**October 17, 2021 John 1:35-42**

 ***A Compelling Invitation***

**Scripture:**  John 1:35-42 NRSV

*(35)The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, (36)and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (37)The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. (38)When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" (39)He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. (40)One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. (41)He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). (42)He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).*

**Notes:**

1. ***Jesus*** is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
	1. Our journey of faith is dependent on God’s ***grace***.
	2. Our journey begins when we come to know ***Jesus***.
	3. God’s ***grace*** is defined as God’s unmerited favor.
	4. God’s loving response to an ***undeserving*** humanity.
2. We are all on this journey of ***grace***,
	1. Each spiritual walk begins with an invitation from Jesus to “***come*** and ***see***.”
	2. Eventually the “come and see”, becomes “***follow*** ***me***.”
	3. What cost God most ***dearly*** cannot be made ***cheap*** for us.
3. This journey of ***grace*** is costly and will require ***courage***.
	1. Those who take this journey will be ***transformed***.
	2. If you follow Jesus long enough, you will be called and ***commissioned*** to some work within the body of Christ.
	3. God will prepare you for a ministry of some sort, and then commission you to “***go*** and ***do***.”
4. How can you engage in discipleship, evangelism, and fellowship, if you are not ***engaging*** in the ministry of Jesus?
	1. Jesus ***commissions*** you to “***go*** and ***do***”.
	2. God motivates you to ***serve*** Him, that is how you are to “go and do.”
	3. How is God calling you to ***serve***?
	4. Move forward with ***simple*** ***acts*** of kindness and get into the ***Word***.

**Script:**

Sometimes I wonder how I ever got to where I am and if this was God’s plan all along. Other times I realize that it is only by the grace of God that I am where I am; physically, mentally, and spiritually. I have done risky things that could have resulted in my body being crippled or physically handicapped. I have done things in my life, that if not for the grace of God, that could have resulted in me being led down a path to illegal behavior, substance abuse, and maybe even addiction. I have in my early years tempted fate, and engaged in sinful acts that could have resulted in a lifestyle that was filled with sin and damning behavior. But again, only by the grace of God was I able to end up here where I am today.

We have all had opportunity to engage in such behavior. We have all faced temptation to engage in activities that may be dangerous to us physically, mentally, and spiritually. Yet, here we are today seated in the presence of one another and feeling pretty secure in our selves and our lifestyle. It is only by the grace of God that we can sit here today.

We have read many scriptures, interpreting them to say to us the words we need to hear to give us confidence in the life we live and where we may spend eternity. Yet we must be ever vigilant in our pursuit of this life so that we do not find ourself being led down a path that pulls us away from our savior and decisions we make that are against His will in our life. To walk this world in the confidence of our Lord, we must know that Jesus is the Way to get where we are going, we must know Jesus is the Truth of this world in which we live and that which is righteous and that which is not, and we must know Jesus is the Life that we must live to arrive at the Lord’s desired destination for each of us.

Today we are going to begin on a 6 week journey looking at discipleship as a journey of Grace. We must understand that this journey is not something we begin today and finish at some defined date or destination in the future. Our journey of faith is dependent on the grace given only by the Lord, and that it begins Where we come to know who Jesus is; it continues here where we are in our life; and will continue until we reach Heavens golden shore. Today we will explore this journey, beginning with a reading from John 1:35-42. Stand with me as we share in this gospel reading.

(35)The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, (36)and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (37)The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. (38)When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" (39)He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. (40)One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. (41)He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). (42)He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). John 1:35-42 NRSV

I have seen and been impacted by many strong Christian brothers and sisters, but one that stands out to me is somebody that lives their faith so simple and transparent. I will not mention their name so that I do not embarrass them. To look at them you would see somebody who is exactly as they appear; timid, humble, meek. They act the same in church settings as they do in the world; their behavior is constant. They are caring; they are compassionate; they seem to be able to feel what those who are hurting around them are feeling; and they are not afraid to share a tear, tell others about what Jesus did in their life. They exemplify to me everything that Jesus is; a man whose love knows no boundaries and is willing to love extravagantly. Perhaps that is what makes this person so compelling to me. They followed Jesus every day, in everything they do and say, Jesus is at the center. Perhaps that is why I admire this person so much; in every way they are a perfect example of what being a Christian is and a perfect example of who Jesus is in our world. Their life was a journey from sinner to a life lived in Christ’s example. A journey that begins with an invitation to come and see; and ends when we meet Jesus, face to face. This person I speak of doesn’t just wear the title of Christian, but is an example of what it means to be a Christian and the grace of God.

First let me take a moment to define exactly what God’s grace is. God’s grace is defined by many as: God’s unmerited favor; God’s undeserved love; The favor given to someone who deserves the opposite; the absolute free expression of the love of God finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; and, God’s no-strings attached goodness. All of these are attempts to describe something that is indescribable, God’s loving response to an undeserving humanity. God’s grace comes at no cost, totally free of charge. It is best described as a gift.

We are all on this journey of grace, we may not be at the same place on our journey, but we are all somewhere on the path. Its important that we understand this journey language. Think about the life of Christ; he was not just a preacher, prophet or healer. He traveled around to where the people who needed him would be found. He didn’t stay in one place for very long. He moved from place to place and from life to life, changing lives as he entered into them. Think about our passage today and what would have been missed had they hesitated or waited for the next time. We believe that one of these disciples to follow Jesus was Philip and the other it tells us was Andrew. How would their lives have been different had they not followed Jesus on the day that the Baptist made this declaration.

Imagine the events that they would have missed waiting for the next time; the next time that he would walk past, the next time he would be in town, or the next time he would invite them to come and see. Instead after John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah, Andrew and Philip do not hesitate they immediately begin to follow behind him. If we could all be so bold; can you imagine how our lives may be different.

Each spiritual walk begins with an invitation; an invitation from Jesus to “come and see.” Andrew and Philip hear these words after they show interest in what John the Baptist says about Jesus. When we begin to follow after Jesus it is because we are looking for something; we are intrigued by Jesus. Jesus understands that nobody follows after Him for long without being confronted with a series of decisions. Some of these decisions are life changing. These decisions require commitment.

Following Jesus isn’t an extended spectator sport, eventually you will be asked to get involved in the action. Eventually the “come and see”, becomes “follow me.” While these two phrases sound similar and may sometimes be used interchangeably; they mean very different things. “Come and see” is about becoming acquainted with the journey. It’s about getting close enough to explore, maybe even become informed enough to make a decision as to whether it is for them.

Eventually though, a decision is required and there are a few things you must know. First your decision is made possible through the extension of God’s grace. God places the options before you and you must decide for yourself, what you will do. Nobody else on this planet can make the decision for you; only you can make this decision for yourself and God’s grace makes it possible.

This grace is personal, but it is not private. It will meet you in your uniqueness and will challenge you on a deeply personal level. And while this grace may be extended freely to you, it may cost you deeply. Grace is costly because it calls us to follow Jesus. It is costly because it costs a person their life; and it is grace because it gives a person the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner. And let us not forget that grace is costly because it cost God the life of his only son; and what cost God most dearly cannot be made cheap for us. Costly grace is the incarnation of God. That same grace should remind us that we were bought at a price so dear that it is never able to be repaid, but is given freely to those who will receive it.

Following Jesus into this journey of grace is costly and will require courage. You will face obstacles, you will face struggles, and there will be situations that you will not want to face, but the Lord will be with you. If you heed His call to follow, He will transform you in a powerful way. It starts, “Come and See.” Then moves to the challenge, “Follow Me.” And is evidenced in the promise of Jesus that “you will be” radically different. Those who take this journey seriously will be thoroughly transformed.

It is often said that Jesus loves us enough to meet us where we are; but He also loves us too much to leave us there. When Andrew and Peter were called to leave their boat, Jesus said, “I will send you out to fish for people!” This transformed how they saw themselves and gave them purpose. Each person who you look up to as a role model for what it means to be a Christian has been transformed from who they once were to who you see now. They are gradually being transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

“I will send you out to fish for people!” This statement from Jesus points to a beautiful truth of the journey of grace; if you follow Jesus long enough, you will be called and commissioned to some work within the body of Christ. It starts with “come and see”, moves to “follow me”, promises “you will be”, and then commissions you with “go and do.” It is impossible to live this Christian life with out transforming through each of these stages. If you enter the come and see phase you will need to make a decision, will you follow Him? You must choose, if you choose to follow Him, then he promises to transform you. In that transformation God will prepare you for a ministry of some sort, and then commission you to “go and do.”

Right now, some of you are sitting there saying, “wait a minute pastor, I was told that it was not about works but about faith.” This is true, but how can you follow Jesus if you do not go with Him? How can you say that you are a follower of Jesus when your life does not exemplify it? How can you engage in discipleship, evangelism, and fellowship, if you are not engaging in the ministry of Jesus Christ? I am not saying that you will be up front and, in the limelight, but you will be a part of the ministry in some way shape or form. Of the many ways to serve here we find Attendance at services, fellowships, kindness outreach. You may help prepare the thanksgiving meal, or maybe even serve it or deliver it. You may teach a small group study, lead children around from class to class during VBS, or you could serve in the nursery. You may attend and help on work day, or may just see a task that is needed on the grounds and taking care of it. You are called to bring your tithes and offerings of funds, goods, and service. Jesus commissions you to “go and do”, but there is not a defined way to “go and do.”

In whatever way God motivates you to serve Him, that is how you are to “go and do.” This commissioning is personal but not private. And this journey of grace is compelling, not only for us, but also through us, to others who see us. We are not only afforded the opportunity to join Jesus in partnership in his mission, but we are called to it. How is God calling you to serve? Where have you served in the past and where do you feel God guiding you.

We are the body of Christ, we are the hands and feet of this body, His body. How are we reaching out to those in need? How are we nourishing ourselves in the word? How are we moving forward on this journey of grace? We move forward following the prompts we receive from Jesus. We move forward doing the simple acts of kindness, mercy, and grace to those we encounter in our daily lives. That is how we reach out to those in need. We get into the word, whether it is reading scripture, listening to podcasts, or watching YouTube videos, immerse in God’s word and teaching. Remember I said there is not any defined way to serve Him, but remember there is only one way to the Father, and that is through Jesus, Jesus is the way. There is but one truth that we should live by, and that is the truth found in Jesus. Finally, there is but one life we should be living, and that is the life of Christ, we must be striving each day to become more like Him.