

Not a Leader, Just Walking Buddies

Luke Bushman January 15th, John 1:35-42

To start our meditation today, I would like to reread the last seven verses of our Gospel text if that is okay.

35 The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. 36 As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, “Look! There is the Lamb of God!” 37 When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

38 Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them.

They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

39 “Come and see,” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. 41 Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”).

There are a couple of points in this passage that really stood out to me. For starters, John is not concerned with maintaining a large following. John knows that his role is to point people towards Jesus. When Jesus walks by he declares “Look! There is the Lamb of God”. Lamb of God is quite the claim to make on John’s part, it is not a metaphor that he concocts on the spot.

Earlier in the text, the day before, John makes this same claim about Jesus. This may be a reference to Jesus as the Passover Lamb, or the suffering servant prophesied in Isaiah. Upon repeating his claim from the previous day, John’s disciples immediately decide to follow Jesus. John seems unbothered, as he knows his role is to direct others to Christ. His eccentric lifestyle and bold teachings were never about inflating his ego, and getting attention. They were always about enriching others’ lives, and what can be more enriching than being free to walk with the Lamb of God.

When Jesus sees his new followers he asks them a beautiful question. What do you want?

It is an interesting question, and one I think we need to ask ourselves, and also ask, what do others want. When I decide to follow Jesus what am I looking for? Am I looking for rules? Am I looking for someone to judge me? Am I looking for leadership?

I think this is an important question, when people come searching for Jesus, what do they want? Can we as followers of Jesus, give them a taste of what they are looking for?

The two disciples answer “Rabbi, where are you staying”. They want to be with this person who they see as a teacher. They want to know what day to day life with Jesus is like.

Jesus’ response to this question? Come and see.

Jesus does not always give direct answers. Jesus invites them to find out for themselves. To walk alongside him, to see where he stays, how he lives, and how he has a lasting impact.

I think we see in this text that John and Jesus are not stuck to a top down leadership model. They walk alongside people, allowing them to freely come and go and explore life. I think that is what we want. We want someone to walk alongside us.

One thing my family has done for ages is our annual backpacking trip. We go almost every year, and go hiking in the mountains. We have been doing this since I was in around grade seven. When we were younger we were extremely dependent on my Dad to navigate the trails, prepare the food and set up camp. Nowadays we are all fairly capable of accomplishing the hike safely and efficiently without much leadership. Now we are just walking buddies on the trail. Sometimes a few of us will do some extra hikes after setting up camp while others lounge around. Sometimes we are spread out over several kilometers along the trail, as some groups speed ahead, and others take it slow. Sometimes you have four people around you while you walk, and other times, you are by yourself taking in creation.

I think this fluid group of walking buddies is what discipleship can look like. Jesus and his disciples certainly did a lot of walking during their time together.

When we walk through life together as a church community I think it is often like being walking buddies on a hiking trip. There is a group of people on a journey. Some are struggling, and need the people around them to be gentle, to walk slowly and encourage them. Sometimes you need a firecracker at the front, moving fast to the ultimate goal, so when the rest of us get there camp is already set up. Every single walking buddy on the trip carries some essential supplies for the journey. Who you walk with changes and your speed and motivation fluctuates, but you are on a journey nonetheless. It can be difficult, sometimes you and your walking buddies will argue, but the rewards of journeying together are amazing.

I hope we at OMC can be a good group of walking buddies. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, and inviting others to join us. Jesus invited the disciples to come and see because understanding Jesus means understanding a person. It is important to study scripture to learn about Jesus, but it is also important to get into the personhood of Jesus. Being around a group of people whose mission in life is to imitate Jesus, seems like a great way to better understand who Jesus is.

Let us move through life together; the highs and the lows; the fast times and the slow times; the exciting and the mundane. As we go through life I pray that we will model to each other and the world, what it looks like to live like Jesus.