

Follow Me the Souce of True Joy

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes that true joy is found in fully surrendering to Jesus as both Savior and Lord.

Duration: 46:18

Scripture: Matthew 4:19-20, Matthew 11:28, John 3:30, Romans 13:12

Topics: "Following Jesus", "True Joy"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of following Jesus wholeheartedly, emphasizing the need to surrender all aspects of our lives to Him. It challenges the audience to redefine success based on God's standards, highlighting the joy that comes from being in a right relationship with God through repentance and renewal. The message underscores the urgency of immediately responding to Jesus' call to follow Him, redefining our priorities and ambitions to align with His will.

Transcript

The book of Matthew, we're going verse by verse through chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, chapter four. And the topic tonight is follow me the true source of joy. And at this point, I want to recall our mission statement in Matthew and listen to this carefully.

My goal is to bring centrality and relevance to Jesus's words, to understand theology in a deep yet impacting way into compare and contrast biblical truth with air to allow the power of the gospel to truly shape and challenge hearts so that deep, meaningful change takes place to magnify the message. And that's my goal is to pull from Matthew some relevance for us today. But before I do that, I want to make a correction in the bulletin.

You probably have seen it where it says baptismal service tonight, and that's next Saturday, the 29th. We already have three or four people who are going to be baptized next weekend. So if you want to see me after the service and we can schedule that as well.

So just a quick correction there. Everything else is in the bulletin. You know, and on this question, too, of joy and following Jesus and the true source of joy, why are so many people starved for joy in our nation today? Do you realize we live in the most blessed place on the planet? Abundant everything.

Yet suicide is rising. There's no joy. There's no peace.

Why is that? Where's that connection there? Shouldn't we be the happiest people on the planet? And what I want to talk about tonight is joy. I'm talking about true joy comes from three primary sources. And I'm going to talk about those.

These aren't topics that are new to this congregation. It seems like every time we get through Matthew, we keep hitting a lot of the same themes. But I think God really wants to bring that point home because not until it sticks in that it begins to take root in our lives.

And when I'm talking about following me, where Jesus said, you know, the famous verse where Jesus said, follow me, I'll make you fishers of men. And it's about following him. But I want to do a little background on this whole topic.

And the older adults will probably recognize this. But a lot of the younger guys and gals won't. But in the 1980s and 90s, there was a big controversy over lordship salvation.

Have you ever heard that term? You'd have one side lordship salvation, the other side saying no lordship salvation. You know how I like to go sides and try to find the middle ground. But on this whole debate, there's books even written.

I have a few on both sides. In a nutshell, lordship salvation says Christ is both Savior and Lord. You can't just grab him a savior and maybe make him Lord someday.

So that was the big controversy and one of the lordship salvation, the what I would call the non lordship salvation, those who say you can know Jesus as Savior, but you don't have to know him as Lord. Here are a few points that I pulled from the resources. Saving faith, faith that saves you is giving credence to the truth of the gospel.

That's all it is saying. If you if you give credence to the truth of the gospel, yes, I believe what you're saying, Shane, is true. You're saved.

Jesus doesn't have to be Lord. There doesn't have to be any fruit to there as long as I acknowledge that. And they also said that the news, just the news that Christ died for our sins is complete, is the complete gospel.

And they go on to say that disobedience and prolonged sin are no reason to doubt one's faith. So as you can imagine, this was a pretty heated debate. You know, you have John MacArthur on one side and other top names in the 80s and 90s on the other side.

And in the know the no lordship salvation, the side was saying, you know, you can know Christ as Savior, but not Lord. And that's hard for me, because as you read the Bible, it's not a divided savior. He's either he's either he's the Lord Jesus Christ, so he is both Savior and Lord.

However, the other side had the tendency to bring out the sledgehammer. Right. And you better bow to the lordship of Jesus and making this real dogmatic and angry God.

It's not an angry God. It's a loving God upset at sin, calling people to him. It's a plea.

It's a call. Come to me all your week and heavy laden and I will give you rest. So I'd like to find the middle ground again.

We don't want to beat people up at the same time. You cannot know Christ as Savior, but not Lord. Those are polar opposites.

He saved me, but he's not the Lord of my life. Actually, Jesus said many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we did all these things in your name. Depart from me, he will say, I never knew you.

And I gave this message a couple of weeks ago. Some of you were there at a high school graduation, Christian high school, and those kids were shocked when I talked about religion versus relationship. You can't ride your parents' coattails.

At some point, you're going to have to make a decision for Christ. You're 18, you're graduating. Everything you believe is going to be challenged to the core.

You better know him as Savior and Lord. And I could see in their face, oh, man, but that's the truth. He's not a divided Christ.

And what happens is when he's only Savior, people, it seems like there's what they call cheap grace. That's why people are there's rebellion, there's disobedience. And if there's no fruit, you have to question somebody's sincerity of their commitment, because the Bible is crystal clear.

If a person has Christ as Savior and Lord, it's one. It's all in the same. There is fruit.

You bear fruit might not be perfect fruit. It might not be mature fruit, but there's fruit there because why now the Holy Spirit is indwelling the person, the believer. So there should be fruit of the spirit there.

We can quench and greet the spirit of God. That's why God and I feel a calling on this church is to call people out of that that lukewarm state where they don't really know the passion and the power of God. So that was a big, big debate back then.

It really fits in with this, because when Jesus said, follow me, he meant follow me no matter what it takes. And what I've noticed in Christianity is that many of you have noticed this, too. The problem isn't that we raise our standard and miss it.

It's that we lower it and we hit it. Let's think that through for a minute. Following Christ, the problem is not that we raise our standard and we miss it.

It's that we lower it and we hit it right here. And so we walk around not knowing the power of God, not truly following him. We think that following him means coming to church on Saturday night, maybe reading a few Bible verses.

That's not following him. That's lip service. That's appeasement.

Well, I better do this. And so I want to talk to you now about following him. And the Bible use an interesting word here that we don't hear about a lot.

And it's word doulas. And the new king, actually, the King James in 1611 translated this word doulas slave to servant because of the mark on our nation's history with slavery and that practice brought over from from Great Britain. And they changed that word from slavery to servant.

Even the Geneva Bible that the reformers use and the pilgrims brought over turns that word doulas into servant. And it kind of loses the meaning, wouldn't you say? Because we are slaves of Christ. You were bought.

I was bought at a price. If we just take a minute and think about that. The son of God came from heaven, died for our sins, saved us from eternity, separated from God.

We are bought at a price. Lord, what do you want me to do? Show me, Lord, anything you want me to do. I will do it because you're either a slave to sin or you're a slave to Christ.

And too many people are caught in that pole that slave to sin, slave to sin is carrying me and carrying me, and they know nothing about being a slave to Christ. And I will submit to you tonight that that is where the true, true source of joy comes from. That and that alone, because then, Lord, it's your life, whatever you want, Lord, it's your life, you control me, you direct me.

And we don't know anything about that in America today, we get upset, there's not enough parking spots. If our plans don't go just right, the way I planned it doesn't go just right, what's going on here? And that's what we I think if we can get back to that, following him no matter what the cost, I want to read a person by the name of Sanctus real quick, I want to read his story because this is impactful. I had to reread a few times and it's not real good reading before you go to bed, but you know, it left a mark on me.

And I just want to talk about this because I like to read first century, second century, third century, fourth century Christianity. And of course, early church fathers, church history, what they actually went through. And we have no idea how blessed we are in this country to come and worship God.

We have all kinds of translations. We've got Android for this and apps for this. We've got everything.

We've got the Bible everywhere. We can pull it up here. These people would die for their faith.

They would die for the word of God. They had to cherish it. They had to hide it.

Let me read the story of this gentleman. It was the middle of the second century during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Christianity was illegal and believers throughout the Roman Empire faced the threat of imprisonment, torture or death.

Persecution was especially intense in southern Europe, where Sanctus, a deacon from Vienna, had been arrested and brought to trial. The young man was repeatedly told to renounce his faith that he professed, but his resolve was always I am a Christian. No matter what question he was asked, he always gave the same unchanging answer.

According to the ancient church historian Eusebius, Sanctus girded himself against his accusers with such a fierceness that he would not even tell his name or his nation or his city to which he belonged or whether he was free or bound as a slave, but answered in the Roman tongue, I am a Christian. When at last it became obvious that he would say nothing else, he was condemned to severe torture and public death in the amphitheater. On the day of his execution, he was forced to run the gauntlet subject to wild beasts and fastened to a chair of burning iron.

Throughout all of it, his accusers kept trying to break him, convinced that his resistance would crack under the pain of torment. But as Eusebius recounted, even thus, they did not hear a word from Sanctus except

the confession confession, which he had uttered from the beginning. His dying words told of an undying commitment.

His rally cry remained consistent throughout his entire trial. I am a Christian. I am a slave of Christ.

I mean, you read this and you go, wow. People aren't even willing to live for him now, how are they going to die for him someday? We can't even live for him in the blessed nation that we're in. Lord, what is what is your will for me? What is your life? And that's why I beat this topic of the surrendered life to death.

And I will continue to do it because then and only then do you realize and you feel that fully surrendered life, because Christ, now I'm yours. If my plans don't go as planned, I'm yours. If things aren't going the way I thought, I don't care.

I'm yours. I'm a slave. I'm bought at a price.

Lord, where will you take me? Where will you guide me? Where do you want me to live? Where do you want me to go? You show me that my life is yours. Do you know how much freedom that brings? It releases everything. But we're so worried about this and that and money and this and status and this and this and our job and this and this everything.

We're so worried about everything because we have plans. And if our plans don't work out, we get upset. Or is it just me? No.

OK, you guys get upset, too, and your plans don't go as planned. And it's hard for a type A personality who's very regimented, very disciplined. I have things in place.

My mom said I had a chore chart at five years old. You know, checking and when my plans don't go right. But I've learned, OK, Lord, this is your life.

Where do you want me? And then you don't get upset. Why? Because it's his it's his it's his account. It's his finances.

It's his church. It's his business. It's his life.

I am bought with the price. So if you understand what Dulas meant in the in the Greek there, it's a slave of Christ. And we've kind of lost that meaning.

You say, oh, Shane, I don't like this. Well, you should, because you're either a slave to sin or you're a slave to Christ. And what do we try to do right here? You know, it's uncomfortable in the middle.

I sure don't want to be a slave to sin, but I don't like this slave to Christ stuff either. That I'm some weird, radical Christian. Always read my Bible and always doing this and praying without ceasing.

Oh, I don't want that. Well, that's where true joy comes from. Then why are most people miserable? Why are most you do look at Barna research, Barna research, the recent polls showing why are more Christians depressed now than ever before? Just go on.

Look at their research. Look at their findings. Depression, antidepressant drugs, suicide.

There's no joy. There's there's there's arguing. There's contentions.

Why is that? If we found the true source of joy, why is that? It begs the question. We can't ignore it. And that's where we find ourselves today.

So verse actually chapter four, verse 12 in Matthew, chapter four, verse 12. Now, when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he departed to Galilee and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled, which is spoken by Isaiah, the prophet, saying the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. I need this to be challenging.

By the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And upon those who sat in the region in the shadow of death, the light has dawned. From that time, here's a word we talked about a few weeks ago that just seems to keep creeping up everywhere we go.

From that time, Jesus began to preach and to say, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. As I asked a few weeks ago, if you weren't here to listen to that message, why can Jesus talk about repentance? But if we do, we're labeled as legalistic and narrow minded and bigoted and all the mean church and all this Shane's a Godzilla preacher and just, you know, throwing a mean and hardcore repentance. Jesus says he gets it.

He gets all we love what Jesus said. We love that guy, even the world. Why? Because they just take glimpses of what Jesus said.

Turn the other cheek, love your enemy, all those things. So even Jesus himself is saying from that time, from the time of and remember what happened earlier. Jesus went down to the Jordan River.

John the Baptist said, well, well, well, hold on. I'm not going to baptize you. Jesus said, suffer it so that all righteousness might be fulfilled.

You need to baptize me. John the Baptist. Jesus went down into the river.

John baptized him. The heavens opened. The spirit of the Lord descended upon him.

The father spoke from heaven. This is my beloved son and whom I'm well pleased. Jesus was led into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted.

Then he comes out of that wilderness experience. The Bible says specifically and clearly that he was filled with the spirit of God. And that's when his ministry began right here.

So the day or the week or whatever, the hour his ministry begins, he starts saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That's a very healthy word. Repent, return to God.

That was Jesus, he said, for this purpose, I've been sent to preach repentance. But the pulpits are silent on this topic. Pretty much, and that's why we're not seeing, I believe, a lot of lives being changed.

So what can we pull from this? The first source, the first source is to understand joy versus happiness. Any ideas on what the difference is? Huge difference. Happiness.

Where does that word come from? The happenstance. What's happening to you? So I'm happy based on what's happening to me. When things are going good, I'm happy.

When things are not going good, I'm what? Sad, happenstance, joy. Whatever is happening now, of course, this doesn't mean that Lord put me in difficult situations, Lord, take all my money, Lord, have this happen to me. Oh, woes me.

It doesn't mean that, but it means that we can have tremendous joy knowing that all things work together for those who are called of God. All things work together. The joy that's there, the joy of being in a right relationship with God, the joy of seeing him someday, that joy of the spirit for life.

And I think a lot of people, myself included, we start to measure things by happiness. What's happening to me? I mean, when do you get in a bad mood? Usually when things aren't going your way. Or is that just me again? Let's have some honesty here.

I'm going to have to do teaching online next week. So we think about that. So the first thing is I want you to leave here tonight knowing that joy and happiness are not friends.

Because happiness, that's why you'll see top movie stars very happy when the new movie comes out and then they'll go into fits of depression for months until they get a new contract. Same thing with business owners. Books are up, incomes good, happy.

Here it comes. I'm really low. I'm really down.

I can't believe this is happening. So our life is like this, ups and downs, ups and downs based on what's happening to us. You want to read something interesting? Try this one.

Fox's Book of Martyrs. It's unbelievable what early Christians went through. They knew the joy of following their savior and see the joy they had.

You might say, oh, man, that guy being I couldn't have went through that, you know, it is hard to say. It's hard to read that go, oh, man, I'd have to have the grace of God because that would be challenging. But we have to understand that these were men and women filled with the spirit of God because they were surrendered to God.

And a new level of grace comes in, a new level of the spirit of life comes in as you submit and surrender to that. So everything we read about wasn't in their flesh. It was done in the spirit.

And that's the first thing there is dividing between joy and happiness. Because look at this, John the Baptist, Jesus says, was the greatest preacher who ever lived. The greatest man who ever lived was beheaded.

That's a bad day. That's why when John was in jail, what did he say? Are thou the Christ or shall we look for another? Because his circumstances begin to fuel that doubt. And that's what the enemy will use in you and in me a lot of times.

He'll use your circumstances to fuel your doubt. When many people I've seen that walk away from the faith or go into a backslidden state, it's often because of their circumstances were not going how they thought. We tell them on TV that Jesus will be your friend.

You'll get you'll own all this, you'll give you this and this and this. It's like my personal savior. I carry my pocket.

And when he doesn't deliver, they get upset. If they would just teach that you are a slave to Christ, he commands you, you don't command him. There's a big difference there.

Jesus isn't doing what I thought. No, whatever you want, Lord, you're the Lord of my life. And we have to understand that he controls circumstances and situations.

And he guides us. He opens one door and closes another. It's his life.

Lord, where do you want to take me? The greatest man, greatest preacher that ever lived, Jesus said there's no there had been nobody greater born of women than John the Baptist was beheaded. Let that sink in. I mean, that amazes me because here comes Jesus.

He's starting his ministry. You might say, hey, get me out of prison. What's going on here? Are thou the Christ or shall we look for another? Jesus said, you go tell John the lame are walking, the blind are seeing the deaf are made to hear again.

You tell John the Messiah is here. The Christ is here. And then they pulled him out off with his hand.

So we just have to get this this American Christianity mentality out of us. Do I pray for joy, peace and happiness? Absolutely. Do I want to raise my kids in a wonderful community and not have Christianity illegal? Absolutely.

There's some hardcore guys out there. So, yeah, bring the persecution on. Yeah, right.

Until you've got an AR 15 at your head saying denounce Christ or pull the trigger. Very easy to say now when we live in air conditioning places and it's not too, you know, we don't get in too much trouble with the media will will will murder you with their words. But other than that, we live in a very blessed place and we should be thankful for that.

So just think about that. John the Baptist beheaded. The next thing we pull from this is a prophetic accuracy that we talked about a few weeks ago.

Actually, probably a few months ago now. God confirms and convicts through his word. That's what we learned in the first opening chapters of Matthew, where Matthew said, this is that that was written.

The prophet Isaiah said the prophet Isaiah said this is what was written by the prophet Micah. This is what was written. So it's confirming God's word.

He's saying, listen, I've already told you this. So there was no excuses. There was no excuses for the people.

God will convict and he will confirm his word. If anyone is in here tonight or anybody hearing this message later, if you have questions about God, your Lord, I don't know. Show me.

I'm beginning to doubt your word. Look, show me. He loves those questions.

He'll confirm it. He's not up in heaven saying, well, too bad you're out of luck. He wants he's drawing close to those who want to seek him with all their heart.

He will confirm and convict that. And then and then this part I love. He talks about the people who said in darkness have seen a great light.

And upon those who sat in the region, the shadow of death was upon them. But they saw a great light. And I was reminded of John five.

While I'm in the world, I am the light of the world. Romans 13, 12. The night is nearly over.

The day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. So you'll see that contrasted, especially in the Gospel of John, light and darkness.

Light and darkness, right and wrong, good and truth. You know, I've talked about that many times, and I think we forget that the darkness has to bow to the light. They're not competing forces.

Sometimes we go into our kids room. You just open up the blinds and all that light just comes in. The darkness has to flee.

See, some of you need to know that it's not the Jesus and the devil going back and forth. He is the light of the world. Just turn it on.

Just turn on the switch. It darkness has to flee. That's when you start to start to talk about Jesus Christ.

Demons tremble. People get visibly upset. People that can be demonically, that Jesus talked about in his day, I believe it still happens today, that demonic oppression.

When you can say any other name you want, but when you pray, let me pray for you. Jesus Christ, I pray that they get upset. They will spit at you.

They will hit you. You'll hear they're screaming out. Why? Because it's the name of Christ.

It's that light shining into the darkness. I don't want that. We don't want that.

The person says, I need that. I need that. But that demonic influence pulls.

They don't want the name of Jesus Christ. I mean, it's so powerful that they have to bow the hell. It's not competing.

They can't say, well, too bad, too bad. Think about the gospels are so amazing. When Jesus would walk into a room, address a whole crowd of people, he never negotiated.

He didn't say, well, let's try that. He just said, out, out of that woman. Now go woman.

Now are loose from your infirmities. Go, you're loose. Go, the Legion.

We are Legion. We are demonic spirits in this man. We are Legion, for we are many.

Christ is out of that man. And then he was sitting clothed and in his right mind. Where does that power come from? The light of the gospel.

The darkness has to flee. That's why you'll go to third world countries. You go to some parts of Africa.

There's just this darkness over the whole area. That witchcraft and that voodoo and all that stuff. It's just darkness.

So Christ stepped into eternity, stepped from eternity and down to earth saying, I am the light of the world. Not I might be. I'm a portion of it.

I am the light of the world. That's powerful when you grasp that. Addiction, he's the light of the world.

Turning from God, you feel this turning from God. He's the light of the world. He brings peace and comfort.

That's what the light does. That's why I love John 3, 18 as well. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only son.

This is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but men love the darkness instead of the light because their deeds are evil. This is why they say get God's word out of everything.

We don't want to pray at city councils in the name of Jesus. We don't want God in our schools. We don't want God in our government.

We don't want God in our bedrooms. We want God out of here. He says, I cannot go.

I am the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth will not leave. This is the verdict.

I'm pronouncing verdict on you. Light has come into the world, but you love your darkness instead of the light because your deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

So that's the battle, you cry, that you're seeing in the media. All these things, the military, all these things, light and darkness, pushing, pushing, pushing, pushing. And that's why there's big debates.

Should Christians be in politics? Should Christians not be in politics? Well, what's the truth usually? Right in the middle, we can have lights in Hollywood. We can have lights in real estate. We can have lights in the medical field.

We can have lights in there, but you can't have light in the political arena? Why not? Be the light of the world wherever God has called you. Now, granted, the church isn't called to be a political movement. We're called to be a spiritual influence.

My goal is to motivate the congregation that some of you run for office. Some of you try to make different policies and procedures. And people say, well, Shane, you can't legislate morality.

Have you heard that? You can't legislate morality. Right, you can't change a person's heart by forcing a set of laws upon them, but you can restrain evil. Think about that.

You can restrain, you honor God by your laws. Your laws honor God or they don't. I mean, think about that.

If there's a new law that said five miles over the speed limit, you're going to jail for a year. How many of you might, they just take you right there and see you later. In a year, you can see your family.

You think we all might just drive a little slow? Oh, absolutely. Why? Why? The punishment. So you can't change a person's heart by lowering that speed limit or putting that law in there, but you just restrained a lot of speeders.

That's that restraining force. Now, is the hope in government and laws? Of course not, absolutely not. But we should have these in all areas of life.

And the Bible describes the intoxicating power of sin. Hear this, hear this loudly and hear this boldly because you'll need to hear this at some point. The Bible describes the intoxicating power of sin as deceptive and misleading.

We walk in darkness, stumbling, unable to see what we stumble over. The Bible talks about that. When we are in sin, besetting sin, I'm not talking about we all sin, we're sinners, but besetting sin that we just allow and we hang on to.

We're walking in darkness. We're tripping over things. We don't know, we don't even know.

That's why there's no peace and joy. That's why there's anger and hostility. Why? Because that light wants to shine.

And what are you doing? I'm going to hide it. What's that little kid's song? Hide it under a bush all night. I'm going to let it shine.

It's wonderful theology, even though it's a kid's song. To let that light of the gospel shine. That's how people are converted.

That's how people are changed. They see the light. There's something different about you.

There's a distinction. Where's that difference coming from? The light of the gospel, the light of the word. But we have to do things as well.

We have to renounce bad attitudes, negative attitudes. We have to renounce all these things that are pulling us away from God, besetting sin. All these things that are, what are they doing? They're quenching and grieving the spirit.

They're quenching that light. The light of the gospel that should be shining is being draped over by a big blanket. That's why he says, call those people forward.

Have that come. So what did Jesus say? Last sentence here I talked about. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And I just want to talk about this. And I'll go into the next point because we talked about a lot. But the second source of joy.

I've probably seen this more times than any other act that a person can do. There is more joy in heaven when one sinner repents, right? You've read the verse and Jesus talks about that. But there's also more joy on earth when one sinner repents or when a person repents and gets right with God.

That's why Jesus went preaching repentance because that's where true joy comes from. So once we understand joy versus happiness, then we say, okay, there's areas I need to work on. Repent and be converted or repent and turn to God.

And I can't believe I missed this for 12, 13 years. I've loved to study this topic. But as I was preparing this sermon, I just looked at the word repent.

You know, we always put re on something, right? Repent. To redo. I'm walking this way.

I'm repenting. What other words in the English language do we use? Renew. So if there's a broken relationship with God, he's saying repent and it will renew that.

What about refocus? Something's not focused, right? It'll refocus your life. What about rejuvenates? Many people are feeling dead, lethargic. Christ seems a mile away.

They don't know anything about what I'm talking about. That repentance rejuvenates that life, replenishes, rebuilds, reconnects, reinforces, and finally repairs and restores. So if there's something in our lives that we need to repent from, that's where true joy comes from.

I've talked to a lot of people who are holding in things and there's no peace and there's no joy. Why? Because they haven't repented from it and renewed and restored the relationship with God. When I'm not in right relationship with God, I'm not a happy camper.

Are you? When you're not in his word, when you're not in right relationship with God, not perfect relationship, but right relationship, you're not happy. Because joy is a byproduct of a right relationship with God. Just look at the book of Acts.

Then the disciples went out joyful that they'd suffered for the cause of Christ. Joy filled their hearts. Joy, joy, joy.

Why? Because they're in right relationship with God. We could preach on this topic for months. If I had a chance to go to every church, big church or little church in America, I'd preach on this topic right here.

I've got one thing to say to you tonight. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What? Me? Yeah.

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And people know they're either leaping for joy saying, Amen, preach it brother. They're saying, Oh my Lord, not me.

Because the word of God calls it out. I don't have to. That's what the word does.

And that's why I believe repentance is a mark of West Side Christian Fellowship. One of our goals, one of our core values is the desperate need for repentance. A voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

And I feel that that's one of the callings of this church is to help people, enable people in that area to call that prodigal home, to call that wayward daughter home, a voice crying in the wilderness, repent, return to God, repent, return to God. Why was he a voice, John the Baptist, crying in the wilderness? Same thing we see today. The media is not going to pick it up.

The Hollywood's not going to pick it up. It's crying in the wilderness. It's out crying to the people to turn back to God or turn to him, renew that relationship.

And then we go into verse 18. And Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen. And when he said to them, follow me and I will make you fishers of men, they immediately left their nets.

Look at that word, immediately left their nets right there and followed him, going on from there. He saw two brothers, James, the son of Zebedee and John, his brother, and the boat was Zebedee's father, Zebedee, their father, mending their nets. He called them and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

I believe that's a problem with many people today. God is calling them call. Would you come and follow me? There's no, not sure.

Let me go and do no. Immediately. There's immediacy.

There's urgency there. Because the more we contemplate it next week, turns into next month. The next month turns in the next year.

And you'll see a lot of old people that are very bitter at what could have been because they neglected this call of Christ saying now, follow me. But as a word of encouragement, also, it's never too late. No matter if you're eight or 88, that hope of God renewing and restoring.

He's saying, turn to me, return to me, return to me. God's saying that throughout his word, return to me, return to me, and I will return to you. So what can we glean from this? First, Jesus found them working.

Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew the strength. Sometimes we miss. We think that verse waiting upon the Lord.

Well, let me just sit right here and wait. Let me just sit and wait for God to move. Waiting is like a waiter, a waitress.

We're waiting upon the Lord. And as we're waiting upon him, doing things that honor him, serving him. That's when he opens doors.

That's when he makes his call certain. So that's what that scripture means. I'm waiting for the Lord.

Well, let's talk about this. What does follow me mean? Jesus says, follow me, follow me, follow me. And that's what I want to get to this third source in which we talk about often here as well.

We can't get away from this topic. It's the fully surrendered life in a nutshell. That's what follow me is.

It's that it's a fully surrendered life. You're either carnal or you're committed. See the difference? We're either carnal Christians or we're committed Christians.

The Bible doesn't give a lot of gray area there. And you know, just for, I just want to show you guys something. We read about the disciples often, right? Let me just read a few things.

What happened? Philip, you guys know Philip, right? God called Philip. You're chosen. You're going to be one of my disciples.

AD 54. He was scorched, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified. Matthew suffered martyrdom being slain with the halberd in the city.

Of Nebaha in AD 60. What about James? At the age of 94, he was beaten, stoned by the Jews, and finally had his brains dashed out with a Fuller's Club. What about Matthias? He was stoned at Jerusalem, then beheaded.

What about Andrew? Two ends of which he was, he was fixed to a cross. It's on like a, an X-shaped cross and crucified on a cross that was an X-shape. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria, ending his life under their merciless hands.

What about Peter? Jerome said that he was crucified with his head being down, his feet upward. Crucified upside down because it said, as he said, he's unworthy to be crucified after the same form and manner of his Lord. That's Lordship.

That's Lordship salvation. These men, these men, there's a lot of women in here too, died for the cause of Christ. You might say, wow, Shane, this is a heavy message.

I don't know if I want to do that. My point isn't, do you want to do that? My point is, the difference between being distant from God and knowing him and the power of his resurrection, the power of his suffering, is this one point that Jesus says, follow me. I will tell you, as God is my witness by the authority of God's word, that many, many, many Christians are not truly following him.

Following him doesn't mean we just come on Saturday and read the Bible now and then. Our whole life is affected by what we watch, what we listen to, who we associate with, our friends, everything, our whole lifestyle is a lifestyle of worship and following him. Not a perfect lifestyle, but a lifestyle that's going in the right direction.

And what happens, I think, is we need to remove the success syndrome. We need to remove the success syndrome. What happens is we have all these, most people lack joy because of their definition of success.

Here's where the rubber meets the road. Have you heard that before? How do we define success? Let's think about this. Is it any different for a national wide singer who has millions of CDs, well-known name, or somebody singing at their local church, ministering to dozens of people a week? Is there any difference? In God's eyes, no.

In the world's eyes, one is a success, the other is a failure. So we measure ourselves by those standards. Pastor, thousand people in his church or 150.

One's a success, the other is a failure, right? No, it's faithfulness. So the success syndrome of corporate America is caught up with the church. Stay-at-home mom, a failure.

Businesswoman, making lots of money, that's a success. You see how this works? A man who owns his own company, he's a millionaire by 35. Another guy, he's working, he's working hard till he's 65, 70.

One's a success, the other is a failure. That's what the world, you see the difference here? So what we do is we measure ourselves based on that, the success syndrome. And we don't see any of that in the Bible.

Follow me, follow me no matter where I take you, the hills and the valleys, the ups and the downs, the stairs up and the stairs down, no matter where I take you. And it's hard, we all have to fight that. I haven't mastered this area.

But that's where true joy comes from. It's that, it's that following after God. I like what Oswald Chamber said here in your bulletins.

I think we might even have it up here. God buries his men and women in the midst of paltry things. No monuments are erected to them.

They are ignored, not because they're unworthy, but because they are in a place where they cannot be seen. Let me read that again. God buries, think about this, me, you, all of us.

God will bury his men and women in the midst of paltry things. No monuments are erected to them. They are ignored, not because they are unworthy, but because they are at a place where they cannot be seen.

It's funny, I go to pastors conferences sometimes. You got pastors from San Diego, Orange County, Texas, and all over Alabama, you know, this big city like Palmdale, Lancaster. Isn't that this, you know, the worst place in LA County and all this, you know, child molestation, all this.

I'm like, it's where God's calling me. It's his life, not mine. You see how that works? It's success syndrome.

Oh, how are you stuck? Oh, yeah, well, you know, I want to walk out and have a beachfront property and see the view in the oceans. I mean, is that where joy is at? Really? Maybe nice for a vacation, but I think I would get pretty upset if that's not what God's called me to do. Because true joy is being in the center of God's will, no matter where that's at.

You can go through hell and high water and be joyful because you're in the center of God's will, no matter where you're at. And this is the marketing plan. We even talked about a few weeks ago.

Go back and listen to that message. The marketing of evil. The devil says, rush ahead.

This is your time. This is your spotlight. It's all about you.

Get noticed. Make a name for yourself. He must increase.

So I must increase. That's what the devil does. Push, push, push, push, make a name for yourself.

Open those doors. Force that open. Come on.

It's all about you. And this pride comes up. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

God says, no, just humbly submit to me and my will and I will guide you. I will direct you. You see the difference there? So that's one of the things we can pull from this.

The final thing to I'm getting ready to close. Following me when Jesus said, follow me. It redefines everything.

Think about this. My agenda is my goals. My ambitions.

My pursuits are all redirected. I might do the same things. If you enjoy golf, you enjoy fishing.

You I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about your whole life changes because now you're Christ focused and not self-focused. Because self-focus is going this way.

What brings more pleasure to me? What brings more money to me? What brings more comfort to me? How can I serve God and use the least amount of energy possible? Where the other side's Christ focus. Follow me. Let me guide you.

Let me direct you. And many of you, you know, when Jesus said all your weak and heavy laden, I will give you rest. Do you know that he cried that come to me? Come to me all your weak and heavy laden.

I will give you rest. He's speaking to the people, no microphones, no microphone. Do you think Jesus had his mild meek little voice on? He's saying come to me.

Come to me all your weak and heavy laden. I will give you rest. He knew he could deliver and that same promise is given us to us today.

No matter what we come in here with the bearing this burdens, bearing this guilt, bearing the shame, bearing this direction. I don't know where God's at. He just says come to me.

Come to me all your weak and heavy laden. I will give you rest. Not maybe not.

I'll think about it. Not. I'll try.

There is rest. There is complete rest in following Christ. Without a shadow of a doubt.

That's what everything hinges upon. So when Jesus says follow me, if you want a nutshell, I could sum the sermon up in a minute. Follow me is die to self.

Give me your life, your ambitions, your goals, your dreams, your finances. Give me everything. Let me guide you.

Spend time with me every day so I can speak to you and guide you for my word and fill you with my spirit. Then you're mine because you're bought at a price. You're do lost.

You're a slave. And that's that's where true joy is from many Christians hurt. There's contentions and there's arguing.

There's backbiting. There's bickering are why is that happening? Because plans are getting I didn't get my way. I didn't do this when you're a slave of Christ.

You're not really concerned with your way. Well, that didn't work out. Oh, well, God, it's your plan that I didn't get that promotion.

I thought, well, Lord, that's your plan. That didn't happen. Like I thought, well, Lord, it's your life.

You see how much joy is there when the opposite is true? That's where anger comes from. That's where fighting comes from and bickering. Giving him everything and I can't stress that enough.

If I could say my heart cry, my heart cry for everybody in this room, everybody, this church is to be desperate for more of God. That is a true heart cry of every believer is to be desperate for more of him. And it begins by following him unconditionally.

And it all begins right here. It's not rocket science. It's not deep theology.

It's a broken heart crying out to God and saying, Lord, I will follow you with all of my heart. I will stumble. I will fall.

But Lord, you hold me. You hold me with your strength. You guide me.

That's it. That's the the Spirit filled life. Let's pray.

I'll have the worship team come up as well. Lord, it's such a heavy message of following you, Lord, but we know that there's peace or there's light not at the end of the tunnel, but in the tunnel. Lord, we ask for your direction.

Lord, I just prayed tonight during worship. Lord, that you would just renew it and rejuvenate our spirits and our senses. Lord, I pray that you bring just healing to our body.

Or does we commit everything to you and we follow you unconditionally Lord that you will guide us. You will direct us. Lord, I just prayed though that tonight hearts would be open right now.

Lord, not wondering where we're going to eat. How quick can we get out of here? What our plans are for tonight? What's our busy schedule tomorrow? But Lord, it's all about you tonight as we worship you Lord begin to break hearts. I pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/INBgSLXFZhE.mp4>

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