

SERMON

John 1:43-51

Wherever you Lead

Nunawading and Waverley, 14-1-20

Dear friends in Christ,

Follow me, Jesus said. How good are we at following? Probably better than we think. An example comes to mind from a Netflix series I am watching called the “Surgeon’s Cut”. The first episode focusses on Kyprios Nicolaides, a lovely Christian person who is a top ultrasound surgeon working on saving babies in the womb and is a pioneer in his field. He explained that while at university he was distracted by protests, marches, anti-Vietnam rallies and became disinterested in his medical studies. One day a new lecturer turned up and spoke about the new-fangled ultrasound, exploring the lives of babies in their mothers’ wombs. Nicolaides was completely hooked. From that first lecture he followed this teacher, desperate to find out all he could. Following is not too alien from us, after all.

Our Lord Jesus was so inspiring, had such a vision of his Father’s future and the coming kingdom, displayed such an innate sense of authority, people followed him. His presence, his gravitas was almost mesmerising. One day at Nazareth, he preached at the synagogue and his own townspeople became enraged. They dragged him from the hall and marched him to a cliff edge to throw him down. The gospel account records that he **walked through the crowd** and left. How could he do that? It was his spiritual power, his power over broken limbs, blinded eyes and demons and his power in his word, his teaching about grace that amazed and frightened people. He could move people to leave behind what they were doing, drop their nets, leave family and business and literally go on the road as **Philip and Nathaniel** did.

Sometimes we cry out for a leader. We want them in politics. We want the corporate tycoons to lead in philanthropic ventures. What about a leader who will end land clearing in Australia? On the mundane level, we need a leader to look up to and follow. Pastors work alone, though less so today. When I graduated in the 1980s, I was either going to sink or swim. I felt quite lonely, at times. When I was young and new at the job, I wanted a leader to show me the way. Today, we have mentors and coaches, and the departments of the church, such as Grow ministries.

There is support. I wonder if you have experienced that inner cry for a leader?

In your family, you are a leader and are saying, “follow me” for Luther said that parents are pastors and bishops. I think that if there is one strong Christian, a believer in the Lord who shows spiritual leadership, then other family members may respond. I am generalising and not everyone has the right personality to lead from the front. In the end, God’s holy word is the power but it takes leadership to testify to the word.

We hear Jesus invitation, **follow me**, and we reply, “wherever you lead”. That is the first thing. How daring will our following be? Could you be involved in overseas aid work, take up a role in serving the church, or being a witness to others? Later, Jesus would tell his disciples there would be a cross at the end of the road but initially they were not sure where following would lead to. Can we follow when we do not know how it will turn out, for example, in employing a Chinese evangelist or starting a church plant? Wherever you lead is how we are to respond to Jesus.

Here is a paradox: the more we say to our Lord, “wherever you lead”, the greater our ability to spiritually lead others. Leadership may be innate and dependent on personality to a point, as I mentioned before, but it can be learnt. When Jesus calls us, he will also train us.

He starts with knowing us, reading us like a book and working with all parts of us, weaknesses as well as strengths. He knew Nathaniel: **Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit**. The Lord Jesus knew that Nathaniel was not a crafty person but a tell-it-like-it-is kind of person. He would, then, take him and know how to use his gifts. We can trust the Lord to do that with us, too.

Discipling rests on Jesus knowing where we are, seeing us from a distance, knowing what is going on in our lives. He is so kind in this way. He said to Nathaniel that he saw him some kilometres away **sitting under a fig tree**. We are not alone when we follow him. Jesus can see you as a parent struggling with your children or as a Christian boss trying to be fair-minded with your employees. Let us trust him, then, and really believe he is involved in what we are doing for him as we follow.

There will be limits based on how our Father has created us but all of us can lead. Christian leadership is learnt from following our Lord Jesus, wherever he leads.