move? In other words, whether we choose to follow Jesus or Jesus chooses to call us first. Luke gave an answer here. He portrays Jesus as the savior and he has the authority to call us first. Luke also let us know that there is a special pattern of Jesus calling on his disciple. From chapter four all the way to chapter six, Jesus' authority is the thing of this section. In this section, Jesus finished his call of 12 disciples in three different occasions.

Each time, before the call, Jesus performed some miracles and then called some disciples. On the first occasion, Jesus healed an official's son and Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law's fever before the enlistment of four fishermen. On the second occasion, Jesus healed a leper and paretics before the enlistment of Matthew. And on the third occasion, Jesus healed a disabled person and a man with a shriveled hand before the selection of 12 disciples. Why Jesus had this special pattern? For through these miracles, Jesus can let the disciples know he's the God. He has the authority to call them. Please listen once very carefully. This pattern explains that Jesus chooses to call upon us first. Now we choose to follow him. Last, the master/follower relationship shall also be determined by God, not by man. In other words, we couldn't decide how I'm going to follow Jesus or what kind of a Christian I would like to become. For Jesus is the one who makes the decision.

Number two, we need to realize that we are sinful. In God's call, we can see that we are sinful. Look at Peter's example in verse four to eight. This miracle happened on the Lake of Galilee. Lake Galilee is a small lake. It's only six miles wide, 15 miles long. The depth

is about 120 to 155 feet. So it's a small lake, but it's pretty deep, just like Lake Washington. And so in this small lake fisherman use only small boats. However, that night, Jesus asked Peter to use a deeper water dragging net, which is according to the record, is about 328 feet long and about eight feet wide. The big dragging net is not a casting net, which is huge compared to the size of the ships. Then, in verse six to seven, the miraculous catch of fish almost breaks that big net and sink the ships.

This miracle awakens Peter. Peter must have seen some of Jesus' previous miracles, yet not until this personal experience Peter didn't realize who Jesus really is. Here Jesus' sovereignty is the issue, which is who Jesus is. For a person who doesn't know God, realizing God's presence and sovereignty always brings him or her a repentant heart, to see his or her own sinfulness. Look at that, in verse eight. Peter called himself a sinner after the miracle. What does that word mean, sinner, sin? The same word was used in Roman 5:19. Please allow me to read you that verse again. Roman 5:19, "For just through the disobedience of one man, the many were made sinners. Also, through the obedience of one man, the many will be made righteous."

So very clearly Peter knew the meaning of the sinner who is from Adam's disobedience, and this realization is so important for us to answer God's calling, which leads up to point number three. We need to realize we need to obey radically. Since Jesus is the one who decides how we should follow him, what is his turn? In verse 11, we saw disciples left everything and followed Jesus. In the same account recorded in Matthew 4:19, he recalls Jesus' word saying, "Come. Follow me." Follow, this word in Greek, when referring to an individual always means follow someone as a disciple. Jesus and Paul, both of them, taught a lot of things about how to become a disciple. Even if we take only how they teach about this word follow, we can find this word was used 89 times in the New Testament. I'm going to share with you three passages this morning.

First one is from Luke 9:57 to 62. "As they were walking along, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.' He said to the other men, 'Follow me.' And he replied, 'Lord, first, let me go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own debt, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.' Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but first let go back and say goodbye to my family.' Jesus replied, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God.'" Have you heard of this passage before? Another one from Luke 18:22. "Jesus said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor and you will have the treasure in heaven. Then come follow me.'" Wow.

The third one from Mark 8:34. "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow me.'" After reading this passages, we know Jesus is asking a radical type of following. Yet we might think, how can we be possible to match that high

standard? How are we going to survive with our family, friends, and job? Isn't God a merciful God? But here God demands our heart and willingness to totally submit to him with no reservation, no holding back, be bold to trust in him. Not only does the Bible teach us that we have to seek first his kingdom and righteousness and all things will be given to you. Our Christian experience also affirms that only after we have done so God will provide us with everything beyond our imagination.

Please allow me to share some of my personal experiences of being obedient to God's calling. In 2019, my wife and I, we decide to plant a church because we received a calling from God. God told me that Seattle needs a revival and our church will be the answer of God. And so we obeyed and we started that church planting project with no money and no people. Zero. Zero people. Zero money. A new church plant is just as hard as a startup. I believe it's even harder because it's non-for-profit. There's no revenue there. And in that first year, we needed to prove to the denomination that we deserved financial support. We needed to raise church fund support. I needed to pass assessment, do all the training, build up a small core group, build up small groups, things like that. And I had to finish all those before I can get an okay and get financial support from the denomination.

But as a pastor all my life, I don't have much savings. And I remember in the first 11 months I didn't get paid at all. And so my wife and I, we work as part-time. We took a part-time job as a Amazon shopper. We do grocery shopping at Whole Foods Market for online customers. And it's just a part-time job. It doesn't make too much money, but we love it. Until today, we still keep that. We still go to do shopping on our day off on Monday. So if you go to Whole Foods, you can see me on Monday morning. But anyway, we trust God will provide. And gratefully we did raise about \$45,000 for the initial church fund, but that's for the church, not for us personally, and so we just trusted God. However, at the end of that first year, when I was doing the taxes, I cannot believe my eyes. God touched so many people's hearts to give us personal donation. In the end of the year, I looked at the bookkeeping, I had exactly the same income as I had in the previous year, 2018.

Amen. God doesn't owe me anything, not even one penny. God answered our obedience with miraculous financial support. You know what? God doesn't need our money. He's testing us to see if we are obedient to his calling. When God sees our obedience, he will do his part. God provides everything we need. Later on, we didn't even have to spend a \$45,000 church fund. Until today, that 45,000 is still sitting in the bank. I told my church coworkers. "Don't touch it, leave it there, but tell the story. This is a testimony of God's providence." So after that very difficult first year, finally, on February 2020, our church was ready to lunch. We had our grand opening on the 23rd of February 2020. It was a very happy moment. We had about 30 people came to the service. We celebrated. But you know what happened? Just one week later, COVID and Washington's stay-at-home order was issued and the church had to be shut down.

Amazingly, God already knows. God provides. Five days before our grand opening, I got a meeting with Pastor Jacob. Some of you maybe know Pastor Jacob of Rock Church. A couple weeks before that, he called me and he said, "Pastor Ian, can we meet? I have something to discuss with you." He didn't say anything specific. I didn't ask either. I said, "Okay." So we set up a day. That day was the Friday before our grand opening. And I just hung up the phone. But after I hung up the phone, I had a thought into my mind. I didn't believe that's from God, because it's so clear. My wife asked me, "What's that phone call about?" I said, "Pastor Jacob wants to meet. He didn't tell me what he's going to talk about, but I already know. First, he's going to say to me, he's leaving Seattle, and, second, he's going to entrust his church to me." I said, "God told me that."

And she said, "No way. That's not possible." For the Chinese community, I don't know about American, but the Chinese community, we've heard many story about church division, even church spirit. We had never heard of a successful church merger at all. But anyway, I and Pastor Jacob met at a coffee shop. After we sit down, the first words that came out from his mouth are, "Pastor Ian, I'm leaving Seattle and I'm got to entrust my church to you. Are you surprised?" I said, "No. I already knows this because God told me." [inaudible 00:18:32] that we know this is God's doing. Then after that, in the later following six months, there's a lot of negotiations between two denominations. I can tell you it didn't go pretty well. It's very difficult. But both Pastor Jacob and me believe, if God wants it to be done, it will be done.

After that, how should I say, not we, God completed that church merger and our church grew. So many churches, they had to reduce their congregation meetings during the COVID and some churches even shut down. But because of the miraculous church merger, our church grew double in the pandemic. That's a miracle.

Amen!

Yeah, amen to that. So God answered our obedience with a miraculous church merger. Okay, finally, the stay-at-home order ends in January 2021, and so we start our online Sunday service and prayer meetings. Six months later, in July, the entire state was reopened so we start doing the physical meetings. From that time on, another miracle happened. We see new friends come to our service. Every single Sunday, we see new visitors, no exception. And you know we don't do commercials. We don't do promotion. When you come to our church, you don't even see a church sign here. And some of them, they're meeting in BelPres, they don't even know there's a Chinese church there in S150. So I don't know where those new visitors come from. I don't know. They come from nowhere, but they just keep coming every single Sunday.

For two and a half years, a total of 130 Sundays nonstop, no exception, every Sunday we're seeing new visitors. For now, a total of 500 people have visited our church. Some

of them moved away, but a total of 300 decided to stay. And right now we have about 100 people average on every single Sunday. So God answered our obedience with miraculous church growth. Amen to that?

Amen!

So don't worry about your health. Don't worry about your job. Don't worry about your relationships. God knows it. If God can do that, even in COVID, God can do everything for you. But you need to be bold. You need to trust God. You need to obey him regularly. Do you want to experience the same thing? Maybe some of us still haven't learned this crucial lesson of radical obedience in our Christian life. Let's go back to the text. In verse 10, [inaudible 00:21:50] is the future tense of to be. Future tense implies preparations. Jesus' called disciples to equip them for the future ministry. Later examples of Jesus' ministry tells us that Jesus allowed failure.

So don't be disappointed about our failure, but also don't disregard about our failures. We have to correct our wrong thinking and respond to God's word to follow him in his way. To conclude, knowing who Jesus is should be our driving force to respond to his call. God has spoken his word and his word is very clear. So let's be sensitive to God's voice around us and action to follow our law as a true disciple. God bless you. May I again, thank you, ask Pastor Scott to deliver our closing prayer?

Thank you, Pastor Ian. That was a great word. Jesus, thank you for the privilege you give us of following you, and thank you that you allow our failures and that you don't give up on us, and that you continue to call us to follow you more and more. Lord, thank you. It is a privilege. And so help us to respond to your gracious call, to follow you, obey you radically because we know, as Pastor Ian has testified, that you are faithful and that when we follow you you know everything we need and you provide. Lord, help us to have that kind of faith and that kind of trust as we go from here. We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following (note: we use the same scripture reflection questions each week so that we can practice using the same tools over time as we examine different scriptures):

- What do you feel when you read this scripture (excited, angry, worried, etc....)? Why do you think that is? (Explain in your group and then take that response to Jesus in prayer this week.)
- As you read this scripture, where does it challenge your current cultural context?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What do we learn from the text and Pastor Ian's sermon about obedience?
- How does this instruct us to respond as disciples or followers of Jesus?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.