



Sunday, October 12, 2025

John 1:35-51

This week, I promise is the very last message in John chapter 1. It's the fourth and final and you've got to give me a little grace here because it's a long chapter - 51 verses - so four messages is absolutely warranted.

Over the past three weeks, we've watched John establish the sovereignty and victory of Jesus Christ in a beautiful and emphatic way. We've seen his deep love for Jesus, and how - even in telling Jesus' story - he weaves in a figure like John the Baptist for a moment to help us see the bigger picture. John the Baptist's whole purpose was to prepare the way so that we could see the sovereignty and victory of Jesus - the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We've also seen that God is a God who is both full of grace and full of truth. And in everything He does, He holds those two together perfectly - never compromising one for the other.

Last week, was especially important because as we walked through the preparatory nature of John the Baptist we took some time to focus on the theology of salvation. John made the statement that he would baptize in water but Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit.

What John was doing was pointing ahead - to the time when Jesus would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, indwelling and empowering those who believe in Him.

And for those of us living on the other side of history, we know exactly what he was referring to: Acts 2. The day of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit descended like tongues of fire, a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and a moment when the disciples began to speak the gospel in languages they had never learned.

From that moment forward, we see a clear pattern throughout the book of Acts - that upon salvation, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within the believer. And because of His presence within us,

we now have access to His power - the power to live out the life that God has called us to.

The tension, though, is this: How much of our will are we truly willing to yield to Him?

Yes, as believers, we have all of the Holy Spirit within us, but the question remains: does the Holy Spirit have all of us? This is a question that we all need to look deep into our souls and ask. And it's not just a one-time question. It's a question that might have different answers in different seasons - which is why it's worth asking again and again and again.

Now today, as we step into the last and final section of John 1, we're going to be taking a look now at the disciples of Jesus. You see, the book of John is different from other Gospels - we don't really see Mary and Joseph, or Bethlehem and the stable. John just moves us right into Jesus and now - as we will see - the life of the disciples: namely Andrew, Simon, Philip and Nathanael.

John 1:35-51

'35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"

They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and 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 And 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 is no deceit!”

48 Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

50 Jesus answered and said to 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, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Now, as we’ve already determined from the past three weeks of messages, John - the writer of this Gospel - is clearly intent on showing us the sovereignty of Jesus so that there is no doubt that He is the Messiah.

We see this clearly now in the first 3 verses of our reading:

John 1:35-37

’35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.’

I want you to see how incredibly powerful these three verses are. First, isn’t it interesting to note that John the Baptist had disciples? We often think of him as a Lone Ranger, but that’s not entirely accurate. What we see clearly here is that he has actually amassed quite a following and there are at least 2 disciples who are with him that day.

And from our text today, what we see taking place is the first major transition from John to Jesus. John is walking the streets with two of his disciples as he likely would have for many years now. He's built up a pretty big reputation in the area and whether liked or unliked, he carries a certain presence wherever he goes. Add to that the fact that he now has disciples of his own, and you can imagine the credibility and influence he must have carried in that area.

But this day is different. Now, as he walks that same familiar road, he looks up and sees Jesus coming toward him. And with boldness, authority, and absolute clarity, John declares, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' And immediately, as his two disciples hear this, they turn and follow Jesus.

Now, whether you realize it or not, this short scene is pivotal. It marks the beginning of the handoff - the shift from the forerunner to the Messiah. Everything that happens from this point on will flow out of that transition.

And I want you to notice that John was doing his job. Those two disciples wouldn't have known what to look for if John hadn't been teaching them to keep their eyes open for the coming Messiah. And the fact that they turned and followed Jesus shows us that John had made it abundantly clear that he, himself, was not the Messiah.

They did exactly what John had trained them to do. They dropped everything and followed Jesus. But in doing so, it meant they left John the Baptist behind.

Think about that for a moment. The ministry that John had spent his life working toward - building, shaping, expanding - is now slipping from his fingers. His following is shrinking, his platform is disappearing, his role is coming to an end.

And yet... John doesn't fight it.

Because John knows exactly who he is - and more importantly, who he isn't. He knows his role, and he doesn't try to steal Jesus'.

In fact, if we pop over for just a minute to chapter 3, we see John go over this with a little more detail:

John 3:28-30 (Message)

'28 You yourselves were there when I made it public that I was not the Messiah but simply the one

sent ahead of him to get things ready. The one who gets the bride is, by definition, the bridegroom. And the bridegroom's friend, his 'best man' - that's me - in place at his side where he can hear every word, is genuinely happy. How could he be jealous when he knows that the wedding is finished and the marriage is off to a good start? 29-30 "That's why my cup is running over. This is the assigned moment for him to move into the center, while I slip off to the sidelines.

There's a powerful lesson in humility right there and it all starts with knowing who you are in Christ Jesus.

I remember when I first got my start in ministry. One of the associate pastors at the church where I was serving pulled me aside and spoke into my life. I had asked him one day why he'd never put his name forward to become a senior pastor.

His response stuck with me - and I've never forgotten it. He said, 'Josh, I'm a number two. I'm not a number one.'

So you see, I always thought he was either too timid to step out, or the right opportunity hadn't come by or that he was possibly just too comfortable with his current role. But when he said that, I realized that he wasn't selling himself short - he was simply confident in his calling. He knew who he was in Christ, and just as importantly, he knew who he wasn't.

This is a massive message for the church today. Because you see, it goes back to Paul's teaching of the church as one body with many parts.

1 Corinthians 12:12-19

'For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?'

Not all can be lungs or hearts or brains, arms or legs, hands or feet. The church needs pinkies, big toes, knee caps, cartilage, tendons, veins.... Sure, these might not be the most upfront or glamorous positions, but they are actually what makes the church tick. Without these foundational positions, the church would not be able to function as it does.

Share story of bible college guy losing half of his big toe in a lawn-mower incident. That little half-inch piece of bone and flesh caused him a full year in rehab to learn how to walk again. That's how important even the smallest part can be.

And I know some of you must be thinking. Josh you're a pastor so it's easy for you to say this because you have a very public and upfront ministry so you have no idea what it feels like to be a big toe or a little finger. Granted, that may be true in a Kingsview Community Church context, but every year I go to a conference with other pastors, and I'm faced with the reality that there are many other pastors here who have mega churches, and many other leaders here who are district or national representatives. Some who are even nationwide or worldwide speakers. But me, I'm none of these things. I'm just the pastor of Kingsview Church.

If I'm not confident in the call and in the role that God has given me right here, right now then I can look at all of these other different people and the roles that God has given them and I can start to feel like what I'm doing isn't enough. Or that I'm not enough. If I'm not careful, comparison starts to creep in. I begin to measure success by someone else's assignment instead of my own obedience. And that my friends is a dangerous place to live - because the moment you start comparing your calling to someone else's, you stop celebrating what God has entrusted to you and you start to place all of your focus on things that aren't meant for you. So yeah, it happens to all of us.

But again, all of this helps us to understand just why John responded the way he did. Because his heart was set to building the kingdom of God by embracing the role that God had for him. He wasn't the point in his world, Jesus was.

So when John the Baptist emphatically says in John 3 that, 'I must decrease so that He may increase,' this shows us a heart that is set towards kingdom building not self-glorification. He is far more interested in building kingdoms instead of castles. And my hope and my prayer is that this is an attitude that continues to be prevalent in our very lives: that we must decrease so that He might increase.

Now, that's literally the first two verses and we've got the whole rest of the chapter left! But, what's

really interesting is that this posture of humility and surrender doesn't end with John the Baptist. It gets passed through to his disciples as they leave John to follow Jesus.

You see, they'd spent enough time with John to know what to do when the Lamb of God finally appeared - and so they followed. It wasn't even a question - it was an automatic response. But isn't that the way it's supposed to be? When you see the Messiah, the creator of the world, the Saviour of mankind, the Lover of your soul, what other viable response is there but to follow.

And as they do, almost immediately, they begin to learn from their new master as the very first thing that Jesus does is turn to them and ask a question:

'What do you want?' (v. 38)

Now up to this point, we've seen Jesus make statements and declarations, and we've seen His actions. But this is the very first time in John's Gospel that He asks a question. And I think that makes this moment significant. Because Jesus isn't asking for information - He's looking for a heart-response. What do you really want? What are you searching for? What's driving you?

And their response is beautiful in its simplicity:

'Rabbi, where are you staying?'

Now, this is interesting. Because this is likely not the response that I would have, if Jesus were to ask me the same question. I can think of a whole list of things to respond with before, 'Where are you staying?' Right?

But this one statement shows the purity of their hearts in that moment. Not because they're looking for an address, but because at the very core of their being, they just want to be where He is. Isn't that beautiful. Not a desire for position, power, or even platform. Just proximity. They just want to be where He is. They want to be near, close.

And Jesus' answer?

'Come and see.'

He doesn't give them an address, location, or even destination. He simply offers an invitation to walk with Him, spend time with Him, to journey with Him.

Because sometimes the destination is not the point with Jesus, but the journey is.

And this simple exchange shows us three things today about the call to discipleship that I'd like to share briefly:

The Call to Follow

As we will come to see throughout the New Testament, that phrase - 'Come and see' - is the heart-beat of Jesus' ministry. Wherever He went whether by invitation or simply presence, people followed Jesus. All throughout the gospels we see this time and time again - so much so, that there were even times when He had to get in a boat with His disciples and head out to open sea for a bit of a break. But ultimately, this is how Jesus lived and it's the same call for us today - Come and See. He doesn't demand perfection or instant understanding - just a willingness to journey with Him...to walk with Him.

Everything begins here. Once we believe in Jesus Christ, there's really only one response: to now follow Him. Following Jesus isn't about having all the answers though; it's about taking the next step toward Him. And faith doesn't always start with clarity. It often starts with curiosity.

Throughout Scripture we see people faced with that same choice - some who follow, and some who can't bring themselves to. The rich young ruler couldn't do it - he worshipped his wealth and wasn't willing to worship Jesus instead. Nicodemus struggled, but eventually came around and there were many, many others.

But these first disciples? The moment they saw Him - they dropped everything and followed. Why? Because when you truly see Jesus for who He is, following Him isn't a burden - it's a gift. And when you experience the life that this Gift really offers, you'll want not just to follow, but to tell others. Which is exactly what the disciples did next:

The Call to Bring Others

Verse 40 tells us that one of those two disciples that followed Jesus that day was Andrew. And what's the very first thing Andrew does?

He finds his brother Simon and says, 'We've found the Messiah!' And he brought him to Jesus.

I love that. The first act of a new disciple is to go find someone else. Notice that Andrew doesn't start a ministry, he doesn't write a book - he simply brings his brother to Jesus. And we never even hear Andrew preach a sermon or lead a crowd. But notice who he brings to Jesus in verse 42.

Simon-Peter.

Yep - that Peter. The same man who would later lead the early Church. That's the power of quiet faithfulness. When your heart is set on Jesus, you can't help but want others to experience Him too.

A few verses later, Philip does the same thing with Nathanael. Nathanael is skeptical at first, saying, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'

But notice Philip's response. He doesn't argue. He doesn't try to convince. He simply does exactly what Jesus did with him and offers the invitation:

'Come and see.'

That's the invitation of every believer. We don't have to explain everything - we just need to point people to Jesus.

I often think about the story of Billy Graham, one of the most well-known evangelists in the world. But do you know who first brought him to Jesus? Not another famous preacher. Not a seminary professor. It was a man named Albert McMakin - a farmer who simply cared enough to invite teenage Billy to a revival meeting back in 1934. Billy wasn't all that interested at first - in fact - the story goes that he only agreed to go because McMakin offered to let him drive his truck. But that night, something happened and Billy Graham encountered Jesus and surrendered his life to Him. And from that moment forward, the world would never be the same.

We're not all called to be Billy Graham. But we are all called to be like Albert McMakin - the person who simply says, 'Come and see.'

The Call to Be Known

When Nathanael finally meets Jesus, he's stunned. Jesus says, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.' And Nathanael blurts out, 'How do you know me?' And Jesus answers, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'

I love that moment. Because before Nathanael ever saw Jesus, Jesus saw him. Before he ever believed, Jesus already knew everything about him. All of his faults, failures, his questions and even his secret desires.

We don't know exactly what Nathanael was doing under that fig tree, but it must have been something deeply personal, because at the very mention of it, his heart melts and he switches from scepticism to worship, saying: 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!'

And somehow, this is true for us too. While you were sitting under your own 'fig tree,' Jesus knew you as well. He knew you before you ever showed up to church. Before you ever lifted your hands in worship or prayed your first prayer. He saw you. He knew you. And He called you by name.

Now, for some of us, that's a hard thing to wrap our minds around - the thought of Jesus knowing even the deep, dark recesses of our hearts. The things we've hidden from everyone else. That can feel exposing - even terrifying. However, Jesus' knowledge of us isn't meant to condemn us; it's meant to conform us. He already knows it all - and yet He still invites us to come and see because of His great love for you and me. Because once you taste and see that the Lord is good, everything else will pale in comparison.

So as we conclude this morning, dear church, maybe the question isn't so much, Will you follow? Will you bring others along? Will you make yourself known?

Those are all good questions to ask. But the question that Jesus asks is even more significant - and I think it's one we should ask ourselves too:

What do you want?

Honestly and truly - at the very depths of your soul - what is it that you desire?

Because it's highly likely that wherever your desire is, there also is your focus.

We give our attention to what we desire. We work toward what we long for. We give our best energy to it.

John the Baptist's deepest desire was to see the Kingdom of God come near, and he knew his role in preparing the soil. So he worked tirelessly to that end - making sure that everyone knew he wasn't the Messiah, but that Jesus was.

The disciples on the other hand desired to be with Jesus. And when they met Him, they immediately left everything and followed Him. And not only did they follow - they brought others along too. Because once you've encountered the Messiah firsthand, what other response is there but to follow... and to invite others to come and see?

Oh to be a people that are so desperate for His presence - that we just want to be with Him. And that everything would flow out of that.

Blessing

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lift up His countenance upon you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

Josh Hageman

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