

**Follow Me – How Do you Respond**  
**Mark 1:14-20, Habakkuk 1:14-17**

Well brothers and sisters, here we are kicking off another fall ministry season, getting back into our regular weekly church life routine with our regular worship service.

We're getting back to celebrating Lord's supper, we're starting up our kids and youth programs, our men's group, women's group, and prayer group – and looking forward to pot luck lunches, our annual Community Fall Fair, SouperBowl Sundays and... the big fall feature in November – Breakfast theatre!

Because as much as we enjoy taking things a bit easy over the summer, it's good to get back to regular business, isn't it? Both in our day to day lives and in our church family life.

So, there's been lots of preparation in anticipation of today as our fall kick-off Sunday, not the least of which has been trying to find an answer to the question – what do I preach on? Truth be told I was really enjoying revisiting some of the previous material we'd covered a couple years ago about God

and who He is over the past three weeks and would have been quite happy to continue that.

But... its kick-off Sunday and we're launching a new ministry season and that calls for a new sermon series. So, I had been seeking the Lord and praying and asking Him... Lord what do you want to say to your people at Valleyview as we start this fall ministry season and the answer came very clearly and succinctly one Sunday morning. It was *"follow me!"* tell them *"follow me!"*

So this series for Sept is not just something I'm doing simply because we need a new sermon series for a new ministry season, its not a theme or a slogan that I've cooked up to rally you to a cause or motivate you to discipleship.

No, its literally what the Lord said in response to my question – what do you want me to tell them? Follow me. Just as Jesus first spoke those words some two thousand years ago to Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John He repeats them to us today, Follow me.

It's amazing the impact those two words can have when they are spoken to us isn't it?

Follow me... Are you talking to me?? You want me to follow you? You mean like now? Like get up and go with you?

Follow me... But I'm kind of busy right now, worshiping you actually... oh after the service?? Um can I just stay for the pot-luck first? Actually, how long do you want me to follow you? Is this just for this afternoon? I have to be back home for supper and get ready for work tomorrow. Follow me...

Brothers and sisters, how do you want to respond when you hear those words? Does your heart skip a beat at being called to join the Lord in something He is doing? Do you feel a bit defensive and called out, thinking am I not already following? Do you shrink back in fear for what it might require of you, or for lack of ability, or just plain old stubborn sinful resistance?

Or, do you want, need... a bit more information, some context and then you will be able to determine how you respond.

Follow me.

Brothers and sisters, these are two very impactful words which leave little doubt as to what is being asked of us, but at the same time, without a bit of context it's a bit unclear as to what is being asked of us.

However, the good news is that the Lord has already given us some context when He first spoke these words in calling the disciples. So, let us take a closer look at the scripture passage in the gospel of Mark, to look at the contexts which this calling occurs in, and receive the clarity that can help us respond to follow Jesus.

Now I say contexts because there are four of them that we need to pay attention to. There's the Geographical context, the Covenant context, the Kairos context and the Scriptural context.

The geographical context is somewhat obvious as vs. 14 states that Jesus went into Galilee and in vs. 16 He is walking

alongside the sea of Galilee. But we are generally unaware that Galilee was not an idyllic, peaceful, rustically charming pastoral countryside with a really nice lake.

It was actually a bustling, multicultural, commercial region that was a bit of a crossroads for trade, politics and diplomacy – and while it was not as prominent as Judea and Jerusalem in Jewish life, it still had all the social tension and unrest and political intrigue that comes with being a cosmopolitan region.

It may be somewhat comparable to Alberta. We're not the capital of Canada, we're not even the region most people think about in regards to Canada. When you see pictures of "Alberta" it's a picture of Lake Louise – but in fact we are a bustling cosmopolitan province of significant international economic and political importance.

And a reference to Galilee would also be a reference to its ruler, King Herod Antipas – who was responsible for having John the Baptist imprisoned. And with John's ministry

concluded the stage is set for Jesus to come forward and begin His ministry.

And that segues into the next context, the Covenant context. It's not as obvious but Jesus tips us off to it by using such phrases as "*the Kingdom of God*" and "*fishers of men*."

Now there are all sorts of references in the Old Testament about the Covenant relationship that God has with the people of Israel and how they are to be a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation (Isaiah 61:6; Exodus 19:6) and how God established David's house as everlasting Kings over Israel as part of that Covenant – so we can certainly make the Covenant connection from the term Kingdom.

But the most obvious connection comes to us from the prophet Daniel 2:44 "*In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.*"

Now you may remember that Daniel came to prominence as a prophet for God's people when they had been sent into exile in Babylon as a consequence for their covenant unfaithfulness to God.

But during the exile God revealed to Daniel that this punishment was temporary and that after it was finished a remnant of Israel would return to the land God had given them. But returning to the land would foreshadow the coming of even greater Covenant promises – things like an everlasting kingdom of God.

And we know Jesus wanted to draw on this covenant Kingdom connection from the prophet Daniel because throughout the gospel of Mark, and all the other gospels, Jesus constantly identifies Himself as “the Son of Man” a messianic term that is unique to the book of Daniel.

Now speaking of Daniel and the Babylonian exile of the nation of Israel, you probably weren't aware that when Jesus used the term “fishers of men” he wasn't just being clever because

He was calling some fishermen to be his disciples, rather He was being clever in making a reference to what fishing for men had previously meant in the Old Testament.

There's a few references in the prophets where God speaks about fishing for men and it typically has to do with catching those who are due for His judgement.

And the scripture passage we read today from Habakkuk speaks metaphorically about how the people of the world are like the fish in the sea, and these people are being plundered by a enemy fisherman who pulls them up in his net and takes them as his spoils and Habakkuk ends by asking God if God will allow this enemy to continue to plunder the fish in the sea with impunity.

And if you were to read the rest of Habakkuk you would discover that God is telling Habakkuk that He is going to send the Babylonians to capture many nations, and He will even allow them to capture Israel and take them into exile because of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness, and what we read is

Habakkuk's response to this news wondering how long will God allow Babylon to carry on like this – fishing for men, plundering Isreal and what this means for God's covenant promises to Isreal?

So, its no coincidence that the gospel of John present's Jesus starting His Kingdom ministry by walking along the Sea, in a region that is bustling with multi-cultural activity of different nations, and when He calls His disciples, He makes this reference to becoming fishers of men and we can infer that this is part of God bringing about a deeper fulfillment of His covenant intentions, that through Isreal, Jesus... He would bless All nations – in this case by fishing them out of the enemy's net with his own fisherman.

It's all part of the covenant context in this passage.

Which brings us to the Kairos context of this passage. Kairos is the Greek word for time, but it's a particular, specific word that designates a time that is just the right time, the

opportune time. It's not Chronos time – from which we get our time words chronology and chronological.

I hinted at this before when I said that John's imprisonment sets the stage to Jesus for start His ministry announcing; the Kingdom of God is near.

It's not a chronological development that leads to Jesus beginning His ministry – it's a Kairos development, it's the right time, it's the opportune time, it is the appointed time – John's ministry is finished, Jesus ministry must begin.

So at this appointed time where the Kingdom has drawn near Jesus walks along the sea of Galilee and encounters Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John and it is exactly the right time for them to hear Jesus' words – follow me! That's the Kairos context.

And lastly there's the scriptural context. Did you know that Mark and Matthew are the only gospels to record Jesus calling these disciples by saying "follow me"? And while they have

identical accounts for the calling these disciples, Matthew's gospel adds in a bit more detail about Jesus beginning His ministry.

The gospel of Luke recounts this event with all the details about Jesus getting into the boat with Simon and teaching the crowds and then telling Simon to throw his net on the other side of the boat and they pull in a huge catch...

While the gospel of John tells how Andrew was initially one of John the Baptist's disciples who started to follow Jesus and was responsible for convincing his brother Simon to follow him.

So, in the scriptural context Mark's account is sparse, straight to the point, it doesn't bother with the back story and details that the other gospels include but instead He focuses on the one thing Luke and John leave out – Jesus' command, Follow me! In Mark's gospel presentation this is all that matters, everything else – details, back story, reasons why disciples

were drawn to Jesus, etc... is all superfluous to Jesus' call... His command to these fishermen. Follow Me.

And its this scriptural context that first and foremost stands out as we read Jesus' words in Mark's gospel. Even if we are not well read in the other gospels – just from this text alone it is easy to see it is a bare bones presentation that highlights the command and the response.

Jesus says "follow me" and the disciples simply drop everything and follow Him. They leave their livelihood and their family business behind and follow Jesus.

So, let's take these contexts and see how they clarify Jesus' command to us and direct us to respond what Jesus is saying to us. Follow Me.

The scripture context clarifies this about how we view Jesus' authority as God to command us. He is the King of the Kingdom of God, and it matters not if you like it, or if you feel resentful, whether you are competent or not, whether you

have other significant responsibilities or obligations. Jesus' authority overrides all that. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

An example if you will. None of us here question if the police have the authority to pull us over on the road. When you see those lights come on – it doesn't matter how you feel about it, whether you are aware of what you did wrong or not, or whether you were on your way to an important meeting, or even whether you think they should have the authority or not... when those lights come in your mirror – you pull over. Period.

So, Jesus' words to us this morning are to establish that He has the authority in our lives – not us. He has the authority in His church – not us.

I don't know what issues are going on in your day to day lives which need that reminder, I trust the Holy Spirit will make that clear to you... But its an important reminder to us as Valleyview as we begin the process of leaving the PCC, that we

are doing so because Jesus calls us to follow Him. Its not a decision that we've made out of frustration or anger or self-righteous indignation, but we are responding in obedience after prayer and discernment to step out in faith and follow Jesus. Amen?

The Covenant context reminds us that following Jesus means we make the Kingdom of God the number one priority in every area of our lives. Jesus gets a bit more specific for us about this in Matt 6:33 *"But seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

So brothers and sisters, in your day to day lives – your work, your schooling, your recreation, your social media use, your dating and romantic or marriage relationships, your parenting, and any other category you can think of...

Does it line up with God's design and intentions from scripture and with Jesus' teachings, or does it require some changes so that you are following Jesus?

And this is not only true for each of us – but for all of us together as Christ’s Church as well.

Brothers and sisters, if the Church loses its ability to understand and discern God’s design and intentions for human life in the Kingdom and denies or twists what is revealed in scripture, such a church is not following Jesus.

Such a church is not fishing for men, such a church is leaving the nations captive in the net of the enemy. Assisting the enemy instead of seeking first the Kingdom.

It is breaking faith with our Lord, it is Covenant unfaithfulness every bit as egregious as Israel’s was. And lest we as a congregation succumb to that same temptation... our Lord says to us, Follow Me. Amen?

Because brothers and sisters it is the opportune time to do so. The Kairos context makes that clear to us and what we have been observing the Holy Spirit doing in our midst at Valleyview to bring about something new confirms that God is up to

something now... something that He wasn’t doing before... something that He has sovereignly decided to bring about at this time and as such it requires us to follow Him.

And that is why the command comes to us brothers and sisters. Follow Me. Because in a Kairos moment timing is of the essence. It’s a Kingdom moment, Jesus is up to something, the Holy Spirit is birthing something new, its happening now and now is the time to follow and be a part of it... or it will pass you by and you will miss it.

You don’t have time to wait and consider all your options, its not about determining if we have all the required resources, it’s definitely the wrong move to waiver because maybe something better might come along. This is a Kairos time for us at Valleyview and now Jesus comes to us and says... Follow Me. Amen?

And while the Holy Spirit is bringing about something new here, just as Jesus’ ministry was new in comparison to John’s ministry, there was also continuation. John’s ministry was to



announce Jesus and Jesus ministry was to fulfill God's Covenant promises – both continued God's overarching plan for completing the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption and New Creation.

So to for us at Valleyview, whatever shape this new thing takes for us in the coming year it will be a continuation of our calling to *“Go and make disciples of all nations.”* Fishing people out of the net of the enemy and bringing them into the Kingdom of God, in all areas of their lives.

Because the Geographical context into which we follow Jesus is very much the same as Galilee. Multicultural, multi-racial, cosmopolitan, full of political, economic, and ideological tension.

So Jesus' command to us means that we must come face to face with the reality that we must finally get serious about going out into this community where Jesus has placed us, in a way that transcends our individual day-to-day activities in this community.

Because following Jesus means the Lord will use us to speak those words *“Follow Me”* to whoever He is calling into the Kingdom.

Jesus is already out in our community – walking alongside the Sea, where the commerce and the trading and buying and selling is taking place... where the hockey and soccer games are taking place... where the lattes and Frappuccinos are being made... where the community associations and neighborhood gatherings are taking place.

Jesus is already out there in our community, walking alongside the Sea of humanity bringing the Kingdom of God near... So Valleyview, Follow Me. You will fish for men, women, young adults, children – all who are caught in the enemy's fishing net of lies and deceit and under the power of sin. Follow Me. Amen?

So brothers and sisters, with a bit of contexts surround those words the Lord is speaking to us this morning – how do you want to respond now when you hear Him say *“follow me”*?

The answer will be revealed in our actions in the coming days, weeks and months ahead – both in our daily lives and in our live together as Christ’s Church here at Valleyview.

I pray that our actions will show we submit to the authority of Jesus, for His Kingdom and Covenant purposes in this Kairos moment here and now on the West Side of Calgary, in Springbank Hill.

Valleyview – follow me. Amen? Let’s pray.