

You Never Know – John 1:35-51

John 1:35-51. We’re studying the Gospel of John that we may believe. Believe and keep believing. And this week, we come to the call of the first disciples. An event that’s most likely a precursor to what we find in the *Synoptic* Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

They record a scene on the shores of the Sea of *Galilee* where the first disciples were called; abruptly leaving their nets. But that was probably the *final* step of their call. The start of it all began here in John 1 about 9 months earlier.

Intro

And what we find in the midst of it, is **a pattern of discipleship**. A pattern for growing in Christ. A template and example of what it means to *walk* with Jesus. Live for him.

And in the midst of *that*, in the midst of your discipleship, you never know. That’s the point I want to make. You never know *how* that pattern is going to affect you. You never know *what* it will bring. You never know *where* it will take you. Leading to a life of exhilaration and variety that beats all. It does.

Far from a *boring* life as some people think, the Christian life is one of the most amazing adventures in all the world. One of the most interesting lives you can possibly lead. Because with Jesus, you never know.

[35] The next day again John [the baptizer] was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” [37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. (ESV) It’s an indicator that . . .

With Jesus, You Never Know . . .

When opportunity will knock – Don’t waste it (v35-39)

The two disciples of John the Baptist certainly didn’t. They were just standing with their leader minding their own business. When all of a sudden Jesus walked by and John couldn’t help himself. “*Behold, the Lamb of God!*” “Here he is again!” And the two disciples saw it as an opportunity. An opportunity . . .

• To follow him

To walk in his steps. Follow his lead. Do what he does. You never know *when* opportunity will knock in that respect. You never know *when* he’ll present himself. When he’ll put himself right in front of your mind’s eye. To follow him, and . . .

• To learn from him

That’s the next part. *[38] Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”*

Rabbi was a term of respect, and indicated their desire to *learn* from him. Learn his way. Learn what he knows. Which means they were seeking knowledge and truth. And given who he is, it was the opportunity of a lifetime. And still is. To learn the truth from *the* Truth. Learn the way from *the* Way.

Then, after asking, “*where are you staying?*” *He said to them* in v39 . . .

“Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day [with him], for it was about the tenth hour. 4pm.

The verbs *staying* and *stayed* in v38-39, are the same Greek word translated *abide* later on. As in, be with. Remain with. So they not only wanted to *learn* from him, but . . .

• To be with him

Be near him. Close to him. And he welcomed it. Even invited them. “*Come and you will see.*” (39) So that they did. Opportunity knocked, and they responded.

If you don’t yet follow Jesus, this point is for you. Opportunity is knocking.

– Don’t waste it

You never know *when* he’ll next present himself. If ever. You never know *when* you’re going to hear of him. Or from him. And if you do, you never know if your heart will be soft enough to care. You don’t even know if you’ll be *alive* the next time he walks by.

So don’t *waste* this opportunity. Open the door of your heart, invite him in, and follow him. Confess your sin and make a commitment to live for him.

And when you do, buckle up. Because with Jesus, you never know . . .

How he will change you – Don’t fight it (v40-42)

Whether you’ve been walking with him for 10 seconds or 10 years. You never know.

Becky says I’m “Rob 4.0” or something. And I’m like, “Welcome to sanctification. I had no *idea* he would do this. I had no *idea* he would take me from the pits to the pulpit. No idea he would soften my edges. No idea he would fire my passions.” And all I can say is, “Do it again, Lord! Do more!”

And I’m not the only one. Look at how he changed Andrew. *[40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.* We don’t know who the *other* disciple was, but given the inside scoop here, it’s probably John.

In any case, v41 says – *He [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).*

Andrew was changed that quick. Changed, first of all . . .

• To speak of him

To speak of Jesus. He went from a follower to a speaker in one day. An observer to a witness in a matter of hours. That’s how radical the change *is* sometimes.

And therein lies the pattern of discipleship we find here. It starts with seeing Jesus, or beholding him, and continues with following him, learning from him, abiding in him, and speaking of him. See, follow, learn, abide, and witness. Talk about him like Andrew. “*We have found the Messiah.*” Name his name. Take a stand for him. Speak for him.

When we planted this church almost 20 years ago now, my greatest fear was that I didn’t know how to preach the Gospel. I was scared to death I would get it wrong. Or say it poorly. Scared to death of critics who would pick it apart. Scared to death it would fall flat and nobody would respond. But God did a work to change me, and the rest is history.

Never underestimate the power of God to change you. You never know.

To speak of him and . . .

• **To represent him**

Like he changed Peter in v42 to represent him. [42] *He [Andrew] brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).* Two names, in two different languages, that mean the same thing: “rock.”

The point is, Jesus is changing Peter’s identity to represent him. “From now on, you’re a different man with a different purpose.” That’s the idea. Just like God changed Abram to Abraham. “Exalted father” to “father of a multitude.” (Gen 17:5)

Only in this case, Jesus was foreshadowing that Peter would be a rock of faith. A foundation and example for those who followed. Like he said later on. *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church* (Mt 16:18). What rock? The rock of *faith*, that Peter just displayed, because God had changed him 2 ½ years earlier. Changed him, to represent him.

If that’s you . . .

– **Don’t fight it**

If Jesus has changed your life to follow him, learn from him, and abide in him; don’t fight his impulse to speak of him; represent him. *Embrace* your new identity in Christ. *Embrace* the new you. You never know *how* he might use you.

Third, you never know . . .

What he might require of you – Don’t ignore it (v43-46)

[43] *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee [in northern Israel]. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” [44] Now Philip was from Bethsaida [in Galilee], the city of Andrew and Peter.* So they were basically going home.

[45] *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”* We talked about some of those messianic prophecies back in v21-23. The point being, having found the Messiah, Philip couldn’t contain himself. Just like Andrew. He has that effect, doesn’t he?

And Nathanael’s response is classic. [46] *Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”* For whatever reason, Nathanael didn’t have a very good opinion of Nazareth. Maybe it was because he was from Cana, a *nearby* village (Jn 21:2), and Nazareth had better carpenters. Who knows?

What I do know, is that Philip just ignored it and invited him to come and see for himself. Genius. Because there’s nothing more important than dispensing with the peripheral and getting to the core. Nothing more compelling than seeing Jesus yourself.

The point is this: With Jesus, you never know *what* he might require of you. Whether . . .

• **To go, share, or invite**

Go, from wherever you are to wherever he wants. It might be across the country like Philip, or across the world like Paul. It might be going home or going away. It might be ministry or missions. It might be helping or leading.

Whatever the case, be ready and say yes. Not without prayer, and counsel, and counting the cost; but say yes. *Go* if Jesus requires it. *Go* if that’s what he wants.

And share. Whether home *or* away. Share what you *know* about Jesus. And as soon as you learn more, share that. It could be speaking off the cuff like Philip, or preaching from a pulpit like Timothy. Find outlets, find people, with whom you can share about Jesus.

And by all means, invite others to join you. Extend an invitation to see and learn about Jesus *alongside* of you. It’s the oldest and easiest form of evangelism in the book. *Come and see*. Come and see the *body* of Christ. Come and see his hands and feet. Come and see him with the eyes of your heart. If it’s good enough for Jesus and the Apostles, it’s good enough for us.

Whatever it is, *whatever* God requires of you . . .

– **Don’t ignore it**

For his glory and your joy, don’t ignore it. Even if it means difficulty; or hardship; or pain. Because he’ll use it. He’ll use it, and it’s worth it. Every last bit of it. Because *he’s* worth it.

So be ready and say yes. “Lord, whatever you want, I’m in. Wherever you call, I’ll go. I’ll share. I’ll invite.”

And when you do, you never know . . .

How he will work – Don’t doubt it (v47-49)

[47] *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”* [Evidently, Nathanael was a truth speaker, full of integrity.] [48] *Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered 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!”*

“Under the fig tree” could just be a very specific reference to Nathanael’s whereabouts, requiring supernatural knowledge; or it could be a reference to Nathanael’s study of the Old Testament. Because that’s how rabbinic literature used that phrase. To describe someone’s meditation on the Law.

Whatever the case, Nathanael went from a Nazareth-knocking *skeptic* to a blown-away *believer* to an all-out *worshipper* in a hot second. “You’re the Son of God!” How does that happen? How does somebody go from a skeptic to a believer to a worshipper at *all*?

Jesus, that’s how. That’s the effect he has on people. At least those who see him. And follow him. He turns skeptics into worshippers. Which just happens to be the last part of the discipleship process. See, follow, learn; abide, witness, and *worship*. Don’t miss that.

As his disciples, that’s our life. Or should be. And you never know how God’s going to work because of it. First . . .

• **To open eyes**

The eyes of people’s heart. To see him for the first time or see him anew. How many times have we heard people essentially say, “I once was blind but now I see.” How many times have *you* said it? I certainly have. Not only recounting what God did when he saved

me, but what he's done since. Opening my eyes more and more. To people. And opportunities. And needs.

You never know. It's one of the things that makes life with Christ so amazing.

Second, you never know how he's going to work . . .

- **To break down walls**

Walls of doubt. Like Nathanael. Walls of fear like you. Walls of hurt, or sin, or rebellion. You never know how he's going to break through. Sometimes with kindness and mercy, and other times with truth and conviction. You never know.

But you do know that he will. Because he promised. He *promised* to pierce our hearts. He promised to build his church. Not even allowing the gates of *hell*, the walls of hell, to withstand his work. So . . .

- **Don't doubt it**

Don't doubt that Jesus will work. You may not know *how*, it may be unexpected, but he will. The Bible is clear and our lives are proof. Our *church* is proof. You just never know.

And finally, with Jesus you never know . . .

- What you will see – Don't miss it (v50-51)**

[50] *Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, '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 heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* Referring to himself.

We can't know for sure, but he's most likely alluding to the episode in Genesis 28 where Jacob dreamed of a *ladder* between heaven and earth on which angels were ascending and descending. To say three things here:

- (A) You're going to see the glory of heaven shine on me just like it did Jacob;
- (B) I'm going to connect heaven and earth just like the ladder; and
- (C) The blessing of Abraham will be passed on through me just like it was Jacob.

Greater things indeed! And things we experience to this day. From the glory of God every time we worship, to the connection with God every time we pray, to the blessing of God every time we gather. It's all about Jesus. Things intended . . .

- **To amaze you and assure you**

Just like he amazed and assured the *first* disciples. Only more. 2000 *years* more. And more widespread. All over the world. You never know. You never know *what* he's going to reveal. You never know what he has in store.

So whatever you do . . .

- **Don't miss it**

Don't miss the transformed lives of sinners saved and saints sanctified. Don't miss the transformed homes of marriages restored and families changed. Don't miss thriving churches with growing men and godly women. Adjust your focus and zoom in. Because with Jesus, you never know. You never know *what* you'll see.

Except the process of discipleship, and the most exhilarating life you can possibly live.

Prayer – God, how thankful we are that you've revealed to us things that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined." (1 Cor 2:9) Open our eyes all the more. Enlarge our hearts all the more. To see you, and follow you, and do all that you want. We choose *your* way.

You Are Loved