

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

26 January 2025

The Church's Witnessing

Text: "He said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men". *Matt. 4:19*

Have you spent time wondering why the men followed Jesus?

Had they already heard about him?

If not, why in the world would they leave everything and go with him?

Matthew is sitting at his job and Jesus comes by and says come, and he does.

Men are at work fishing and Jesus comes by and says come and they leave family and work and go with him.

Why?

Did Jesus look into their eyes and they saw, so they followed him?

We do not know why.

But they did go with him.

He called and they went.

He calls us also.

Are we willing to go and do what he wishes us to do?

Jesus just uses ten words to call his disciples.

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men".

This is his call to every Christian.

It is his constant command to his church.

It follows his first command in his earthly ministry, the command to repent.

Repentance is the first step in the Christian life, but it does not end here.

Next is the command to follow Christ and to witness to others.

The pronouns in our text are important: me, I, and you.

Jesus was promising that his person and power in us will result in something different in our lives and in the lives of others.

The verbs are extremely important too.

Follow is a plural verb.

Christ is calling all of us to follow him.

It is a decisive action.

Make means that Christ in us does mighty things through us.

Christ makes us soul-winners.

Soul-winners are made, not born.

The key is to follow Christ.

Following Christ precedes fishing for men.

The exciting reality is that every one of us can see this fulfilled in our lives.

The church's witnessing involves four things.

A life vision.

Having a life vision means that we turn our life's direction over to Jesus Christ.

It means that we think in terms of others, not ourselves.

It means that life is more than time; it is eternity.

It means following Christ and learning from him.

As we do, we learn several things.

We learn his vision as seen in *John 4:35*.

We learn his wisdom and ways as seen in *Matthew 5-7*.

We learn his spirit of compassion, faith, and obedience.

We learn his prayer power.
We learn his sacrifice. He went to the cross in death. He is the grain of wheat that fell into the ground.
We learn his victory in resurrection power.
We learn his power, the power of the Holy Spirit.
Spiritual responsibility.
Every Christian senses a personal responsibility for winning souls.
It is built-in and is prompted by the Holy Spirit.
Dr. C. E. Matthews tells of the time he taught intermediate boys in Sunday school.
At that time it had not occurred to him that he could win a lost soul.
He didn't even know who the lost in his class were.
One day a class member, a fourteen year old, was killed by lightning.
Dr. Matthews asked the boy's father, "Are you a Christian?" He replied, "Not a very good one." Then Matthews asked, "Was your son a Christian?" The question startled the father, and he answered, "I don't know. Do you know?"
Matthews was startled too and answered, "No I do not."
There they stood, neither knowing whether or not the boy was a Christian.
That experience brought C. E. Matthews to consider his spiritual responsibility.
There are six reasons why we know we are responsible.
The Old Testament says so in *Proverbs 11:30* and *Ezekiel 33:7-8*.
Christ said so.
We know it from the example of Christ.
We know from the examples of the New Testament Christians like Andrew, Philip and Paul.
We know because the cry from Hell begs us to be responsible. *Luke 16:27-28*.
We know because the Heavenly Father rewards those who win souls like in *Daniel 12*, *Matt. 28* and *James 5*.
A dynamic spirit.
A spirit of commitment, as expressed by Jesus in his commitment to baptism.
He identified himself with sinful humans, to die, be buried, and rise from the dead.
A spirit of compassion.
In *Matthew 9:36-38*, Jesus saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion.
This charged his life and controlled him.
Compassion in us is God's love in us and through us.
A spirit of cleansing.
Jesus spent his entire ministry teaching, training, and exemplifying how the disciples were to live.
Then, on the last night before his crucifixion, he said to them, "You are clean".
Our spiritual lives are to be clean, with no unconfused sins.
Our personal relationships are to be clean.

Our attitudes and activities are to be clean from any negative spirit.
We can have power when we are clean.
A spirit of control.
This is not human control or mind control, but Holy Spirit control.
Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to empower us to witness.
We cannot be soul-winners without the work of the Holy Spirit, for he illumines the mind, stirs the heart, and moves the will of the unbeliever.
The Holy Spirit indwells our spirits, fills our soul, and controls our bodies if we allow him to do so.
A victorious personal witness.
Jesus Christ will make you a soul-winner.
He has made each of us one and is in us continually to do so.
Being able to witness the redeeming grace of God in Christ is a victory every Christian ought to know.

This is what the church needs today, to be witnessing by means of life and lips.
The church needs to reach inward and outward at the same time.
The words of Jesus are still real for us today.
If we follow him, he will make us fishers of people.
Will you commit yourself to him and to that goal?
That is continuing the work of Christ today.
That is being God's person in Christ today.
That is bringing His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven today.
That is being Christ-like.
That is fulfilling our mission to the world.
And that will bring heaven to earth and His kingdom into our realm.
And fulfill the words we speak together each Sunday morning.
And He can do it for He is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever.