

Sermon Supplement, January 27, 2008, Morning Worship Service
 Kihei Baptist Chapel, Kihei, Maui, Hawaii
 LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST – ALMOST FOLLOWING JESUS
 Glenn Armstrong, D.D.

Sermon Series: LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST

Message Two: LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST FOLLOWING JESUS

INTRODUCTION: This short series, Living on the Edge of Almost, is designed to encourage all believers to take a look at our individual Christian lives—to see if we have leveled off at a comfort level, that may be acceptable to ourselves and other believers, but yet short of what God expects.

The first study, LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST PERSUADED, relates to living on the edge of almost believing in Christ as God’s only provision for our salvation. It is mainly designed to connect the unbeliever to Christ. The rest of this series will mainly be designed to challenge believers and especially any who have decided that their relationship to the Lord is fixed for life and without need for improvements.

LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST FOLLOWING JESUS, Matthew 4:19,20

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”

1. DEFINITION: *“Follow Me”*, 4:19. There are ten Greek words that are translated, “follow” in the English Bible. The general ideas of these words include: union, likeness, discipleship, to carry out to a certain end, to follow close, follow in the footsteps of another, accompany, conform, doctrinal correctness, follow teachings, follow right personal character and attributes, be intensive by being persistent, imitate, etc. All these terms imply total dedication to a person or cause. For our purposes it is following and conforming to Jesus Christ as He is revealed in Holy Scriptures.

2. DETERMINATION: *“straightway they left their nets and followed him.”*, 4:20. Unlike our culture today, education in the New Testament times often took place by young students, learning from master teachers, philosophers, craftsmen, etc. They learned by actually leaving their homes, jobs, families and following the teacher daily and learning by observation and constant communication. This was a normal practice and required total commitment or the teacher would not permit one to be a “follower”. Often that commitment would be put to the test by the teacher and only then would the individual be permitted to continue. Examples of testing by Jesus is most observable in the Gospels.

Most of Jesus' three-year public ministry involved teaching His disciples by real life situations, observing His compassion, learning from His lessons, and growing in their commitment to Him as the long awaited Messiah.

"Straightway" is used 42 times in the Gospel of Mark. It is from the Greek word, *euthus*, meaning immediately. Matthew records the urgency of immediate obedience to become a determined follower of Jesus by recording that Jesus' public ministry and call to discipleship took place after His temptation by the devil to compromise His convictions, Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus did not compromise for convenience nor does He expect His followers to do so. This is made even more compelling by noting that what Jesus demanded of Peter and Andrew took place immediately after Jesus learned that John the Baptist was taken prisoner by Herod Antipus, 4:12. He was later beheaded when Herod appeased his sister-in-law, Herodias, with whom he was living as one of his wives. A call to follow takes on additional meaning when it is measured by some who have discipleship desires. Discipleship involves a commitment to Christ that makes Him first and everything else a distant second.

INSTANT OBEDIENCE IS THE KEY TO ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

3. DISCERNMENT: "I will make you fishers of men", 4:20. Peter and Andrew were some of the first men Jesus called to become His disciples. By profession they were commercial fishermen, working the Sea of Galilee as part of a family business. Peter, John and Andrew are mentioned in particular in this text. (For additional information regarding the call of disciples see also: Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:2-11, John 1:35-42.)

The call to salvation is a call to believe. The call to service is a call to follow Jesus both as Savior and Lord. The scriptures refer to Jesus only 16 times as Savior. He is referred to as Lord 637 times! The absolute Lordship (*kurios*) of Jesus means He is in authority as master, owner of the created universe, King, moral governor, and supersedes anything that has claim on our lives.

It is clear that the disciples did not understand the Lordship of Jesus until following His resurrection, Acts 2:36. It is equally true that few believers make Him Lord over everything, everyone and every personal plan, Luke 14:25-33. When Jesus is presented as anything less than the eternal, creative God, He will be followed only as an example, teacher and good man. When He is understood as the infinite wisdom and extreme power person behind the whole universe of matter, material and mind, will He become Lord in the lives of His followers. When and only when He is believed as our creator, sustainer and redeemer will believers follow close behind Him and become "fishers of men."

SALVATION IS FREE AND UNIVERSALLY OFFERED WHILE DISCIPLESHIP IS VERY COSTLY AND HIGHLY RESTRICTED!

4. DESERTION: "And many of His disciples went back and followed Him no more." Luke 6:66. There are numerous passages in the gospels that say great multitudes

followed Jesus, Mark 3:7. They followed for selfish reasons—healing, to see a miracle or hear some blessing, and even to get something to eat, Luke 18:28. However, it is also observable that the closer Jesus came to the cross the smaller the crowds became. Even Peter “followed from afar”, Mark 14:51. He did this when Jesus was taken before the high priest for condemnation.

Dedication can speedily become desertion when God attaches a cost factor to it. A person who follows Jesus for personal gain or privileges will seldom maintain a close relation to the Savior.

In fact, it is questionable if one is following Jesus at all, if their “conversion” experience is without repentance toward God and for the purpose of health, wealth, worldly popularity and personal gain.

There has been, are, and also will be people who follow Jesus regardless of the high cost of discipleship. Unfortunately, there will also be those who go back into the world and follow Him no more.

COULD HE HAVE FOLLOWED FAR, WHO SHOWS NO WOUND AND BEARS NO SCAR?

5. DEDICATION: “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” *Matthew 26:56.* At the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus needed friends and followers the very most they all forsook Him and fled. However, following Jesus and discipleship do not end when one fails! In fact, the very act of failing may become the motivation for fully following Jesus. It is, after all, the very time that a believer finds out that, while he failed the Lord, the Lord did not fail him. It is often the defeats that demonstrate the closeness of Christ. The disciples who fled later followed with a dedication that, even with their premature deaths, defeated the Roman Empire, founded the church, wrote the New Testament and established the world-wide Christian culture that continues to the present.

FOLLOWING JESUS IS NOT DETERMINED BY HOW MANY TIMES A BELIEVER FALLS; IT IS RATHER DETERMINED BY HOW MANY TIMES HE GETS UP AND GOES ON.

GAA/January/2008 (f)