

# "Peter's Legacy: Invitation"

Mark 1:14-20

A Sermon by Dr. Jim Davis

First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

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Last week we started looking at the story of another life. All this year that's what we're doing. Looking at the legacy left by some of the men and women whose stories we find in the Scriptures. Trying to learn lessons about how to lead a missional life.

So far this year, we've looked at the life of Abraham, the life of Jesus, and the life of Esther. And last week we took our first glance at Peter's life and the invitation that came to him from Christ.

"Follow me," Jesus said to Peter. "And I'll make you become a fisherman for men and women." And as we took time to reflect on it, we focused our attention on the fact that God's invitation to us is always to let him make us become something we could never be by ourselves.

For the vision we have for our own lives is always limited. But God's vision for us is limitless for God sees more than we do. He sees not only the past and the present of our lives. He sees the future too. He sees what we can become. So he invites us to follow Him, to partner with Him, to let Him be at work in our lives so they can become more than we could ever make them by ourselves.

That's what Jesus invited Peter to let Him do. He wanted to make Peter's life more than the life of a fisherman. He wanted to make Peter's life more than a daily routine. He wanted to give it a bigger purpose than the profit he could make and the personal satisfaction he could get from a "good day's catch."

For when Jesus looked at Peter that morning as he walked beside the Sea of Galilee he saw not only the outside of Peter's life, he saw the inside too. He saw Peter's heart. And I believe that when Jesus looked at Peter's heart, he saw a heart he knew he could work with. I believe Jesus saw in Peter's heart a desire to be part of God's kingdom, God's mission, God's purpose. So Jesus did with Peter what God did with Abraham and with Esther. Jesus called Peter to follow Him.

You see that's always the first step. For just as we've seen already this year in the lives of Abraham and Esther, and as we'll continue to see in the story of other lives from the Bible,

a missional life always starts the same way. It starts when a man or a woman listens to God's invitation. And the invitation's always the same. It's an invitation to follow.

"Follow me," God told Abram. "Follow me from the land you know and the people you know to a land I'll show to you. And I'll bless you and make your family a great nation." And that's what God did. And Abram's life was changed.

"Follow me," God told Esther. "I've put you in a position for such a time as this. You can make a difference in the life of your nation." And with God's help that's exactly what Esther does.

"Follow me," Jesus told Peter. "I'll make you become a man who catches people." And on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of God filled Peter, that's just what happened

But it never would have happened, for Peter, or Esther, or Abraham if they hadn't listened to God's invitation to them. Because leading a missional life always starts with an invitation, God's invitation. And the invitation is always the same.

"Follow me," God says. "Follow me out of the life you've been living, on your own, for yourself. Follow me and I'll make your life more than what it is now. I'll make it become a life that makes a difference, a life that leaves a legacy; a missional life. And wherever you find someone living that kind of a life in Scripture you'll always find it starts with an invitation.

But it can't continue without an inspiration and the inspiration comes from the Holy Spirit. John Phillips knows. He was born in England in 1906. He went to school in Surrey, and college in Cambridge. He was ordained to the ministry and twelve years later in the middle of World War II, he was serving a Church in London when he heard an invitation from God, an invitation to begin paraphrasing the Bible.

He started small. Over the course of a month he paraphrased Paul's Letter to the Colossians during the nights he spent in a bomb shelter. As he worked, he often repeated to himself the verse that Paul wrote to Timothy, the verse that says that "all Scripture is inspired," and he prayed for the same Spirit to inspire his paraphrase. And when he took the words he wrote back with him into his preaching and teaching, an amazing thing happened. People began to wake up to what God was saying to them. You could tell it was happening by the looks on their faces.

One of the books he paraphrased was the Book of Acts. He later said it was one of his favorites. He loved the fact that it highlighted the Holy Spirit and the way the Spirit

transformed the lives of ordinary people. Every time he told his congregation, "Every time we say 'I believe in the Holy Spirit,' we mean that we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter a human personality and change it."

How does God make my life or your life become something more than it is now? How does He take an ordinary life and turn it into a missional life? It happens first by invitation. God invites us to partner with Him. He invites us to do something. He invites us to follow Him. That's the first step.

Then comes the second step. And it happens by inspiration. For the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is what lets us do what God's asked us to do in God's way. Jesus invited his disciples to become witnesses to Him in Jerusalem. Then he told them to wait for the Holy Spirit. And this morning we read again of how the Holy Spirit entered into them, inspired them to speak and inspired Peter to remember the prophecy of the Old Testament and see how it was being fulfilled.

The story of what happened to Peter and the other disciples on the Day of Pentecost is a spectacular story. But sometimes, because it's so spectacular, we forget what it's designed to teach us. You see I believe what the story of Pentecost is truly meant to teach us is this. God's desire is to make our lives something more than they have been or what they are. And to do that, God is willing not only to invite us to lead a new kind of life. God is willing to give us the inspiration and the power we need to live that life.

And because that's the lesson I believe the story of Pentecost is really pointing out to us, I love the story I want to tell you now. It comes from Kevin Miller. He's a preacher and one of the editors of a magazine called *Christianity Today*. So lean back a moment and listen to his story.

"When I was a kid growing up," he says, "Saturdays were for projects. Often my dad would say to me, 'C'mon kid.' I'd hop in the station wagon, and we'd drive down the street to Harold's Hardware Store. It had an old wood door, painted white, except where the paint was worn off near the handle.

And after you walked through the door, you felt like you could hardly move. The aisles were narrow. The shelves were filled. Stuff was even hanging from the ceiling! And I'd think, "*No way my dad is going to find anything in here.*"

But then out from behind a counter would come a man named Harold. "Can I help you?" he'd say. And my dad would answer something like, "Yes, I want to hang a light by my front door." And Harold would say, "Well then," and he'd turn around and start walking.

He'd walk down an aisle, reach his hand up on a shelf and rummage around till he found what he was looking for. Then he'd say, "you want to use this. Your wall at home's brick, isn't it?" (And even though our town was small, I was impressed Harold knew that, Kevin says). Anyway, my dad would nod and Harold would say, "Well, to run a conduit, you'll want a masonry drill bit at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch."

And Harold would pull a big flat carpenter's pencil off his ear, get out a little piece of paper and sketch it all out for us. "The conduit goes here ... and make sure you don't mount the light too close to the soffit."

Today, says Kevin, when I have a project to do on a Saturday, I head to Home Depot. Unlike the Hardware Store I went to with my dad when I was growing up, inside, the Home Depot's huge. The ceilings are 30 feet high. And Home Depot has at least twenty times the inventory of the Hardware Store. It all looks great under bright, argon lights.

The only problem is at Home Depot, when I walk through the door I'm mostly on my own. And yes, there's a guy in an orange apron I could talk to if I wanted to. But today if you do that, you always feel like you should have been smart enough to find out the answer for yourself.

Then Kevin says something occurred to him recently. "I realized," he says, "that most of the people I know who are trying to live missional lives are trying to do it as if they were walking through a self-serve home improvement store like Home Depot. They feel like they're supposed to be able to figure out what they need, to do what they hear God asking them to do, all by themselves.

"But the Scriptures," Kevin says "tell us that living a missional life is supposed to be a lot more like a trip to the Hardware Store instead of a trip to Home Depot. They tell us that instead of relying on our own wisdom and strength to do what we hear God asking us to do we need to rely on the help, not of a person whose name is Harold, but on the help of a person named the Holy Spirit. And if we learn how to do that, as the first Christians did, time after time, we'll find that the Holy Spirit has the wisdom we need, the tools we need, the gifts we need, the plan we need to do the work that God asks us to do.

So remember this pattern my friends because it's the pattern you need to follow to do what God asks you to do. And Peter and the first disciples discovered the pattern and we can too. When God calls you to do something, don't try and do it on your own. Leading a missional life is not a do-it-yourself project!

Wait for the help of the Holy Spirit. And remember, the invitation of God in your life is always meant to be followed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that takes the task that God calls you to do and shows you how to do it.

Let's pray ...