

“Following Jesus”

There was a game we played when we were children; it was called “follow the leader”. The rule of the game is simple. An assigned guy does any action he or she wishes, says whatever words he or she likes; the rest of those participating in the game simply follow or obey. The one not able to follow or obey would be given a penalty. The thing is loyalty or obedience. I wonder if we can compare this way of obedience to our call as Christians. It is a children’s game, but did Jesus not say” Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

I came across a commentary on discipleship and following from a certain Baptist Minister named Shawn Thomas. I like his reflection. He devotes some thoughts on -what following does not mean:- a/ Following Jesus does not means limiting oneself to going to church and attending chosen activities that you like , and b/ Following Jesus is not like when you follow someone in Facebook or Twitter or social media and give him or her a like sign of a thumbs up to mean that that person has nice words to say, and you can quote Jesus when you talk about him.

Let us take a look at some verses of the passage to learn about our own calling. Having understood these verses, we can also deepen our commitment and loyalty to the Lord.

Here’s the thing: the ones Jesus called were ordinary guys, simple guys. They were called where they were, meaning: they were at-work, they were busy with their ordinary lives. They were not promoted to a higher class or level of their society when they were called. And they remained fishermen until after Jesus died and rose from the dead. In fact, one day, they were so discouraged that Peter said: “Let’s go back to fishing!” Jesus gave depth and quality to their lives ... from fishermen to fishers of men, as the gospel says. Which should drive home a point for us to learn. Being called does not entitle us to juicy positions and comfortable rewards. Service and greater responsibility remain the rewards of being called.

So for us today, what does it mean to be called, to be a disciple and to be a follower? Shawn Thomas continues his reflection.

“Are you becoming more like Him: more humble, more dependent upon Him for the direction of your life? Are you doing what Jesus would be doing in this world? Are you going where Jesus would be going? Listen: if you are not going where Jesus would be going in this world, and you are not doing what Jesus would be doing in this world, then in what sense can you really say that you are “following” Jesus?

He was all about His relationship with His heavenly Father. But His ministry here on earth was all about touching PEOPLE, in all kinds of ways and situations. Trying to understand sinners and giving them second chances. Looking for those set aside and neglected.”

In summary, the lessons are these. First - Following Jesus will lead you to minister to the people Jesus loves. Do you love the people he loved and ministered to?

And the second is tied up with the first: Do you and Jesus have the same style ... reaching out, compassion, kindness, not only towards those you like; even to those you do not like or who do not like you.

Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. Isn't this the legacy and last remembrance he left us? Our following Jesus is not a cheap kind of discipleship and following; it is a very very costly endeavor. It might even lead us to where we do not want to go! But we have no other way.