



Sermon: Sunday, May 4, 2025

“Follow Me!”

SCRIPTURE: John 21:15-19 ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ 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.” ¹⁷ 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.” ¹⁸ 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.” ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Introduction: A Close Relationship Between Jesus and His Disciples

Today is the third Sunday of Easter, and we’re taking a closer look at Peter in our Gospel reading. His story is also the story of all the disciples who chose to follow Jesus. In the early days of the church, people were still figuring out what it really meant to live as a follower of Jesus.

In today’s reading from John 21:15–19, the risen Jesus has a conversation with Peter. He asks Peter, **“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”** Peter responds, **“Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”** Then Jesus tells him, **“Feed my lambs.”** This happens not just once, but three times.

Now, why did Jesus repeat the same question three times? It has to do with the deep and personal relationship between Jesus and His disciples. And it’s not just about the twelve disciples—it’s about all of us who follow Jesus today. So what exactly does this special relationship look like?

Body: Why Jesus Asked Three Times

Let’s think about it for a moment—why would Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Wouldn’t one time be enough? It seems a little unusual, especially since Peter was an adult, not a child. Some people think Jesus repeated the question to drive home a point. But repetition doesn’t always make something clearer, it can come across as annoying.

Still, each time Jesus asks, Peter answers that he loves Him, and each time, Jesus gives him a task: first, **“Feed my lambs,”** then **“Take care of my sheep,”** and finally, **“Feed my sheep.”** Even though the words vary a bit, the meaning is the same—Jesus is calling Peter to care for His people.

So what does this mean for us? It tells us that being a disciple of Jesus isn’t just about saying, **“I love you, Lord.”** It’s about putting that love into action—taking care of others, especially the people in the church. That’s what **“feeding the sheep”** means: looking after the community of believers.

But that’s easier said than done. Even when we try to support the church and care for others, things don’t always go as planned. The early church, which was led directly by the apostles, also faced many challenges. The apostles didn’t always have their authority recognized. There were even people within the church who resisted them. On top of that, the outside world—especially the Roman Empire—made life extremely hard for Christians. Many believers, including the apostles, were persecuted and even killed for their faith.

In today’s passage, Jesus tells Peter what’s ahead for him: **“When you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted. But when you’re older, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and take you where you do not want to go.”** This is a prediction of Peter’s future

martyrdom. The Gospel writer included this to show us that following Jesus means being ready to face hardship, even suffering.

Then, in the very last verse of the reading, Jesus simply says, **“Follow me.”** These words tie it all together. Being a disciple of Jesus means walking the same path He walked—a path that leads to suffering, but also to resurrection and new life.

Jesus used the same words, **“Follow me,”** at the beginning of His ministry when He first called Peter and Andrew, two fishermen. He said, **“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”** From the start, following Jesus has meant joining in His mission and sharing in His destiny. And what was Jesus’ destiny? To suffer, die on the cross, and rise again. If we want to share in the glory of His resurrection, we must be willing to share in His suffering too.

Now, that can feel overwhelming. Some people might hear this and wonder if it’s even worth being a Christian. Some people might think that if following Jesus means suffering and hardship, it might be better to live without religion. In fact, Jesus wants joy and peace in our lives rather than suffering and hardship.

However, we must not overlook the meaning of suffering that the Bible speaks of. The essence of the Christian faith is not that we chase after pleasant moments, comfort, or material blessings. It is about recognizing that we are all sinners and participating in the life of Jesus. Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, to be generous, to carry our cross—and most importantly, to follow Him. This is the heart of the Christian life.

Conclusion: What “Follow Me” Really Means

So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ—let me ask you again: What do you think Jesus meant when He said, **“Follow me”**? Are you taking those words seriously in your everyday life? This isn’t about making you feel guilty or pressuring you to suffer. Life looks different for each of us, and we each walk our own path.

But Jesus’ invitation to **“Follow me”** is both a gentle call and a strong challenge. He’s calling us to live as His disciples, to take His words seriously, and to be shaped by His story. If we truly love Jesus, we will want to follow Him with our whole hearts.

That means doing our best to learn more about who Jesus is and what He went through. That’s the starting point of real discipleship. If we’re too busy to grow in our relationship with Jesus, we’ll eventually feel lost. But if we make the choice to follow Him, we’ll discover something amazing, His peace and His rest.

So don’t forget: Today, Jesus says to you, **“Follow me.”** If we follow Him fully, we’ll find life in its truest form. May that blessing be with each one of us. **Amen.**