The Calling of Disciples

John 1:35-51

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We are still working through chapter 1 of John. Remember, John is writing this gospel toward the end of his life, late in the first century. Matthew, Mark and Luke have written their gospels. Peter, James and Paul's letters to the churches were in circulation. John, the one described as the apostle whom Jesus loved, gets to have a last word. He gets to tell his story of Jesus. He states his purpose for writing this letter in chapter 20 verse 31.

> **John 20:31** [31] but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We spent 2 months going through the first 18 verses. In the first 18 verses, John begins his letter with a prologue or introduction to Jesus. The prologue gives us the framework for everything else that follows. It tells us Jesus' identity, His relationship with the Father, His rejection by the world, His glory, and his mission of salvation. He concludes the prologue in verse 18 saying, "no one has ever seen God, but because we know Jesus, He has made the Father known to us."

John now begins his narrative of Jesus' ministry with John the Baptist. This narrative covers 4 days. These events occur after Jesus was baptized by John and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. It is not often that we get such specificity in the days and even, as we will see, John will give the hour of the day that things occurred. During my last teaching, we covered the first two days of John's narrative and I will give a brief recap.

Day 1, John answers the questions from the priests and Levites. Who are you? And Why are you doing what you are doing?

- John is baptizing at the exact same place where Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan. People were traveling long distances from Jerusalem and all of Judea and all the region about the Jordan. It was a movement.

- He is calling the Israelites back to visit the place where God visited them. He was calling them to a new exodus. To turn from their sin and prepare themselves for the promised Messiah.
- During this time there were many false prophets claiming to be the Messiah. So, before they even asked, John leaves no doubt or confusion and clearly declared that he was not the Christ.
- So then as prophesized in Malachi, The Priests and Levites asked if he was the person of Elijah? He answered, no. Although, the angel Gabriel had told his father, Zechariah, that "he will turn many of the children of Isreal to the Lord and he will go before him in the "spirit and power of Elijah." So John the Baptist was a "type" of Elijah, but he was not the person, Elijah, who they were asking him.
- Then they asked if he was a "Moses like" prophet as described in Deuteronomy 18? And John answered, NO.
- So, they asked him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replies quoting Isaiah 40:3, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."
- They conclude their inquiry asking, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John replies, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one who you do not know even He who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." – **John's baptism called the people to a new exodus, to turn from their sins, to repent and turn to God in preparation for something much greater than the promised land, but the promised Messiah.**

Day 2, John testifies to the Spirit coming down on Jesus.

- Recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke, John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan river. It was here that the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on Him, and a voice came from heaven declaring, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

- After Jesus' baptism, Matthew, Mark and Luke record the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days where Satan challenges His identity and His relationship to the Father.
- It was in the wilderness that Jesus suffered and was tempted. It was in the wilderness where Jesus proved His faithful obedience as God's son. The faithful obedience that Adam failed to prove when tempted in the garden and the obedience that Isreal failed to prove when in the wilderness.
- God, who called John to prepare the way had said, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.
- So, at the sight of Jesus coming, John announces to the crowd, **"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the World!"** This is the moment for which John was born. The picture that came to his mind was from Isaiah 53 that describes a new Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.
- Ever since Pentecost, at the moment one receives Jesus, believes in His Name, He gives the right to become Children of God and seals us with the Holy Spirit.
- We conclude with the reason that the Apostle John begins his narrative of Jesus' life with the story of John the Baptist. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He was called to prepare the way for the Messiah and John ends the account with John the Baptist proclaiming, **"I have <u>seen and borne witness</u> that this is the Son of God."**

Today we will cover day 3 and 4.

- As Jesus starts His public ministry we will see men following Him to be His disciples and learn what it means to "seek Him."
- We will see Jesus give Simon a new identity.
- And for those who follow Jesus we will hear the promise to see greater things.

John 1:35-42 [35] The next day again John 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. [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?" [39] He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. [40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). [42] He 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).

Verse 35 says, "The next day." This was the third day in a seven-day sequence. In John's narrative, the wedding in Cana was on the third day of the week. Jewish weddings were normally celebrated on Wednesdays. We cannot be certain, but many contend if we back up three days from the Wednesday wedding in Cana, we can argue that this day is Sunday, the Sabbath.

- The day after John initially proclaims, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He, John the Baptist, was standing with two of his disciples as Jesus walked by and he, again, declares, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.
- They were disciples of John the Baptist. Clearly, as followers, they were anticipating the Messiah and now John, who was a prophet, to prepare the way for the coming Messiah declares that He is the Messiah. So, when John sees Jesus walking by, he identifies Jesus as the Messiah. Two of his disciples did not delay, they did not ask, "Is he really the Christ?" No, they just pulled in behind him and started walking.
- The Scripture does not say how many disciples followed John the Baptist, but there is support that John had a community of followers which would have made sense considering all those that were coming from Jerusalem, Judea and across the region. John Chapter 3 records a conversation with some of John's followers. John's followers were saying, "Rabbi, He who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness – look, He is baptizing, and all are going to Him." John responds saying,

  John 3:28-30 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. [29] "The one who has the bride is the

bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease."

- Jesus is the bridegroom. Those that received Him and believed in His name are the bride. John the Baptist is the friend of the bridegroom, "the best man," who rejoices in His voice. John is celebrating Jesus' prominence, and he is using familiar language and imagery used by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea to describe God as the bridegroom, the husband, the one betrothed to the bride Israel.
- What I notice from this story is that only two disciples left John to follow Jesus. John and his disciples were preparing the way for the king and the king had come. At this time, only two followed the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
- What does this tell me? What happened to all of John's disciples? There are so many people that are caught up in the movement and are following a charismatic leader, and they miss the true Lamb of God.
- How many people are sitting in the pews today, repeating the creeds, singing hymns, taking communion and listening to a nice message and do not know the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- What struck me in this passage is not that two disciples followed Jesus, but how many more did not. It is not the same today?
- Who do you know that is missing encountering the Lamb of God today? Would you consider introducing them to Jesus? Or Invite them to VCC?

Verse 38 says, Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, **"What are you seeking?**"

- What a question? He did not ask, "who are you seeking?" but asked "what are you seeking?" Jesus was interested to know the heart motives for following Him. They could have answered, "We are seeking a king" or "We are seeking to get rid of the Roman authority."
- But they answered. And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

- Addressing Him as “Rabbi” or teacher showed respect, humility or even reverence.
- Then answering the question, “What are you seeking?” They responded with “where are you staying?” “Staying” is the same word used for abiding and remaining. It could also be said, “where are you abiding?” or “where are you remaining?” Their answer shows the main heart motive was **to be with Him**.

- Jesus replies in verse 39, “Come and you will see.” So, they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.
  - They stayed, they abided or they remained with Him that day for it was the tenth hour.
  - Do you remember where you were at 9:00 in the morning on September 11, 2001? Or for those of you are too young, do you remember where you were when to world shut down for Covid in 2020? It was such a memorable event and highlight of his life that John remembers the day and the hour he and Andrew met Jesus.
  - I think the main point that John the Evangelist wants us to know is that Jesus’ followers want to be with Him. They want to abide with Him, and they want bring others to Jesus. And we see this in:

John 1:40-42 [40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). [42] He 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).

- One of the two was Andrew. Who was the second of John the Evangelist’s disciples to follow Jesus? John, the author and son of Zebedee, never names himself in his gospel, but only refers to himself as “the other disciple” or “the one whom Jesus loved.” Maybe he did this to avoid any self-promotion and give all emphasis to Jesus. It is well established that John was the second one of John the Baptist’s disciples to follow Jesus.

- Besides abiding with Jesus, what was the first thing that Andrew did? He goes to his brother Simon and tells him, "We have found the Messiah!" Oh, for those that have family members that don't know Christ! Oh, how much do we want them to receive and believe the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in His name.
- Verse 42 says, "Jesus looked at him." He looked at Simon. When the creator of all things, the light of the world, and the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world looks into your eyes, you can't help but be changed. Jesus could see Simon for who he would become and the role that he would play in leading His church. Jesus gives Simon a new name, in the Aramaic, Cephas, in the Greek, Peter which both mean "rock."
- Later in His ministry when Jesus asked, who do people say that the son of man is? Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

  Matthew 16:17-18 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18**And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

- As followers of Jesus, we desire others to know Him, and we invite others to follow Him. All of us who have come to know Jesus have been transformed. As believers and Jesus followers, **you all have a new identity in Christ**. Don't let our culture, our sin, and our fear keep you from realizing the full identity that Christ has for You.
    - You are a child of God.
    - You are heir to God and fellow heir with Christ
    - The Spirit of the living God lives in you!
    - Christ in You! Live freely! Live boldly! Live without fear, for you have a new identity, Christ in you!

And now we proceed to Day 4.

John 1:43-51 **43** The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **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." [46]Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." [47] Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" [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!" [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."

- The next day Jesus decides to go to Galilee. It says, "Jesus finds Philip." To "find" him would imply that He was looking for Philip. They were in Bethsaida, a small fishing village and hometown of Andrew and Peter. Andrew, Peter and Phillip were all fishermen. So, it is likely that they knew each other and maybe Andrew and Peter wanted to find their old friend and bring him to Jesus.
- They find Philip and Jesus personally calls Philip saying, "Follow me."
- What did Philip do? He immediately went to find his friend, Nathanael and appeals to his understanding of the Law and the Prophets saying, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
- In our text John describes multiple ways that people come to follow Jesus and advance the kingdom of God.
    - First, Andrew and John respond to the message of John the Baptist.
    - Andrew brings his brother Peter to Jesus. – Peter responds to Andrew's testimony that "we have found the Messiah."
    - Now Jesus calls Philip personally with the word, "Follow me."
    - Philip brings his friend Nathaniel and says, "we have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." – Nathanael would come to receive and

believe in Jesus through his understanding of the Law and the teaching of the prophets and the supernatural revelation of Jesus.

- We continue to advance the kingdom today, two thousand years later in the same ways at VCC.
    - Jason Pizcazotowski responds to a message from me.
    - Jason goes and tells his wife Angie and Angie is called through a dream where Jesus personally calls her to follow Him.
    - Angie goes and tells her sister, Kimberly, that she has found the Messiah and Kimberly follows Jesus.
    - I shared during my last teaching about my friend, David Lavine, a Jew of Jews, who after hearing Isaiah 53 taught in our bible study responded saying, Yes, he believed that Jesus is the new Passover Lamb and Yes, he believed Jesus is the Messiah.
- Is it not AMAZING AND INCREDIBLE that 2,000 years later Jesus continues to call disciples to follow Him and advance His kingdom in the same ways? Through invitations and messages of a teacher, through family members, through friends, through the testimony of the Law and Prophets in the Scriptures, and even through a personal call from the Spirit of Jesus.
- In verse 46 Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”
    - Nathanael was skeptical that the Messiah could come from such a backwater town as Nazareth. Philip knows that if Nathanael could meet Jesus himself it would be more compelling that anything he could say, and Philip repeats the calling of Jesus to the two disciples saying, “Come and see.”
- So, they go to find Jesus and Jesus sees Nathanael coming toward Him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”
- Nathanael was astonished and said to Him, “How do you know me?” Jesus had accurately described Nathanael and his character. Nathanael expects Jesus to give a response that you might normally expect like, “Your brother told me all about you.”

- But no, Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” – In the OT, to sit under one’s own vine and fig tree is associated with prayerful reflection on the promise of the righteous reign of the Messiah from the line of king David. You can find this in 1 Kings 4:25, Micah 4:4 and Zechariah 3:10. He was contemplating the promised coming of his Messiah. The text does not say this, but it would explain Nathanael’s reply. “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”
- In this exchange, Nathanael goes from skeptic, to the realization that Jesus supernaturally knew him intimately, to confessing Jesus is the Son of God and King of Israel.
- And Jesus makes a promise to Nathanael, “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 <u>ascending and descending on the Son of Man</u>.”**
- Jesus references Genesis 28 where Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching into heaven, and angels were ascending and descending on it. Yahweh Himself stood above it and promised to Jacob the blessing of Abraham. That this land would be given to Jacob and his offspring. Jacob responded that the place where the angels were ascending and descending was the “house of God, the tabernacle, and the gate of heaven.”
- But Jesus says, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending to heaven on the **“Son of Man.”** This reference to the Son of Man comes from Daniels vision,

  Daniel 7:13-14 “I saw in the night vision, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a “Son of Man,” and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

- Jesus tells Nathanael that He, Jesus - the “Son of Man,” will be the “tabernacle,” the point of connection between heaven and earth. And that

through Him the blessing of Abraham, passed down to Isaac and Jacob will be realized, and that He Himself is the Son of Man who will reign and rule forever.

- Jesus called His followers through many relationships and many ways. All His disciples receive a new identity and are sealed with the Holy Spirit, are children of God, heirs to God and fellow heirs with Christ. We are all called to FEAR NOT because the Spirit of Christ is in you! So, live boldly, invite others to know Him, share the good news that you have come to receive and believe, and the promise that we will all see greater things!

What can we learn from the Calling of Disciples?

- John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God. Only two disciples Left to follow Him. How many people are sitting in the pews today, repeating the creeds, singing hymns, taking communion and listening to a nice message and do not know the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

  Matthew 7:21-23 [21] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- **What are you seeking?** Jesus' followers are seeking to be with Him, to abide with Him and to bring others to Him?
- As believers and Jesus followers, **you all have a new identity in Christ**. Don't let our culture, our sin, and our fear keep us from realizing the full identity that Christ has for us.
- Is it not AMAZING AND INCREDIBLE that Jesus continues to call disciples to follow Him and advance His kingdom through invitations from teachers, family members, friends, through the Scriptures, and even through a personal call from the Spirit of Jesus.
- You too will see greater things than these. Jesus has conquered death. He, the "Son of Man," is the point of connection between heaven and earth. The King has come and the King is coming again, and He will reign and rule forever.