

I feel like I've been preaching here since I was young. But every time it's different, I still feel young. When God works with us in life, when we're young, arrogant; God uses our arrogance to teach us our foolishness when we follow our ways. Our ideas are not His ideas. Our thoughts, our timetables, not His thoughts and timing.

And knowing some of you for many years here and many of you are new and to see all the children here. Is a reminder how fleeting, short our life is. How short our time is here. You and I, this place is insignificant to the world, but hardly meaningless. Worth beyond measure. Only because your Lord says, **The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.** Now is His visitation, epiphany. Do not let these days, these times pass-by without being, living intentional, without receiving this Kingdom.

Your phone has apps to find places, for directions to get somewhere. I don't have much use for it. Men like me have an innate gift of direction. We don't have to ask for directions. I'm sure most men here have no use for those apps, rarely ever get lost.

Actually we're all pretty good at not finding our way, getting lost, or rather, readily follow ways that serve us best, follow the world, follow what feels good, follow what seems right, follow tempting ideas. The worse advice ever is to follow your heart, follow your dreams.

**Follow Me.** Here is discipleship, all of Christianity, the totality of the faith, wrapped up in a 2-word sentence. No enticements, no embellishments, no attempts to persuade, no rhetoric, no coffee and donuts, not even a single adjective or adverb; the subject only implied, just a verb, an object: **Follow Me.**

But where does He lead them? To persecution, mockery, death. He leads those disciples through the Promised Land occupied and defiled by Romans, under Pharisaic abuse, without a place to lay His Head in His Kingdom, until the king receives His crown on a cross and head rests in a tomb. **Follow Me.** Leads them to death, even their own death, all but one is martyred. He is born outside the Inn, dies outside the city. He is an outsider from start to finish. He brought nothing into this world. He left nothing behind –but His Word which endures forever. His Word which is folly to those following the world. His Word in power that you cannot comprehend, especially with water and bread and wine, His Word in power spoken to you that removes sins, makes you holy.

He has also called you. Perhaps not as a fisherman, although some of the young men here may very well be, but He gathers you fish.

Here's the surprise of the text. Look at this comfort for you Gentiles. He calls fisherman to be His disciples! And I know what you are thinking? That's not right, why isn't Jesus calling shepherds? Okay so maybe you weren't thinking that be you should've been. The Lord is always calling shepherds.

Noah was a shepherd, Abraham a shepherd; Isaac, Jacob, Moses a shepherd, David, Amos. Ezekiel 34 the Lord says the prophets are shepherds of His people, Jesus even calls Himself a shepherd. The Good Shepherd to call His sheep by name and lay down His life for them. So now this fisherman, fish things.

The sea and fish were signs of the Gentiles, even noted in the text. Those 2 tribes of Israel, Zebulun, Naphtali drew lots for where their tribes settle when they entered the promised land, they were way north and the first lands to be destroyed. They fell because they did not heed the Lord's call to repent. They gave lip service to God and lived like the world lives, accepted what the world accepts, not unlike people who call themselves Christians today. So now into these lands conquered, tainted by Gentiles will be restored, receiving the Gospel too, into all the seas and lands of Gentile fish. As you heard Isaiah tell you; you even sing it, **A light to the Gentiles and glory of His people Israel.**

You are a fish, the caught, drawn to Him is the nets He casts. You did not jump in the boat. You are caught by grace.

To follow Him, in places, in your holy vocations He has placed you. He called you by name. He gave you no choice. **You did not choose Me, I chose you... I draw those unto Myself.** That is not to say that you cannot now reject this grace. Like a caught fish jumping back into the sea. Indeed, Judas was called like Andrew and Matthew, but he threw his lot in with the devil and received the devil's reward. You had no choice in conversion. His Word made you what it said, but, nonetheless, His call is not of the Law. He does not coerce. You do now have a choice. You have, in fact, daily choices. Oh what we have followed in our choices.

**Repent. The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.** That's the summary of Christian preaching. John the Baptist, the prophets, Peter at Pentecost, Jesus first preaching, all **Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

No we'd all rather be told how good we are, like upbeat messages, not words of law to crush how you've followed your desires. **Repent**, he says. You and I have followed ways that lead to eternal death. Followed ways that hurt ourselves, hurt others; ways that don't care for others.

**Follow.** His Words, His teaching, His doctrine. And you can see that ways of the world, even things of Christendom have gone wrong, follow lies.

He says, **Repent.** He intends the whole life to be a life of repentance. A daily, continuous return to your baptism, repentance that old self in you is drown, dead. Yes, **Follow me**, He leads you to death, death of your sinful flesh, to His death, to rise with Him. **Follow Me**, the life you live in Him, He works in us by His precious Word and holy Sacraments. It welcomes you again to His table. The call, goes forth, the Word does its work. Again, again the call, goes out. It does what it says. His drawing you to Him, drawn to His gifts. **Follow Me, out of the darkness, shadow of death**; death in Him is no death at all; life that will not end, to bask in His kingdom today, for eternity. That is where He leads.