

“Are you a Fan of Jesus Christ?”

Written December of 2011

Scripture Reading: Matthew 10:37-40

Introduction

A couple of months back during a 40 day fast (9/11/11 to 10/21/11) the Lord brought a book across my path that really caused me to take a hard look in my Spiritual Mirror, and truly analyze if I was really living for God's Glory. I believe the Holy Spirit used that book to help me realize where I was in my Faith and Walk with Christ, but I also believe it's a message that should be shared as well. Almost every Message (*sermon*) that the Holy Spirit has ever anointed me to write, always have self-reflecting titles which ask a question that is vital to our Christianity. **Here I am today personally challenged by the title of this Message (Sermon). I pray that you will be as well.**

The purpose of today's Message is to help all of us reflect upon this very important question: **“Are you a Fan of Jesus Christ?”**. Before we begin today, I would like to invite the Holy Spirit to open our Hearts, Minds and Spirits to understand what the Lord has prepared for this day.

Sermon

I want all of us to understand what the word Fan means in our everyday lives, but in order to do that I am going to need a volunteer to help me with a small illustration, (*preferably a guy, and you'll see why in a moment*).

Illustration:

How many people here watch sports regularly or every once in a while? Volunteer your task is very simple, all you have to do is tell all of us some of things that you are a Fan of. Me personally I like to watch a good Baseball game, Basketball game and Football game whenever I get a chance to. I would consider myself a Fan of these sports. I am also a Fan of a Christian Band called Casting Crowns, whose concert last month was great by the way. These are all just some brief examples, but what Teams or Groups are you a Fan of personally. (*Wait for Volunteer to give his list*)

I'm sure there were several people sitting here today that probably rattled off a list of Sports, Teams and Bands in your head, right? The truth is we are all Fans of something or the other. Thank you to my Volunteer for your help today.

So that we can better understand the title of today's Message I would like to read to you the definition of the word **Fan** according to Webster's Dictionary.

- **Fan** = enthusiastic admirer of someone or something.

This is the final part of this morning's illustration. Now I am going to ask the entire Congregation to answer the following two questions by a show of hands:

1. **How many people here are enthusiastic admirers of Jesus Christ?**
2. **How many people here are Believers in Jesus Christ?**

Now if you're asking yourself isn't that basically the same thing, you are most definitely correct in that assumption. At the end of today's Message (*Sermon*) I am going to ask you this same question again, I am very curious to see if anyone changes their answer.

Thank you to everyone for your participation and thank you for coming today this concludes the Sermon today. **Just Kidding!!** We are done with the Illustration, but now we are going to dive into the Word of God. Please don't fall asleep during today's Sermon, it is so important you pay attention. You can fall asleep next week if you want, Just Kidding again!! Alright it's time to get serious, this Message can mean life or death to us. **In fact, let's lift up another quick prayer so that the Holy Spirit helps us to stay focused.**

We are going to look-up and review several examples of when Jesus called people to be his Followers. Most of these are very familiar stories, and we have probably heard them hundreds of times, but please just bear with me until the end I promise you that all of this will make sense (*God Willing*).

The first texts are found in: **Matthew 4:17-23.** Please follow along with me because we are going to read these text by text so that we capture the true essence of what is happening in these two separate encounters.

Notice how it says and it specifies in **Verse 18: "for they were fisherman"**. At the end of this text, it is basically stating that the Profession or Career of Simon-Peter and Andrew were FISHERMAN. It's kind of like saying today that you're a Teacher, Policemen, Doctor, Chef, Secretary etc.... It was there lively-hood, it's how they survived and provided for their families. That little phrase was something that I missed, the hundreds of times I had read it before. But why is that phrase important? The following two texts (19 & 20) will tell us why.

Verse 19: "And He saith unto them, FOLLOW ME, and I will make you fishers of men." Now think about this for a second, here are two good Jewish guys who Believed in God and had Faith in God working in their Career as Fisherman when all of the sudden this Man named Jesus appears and tells them this.

Ask yourself the same question, would you give up being a Teacher, Policemen, Doctor, Chef, Secretary etc....No-one in their right mind today would give up their Career and Profession to follow someone they barely know. Now to any logical thinking person in their right mind this statement Jesus made would make no sense. But the following text is the icing on the cake, let's read it.

Verse 20: "And they immediately left their nets and followed Him". WHAT!!!!!! Let's read that again, maybe it's a type-o in my Bible. Now ask yourself this: "WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD DO SUCH A THING"?

This is why Paul's tells us in: **Romans 12:2** *"that our minds must be transformed/renewed"* from a Physical Mindset to a Spiritual Mindset. It is only through the Born Again conversion that we can begin to transform our minds my dear Brothers and Sisters. **Simon-Peter and Andrew put action behind their Faith.**

Notice the key word in **Verse 20: "IMMEDIATELY"**. They didn't tell Jesus, you know that sounds good and all, but could I schedule you in for tomorrow or sometime next week on my day off when its more convenient for me. **NO**, they didn't do that, they **IMMEDIATELY** left their nets (*their lively hood/career*) and followed Him. They left their Families, Wives, their pets, Career and Profession behind and just FOLLOWED. They left what in the world's eyes we call **"THIER SECURITY"** and **"COMFORT ZONE"** behind. They put action behind their Faith; they put nothing before their desire to serve God. **Would you be willing to do the same today?**

Let's keep reading into our next encounter found in: **Verse 21**. Here we see that they are in the family business of being "Fisherman" when Jesus called them to FOLLOW HIM. Pay close attention to **Verse 22** and how they responded. **Verse 22: "And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him"**. Again, we see the word **"IMMEDIATELY"**, They left their Career and Profession. **Would you be willing to do the same today?**

Verse 22: even gives the additional detail that they *"left their Father"*. **They left their Earthly Father to FOLLOW the Will of their Heavenly Father.** That really blew my mind away. But after Jesus asked James and John to that, I love the fact that the following **Verse (23)**, gives a perfect example of Jesus Christ FOLLOWING the Will of His Heavenly Father. Let's read it together.

Verse 23: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

AMEN TO THAT

These four men: Simon-Peter, Andrew, James and John were simple Fisherman, uneducated and relatively poor. But in our next example we will see someone who because of his position, as a Tax Collector, was fairly wealthy and had a high position and power to a certain degree. Let's turn in our Bibles to: **Luke 5:27, 28. "Jesus said: Follow me...he left all, rose up and followed Him."**

There are several important things that happened in this encounter, but to truly appreciate them all you have to have a little background on the culture of that time period.

In a nutshell: in Jewish times it was a high Honor to be Discipled by a Rabbi or Teacher of the Law. Young priest would literally have to interview for weeks and even months to get a spot at the foot of a Rabbi and be taught.

Did you ever notice Matthew's last name "**Levi**"? Matthew was from the tribe of Levi who from birth began training to be a priest in the Temple. Imagine the disappointment of his parents when he accepted a job as a Tax Collector, which not only declared that he had turned his back on God, but also that he turned his back on his people by being employed by the sworn enemies of Israel, the Romans.

Yet here comes Jesus with his Disciples and invites Matthew to join them. This was completely and utterly taboo, IT just wasn't done. Christ was the greatest Revolutionary of His time simply because He didn't care about what people said, He only cared about honoring God the Father and doing His Will alone. God sees the Heart and our True potential, when others only see the exterior and pass judgement based on that.

Matthew understood all this when Jesus called him, and though he didn't feel worthy to be Discipled by Jesus, he left his riches, the life that he knew and Followed Jesus. He didn't care what everyone was murmuring and gossiping about him, even Christ own Disciples didn't agree with the decision Jesus made. **Yet despite all the critics Matthew "rose up, left all and Followed".**

These are great examples of people Truly putting action behind your Faith and also in not putting anything before doing the Will of God. Unfortunately, not everyone responded to the call of Jesus in the same way as many do today as well. Let's look at the following texts found in **Matthew 19:20-22**. This is the story of the **Rich Young Man**.

Notice at the end of **Verse 21** Jesus asks him to "**Follow Him**", but sadly in **Verse 22** we see the young man put more importance on his material earthly things, instead of Jesus Christ. **Ask yourself, do we do the same thing today in making excuses as to why we don't spend more time with God through Prayer and reading the Scriptures.** I will be the first to admit that I am guilty of this, and if we were all truly honest with ourselves, I think you would feel the same way. **We want to follow Jesus but only on our terms, and that's just not good enough.**

Let's look at the Scripture reading given today, but through the eyes of Mark. Turn in your Bibles to **Mark 8:34**.

"And when He had called the people unto Him with his Disciples also, He said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and FOLLOW ME".

My dear Brothers and Sisters we have to be willing to go against what our flesh wants and tells us. This is what **“denying ourselves”** truly means. **Some people think that by just completing a Religious bucket list, that it makes them worthy of something or anything Eternal.**

There are so many people that think by just doing **Religious things** and participating every once in a while in a church program that it makes you into a Christian. Or, that if we dress a certain way, eat a certain way or even Worship God in a certain way it grants us special treatment by God.

This is where religion has blinded us to think that Christ should be at the top of our list of Priorities in our daily lives and we'll be doing the Will of God. We are so quick to say yes, I am a Believer in Jesus Christ. **I am so sorry to tell you that you've gotten your priorities all mixed up my dear Brothers and Sisters.**

“Christ doesn't want us to put Him on the top of our list of Priorities. He wants to be our ONLY Priority.” Kyle Idleman

The false sense of security that religion provides is extremely dangerous. We pride ourselves that we believe in Jesus, that we believe in God; but the concept of Faith Religion teaches will only lead to a false sense of security of obtaining Salvation and Eternal Life.

Matthew 7:21-23 gives us a clear example of the danger of having this false sense of security when **“On that day many will say...Lord, Lord”** haven't I done this in your name and done that in your name **“and the Lord will reply, depart from me for I never knew you, ye doers of iniquity.”** That's the cold hard reality that religion will bring you. OUCH!!!!!!

I am going to give you an example of this, by applying the illustration we did earlier, with the following text: **James 2:19. “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and tremble”.**

There is absolutely no difference between someone that sits in church and says they believe in Christ, and a demon that believes in Christ. Well actually there is. **I think that the demons most times have more Respect and Reverence for God, than the average so called Believer in Christ.** As evidenced by the last few words in **James 2:19 “and they Tremble”.**

They **fear the Lord**; they Respect and Reverence His name, therefore giving Honor to His name. I know a lot of Believers that are far from that kind of reverence when they come to worship in the House of God. **Mark 7:6** says: **“With their lips they honor Me, but their hearts are far from me”.**

“Biblical Belief is more than something that we confess with our mouths; it’s something we confess with our lives”. Kyle Idleman

Jesus asked Peter and Andrew, James and John to FOLLOW Him, and they became Fishers of Men. When Jesus called Matthew Levi to follow Him, he left the money on the table and just walked away from it. You’re probably asking yourself this question, and if you’re not, ask it to yourself:

So, what’s the difference between a Believer and a Follower of Jesus Christ? What’s the defining line?

A Believer admits that Jesus exists and admires who He was but doesn’t want to make any real sacrifice for Christ’s sake. A Follower is devoted, willing to sacrifice everything for Him. A Believer has limits to what access God can have; but a Follower allows complete access to God and the Holy Spirit. As we learned from **James 2:19**, the devil and the demons believe in God and in Jesus Christ, but they DO NOT Follow.

It’s easy to say we are Christian, say that we believe in Jesus and in God; but it’s a completely different scenario to live that belief, day in and day out. God is asking His TRUE FOLLOWERS to put action behind that Belief and their Faith in God. James 2:17 tells us that: “*Faith without action (works) is Dead.*”

In Closing

It is only in Following Jesus that you can begin to have a True Relationship with Him. We can never truly Follow Christ if we choose to do it on our own terms. That means even though you may not agree with all the politics that have come into the church, that you choose to be part of the solution, instead of just sitting on the sidelines and being part of the problem.

That means, that even though you feel that people don’t like you, and are talking bad about you, gossiping about you, that you still choose to Follow and Serve Christ despite what the critics say. **Always keep in mind that they did far worst to Christ; and if we are to truly Follow Him, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and Follow Him.**

We need to all realize that Church is a hospital where we all come with our imperfections so that through the Holy Spirit we can be molded into the image of Christ. **We are all a work in progress.** We can never reach our True potential for the Kingdom until we invite the Holy Spirit to baptize us every day anew and continue the Conversion process that began when we were Born Again.

I found myself this year, feeling really lazy to read the Bible, to Pray, to Fast and I felt distant from God, which was the reason I believe the Holy Spirit wanted me to go into a (40) day fast. After this fast was complete and I finished reading the book “**Not a Fan**” by Kyle Idleman, I asked myself “**Am I just a Fan of Jesus Christ?**” I continue to daily take a Spiritual inventory of my life, and daily ask the Holy Spirit to make the necessary changes in my life so that I can boldly say “**I AM NOT A FAN**”!!!!!! **I AM A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST!!!!**

Christ doesn't want Fans that just sit on the sidelines and admire Him from far away. True Christianity consists of hands on involvement and working together with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Christ paid too great a Price on the Cross on Calvary for us to just sit and point fingers. He wants people that truly realize the Honor and Privilege it is to be Called Christian, and that want to be TRUE Followers of Christ. It's time my dear Brothers and Sisters to bring Honor and Glory to our Creator by the lives we live.

**Look within yourself and determine which one you are,
a Believer or Follower?**

**Are you truly willing to give anything and
everything for God?**

Altar Call

As the final song plays, please read and listen to the lyrics; and ask yourself do you want to be a Believer in Jesus Christ or a Follower in Jesus Christ. I am inviting people who are Bold enough to proclaim that they are Followers of Christ to come forward for a special prayer.