

## John 1:36-41 Jan 19 2020

Ready. Set. *Action!* If you came upon a scene and you heard those words, what would your response be? Would your head make a swivel and your ears perk up, to see *what's happening?*

Action! That's what we see today. The Christian life is full of action. Are your eyes locked on here - are your ears dialed in - to catch the action? Ready? Set?

*"...they followed Jesus."* Those three words might not sound earth-shattering. But they are simply huge. *The timing* of them is huge. This action on the part of these two disciples comes right after the two are told who Jesus is. And please understand how much was communicated in the short message John the Baptizer told them. Jesus is the "Lamb of God" ... "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In the next scene when Andrew gets to his brother, he says exactly what they trusted based on this: this one, Jesus, is the promised Savior (that's what Andrew's words calling Jesus "the Messiah, the Christ" mean).

So having gained this knowledge, what action do they immediately take? (That's what we're noting.) "They followed Jesus." And just what opportunity were they hoping to gain with this? We get to listen in on the conversation where that is made clear.

Children, help us out here. Because this is certainly something with which you've got some experience.

So Jesus asked the two disciples: "What do you want?" You and I can hear what they wanted already from their very first word. They said, "Rabbi." And who remembers from earlier - what does "Rabbi" mean? "Teacher." I think all of you have some experience with teachers. You know what a teacher does for their work. What should you expect if you spend time with a teacher who is going about their work? What will their work day be filled with? They are going to be teaching. So the two disciples, in asking to spend the day with Jesus the "Teacher," were asking if it was ok to come and listen to Him, so that they could learn from Him.

And we want to follow their example. Keep listening as we hear that lesson.

As we return to the action of John ch.1, we hear: "They stayed with Him that day."

Now that is admittedly a little foreign to us. Adult education in our day, in our culture, doesn't look quite like that. You or I pull up a class on a laptop with videos or livestream. There are of course classes that are still in person as well. But even in that case it is for a set time, in a set space, like a classroom. So we have some pretty well established parameters. We're not going to be following around the teacher all day. That's not the norm. That might get called stalking.

But in Jesus' day, in Jewish culture, adult education meant literally going around with the teacher. You'd go where he was going, and you'd remain where he was staying. Think about this. It was an educational model/paradigm that had a much greater degree of "doing life together." It was certainly a very "relational" set up.

Just think of getting to be one of these two disciples: remaining with Jesus, getting to listen to Him, to hear His instruction and observe Him in action, learning throughout.

Now you and I don't have Jesus standing visibly in front of us. But we can still experience the same kind of very "relational" quality in our following of Jesus. In a sense the "doing life together" with Him - which is still a reality, and very important - is a bit easier logistically for us. I'm speaking of how...

Today God has given us His Word, right here - this book - the Bible in front of us. And when we are reading these words, Jesus is talking to us. Jesus is teaching us. Jesus is imparting important truth to us. He is informing and instructing our thinking and our actions. As we're spending time reading, as we're engaged in the activity of studying these words, as we're checking in here for advice and guidance and truth for whatever

new or repeating circumstances we run into... Jesus has the opportunity to direct us. He has the opportunity to correct us at the points we've fallen for error/lies or fallen into sinful behavior.

I hope this is all setting in. We started with "Ready, Set, Action!" And we took off on the trail of the disciples following Jesus. But slow down now. Take pause. And consider. The lesson for us today here is huge for discipleship, for the Christian lives we live. Are you locked on it yet? You know who Jesus is, and the activity that belongs hand-in-hand with such faith in Jesus is: going to Him, hearing Him. Follow the example of these two disciples in John ch.1. This is the same course of action that we are to take. And the "continuing"

Jesus has done everything to save us. For each of you who have been brought to faith in Jesus, you are fully forgiven and an heir of heaven. But please do not think in reply to this, "Well, then, I can just take life easy - this spiritual walk thing is all cake. I know Jesus takes away all my sin, and that's all I need to know." That's not only dangerous. It's deadly dangerous! How long will a faith in Jesus, left unstrengthened, last when an individual is bombarded with temptation, false ideas and the devil's constant assaults?

The Christian life (a Christian's days here on earth), by God's design, is marked by activity. The child of God seeks Jesus. Right here is the place He is always available, His Word is all prepared for our hearing and learning.

If this activity isn't happening, it's not that nothing is filling your life. If this time with Jesus isn't a daily activity, an ongoing activity throughout your life, what things are? Evaluate honestly then where other activities are too high a priority.

I want to challenge you: wherever you are at, get closer to Jesus (strengthened in your knowledge of Him, strengthened in your faith, better equipped for the challenges and opportunities ahead). Maybe that means for you, if you haven't been regular in weekly Bible Study, setting time aside each week for study time here with fellow Christians. Maybe you're already in that good habit. Wonderful. Maybe then you think about picking up a People's Bible like this from the shelf back there, and spending 10 or 20 added minutes a day in devoted instruction time in Jesus' classroom. Maybe that means, for you parents for your children's sake for this goal, taking an added 5 minutes to read a devotion with them each day and talk about God's truth. And if you're already doing that in the morning or at night, adding another opportunity to hear more from Jesus: reading a Psalm and discussing it. Adults, that's something you can do also. Do you already have a consistent devotion you read at night? Maybe it's from the Meditations devotional booklets. Maybe it's the wels.net daily devotion. If it's one of those, then what about adding the other one at another time during your day, like lunch break. I know this is a bit of a challenging application to make with such a large group where there is a wide range of what each of you is doing presently. So I'm asking you to ask yourself: what's your next step to learn more, to grow in your knowledge of Jesus' truth and love, to be prepared for whatever in life is thrown your way next - by way of challenge or opportunity?

Speaking of opportunity... we shouldn't miss in John ch.1: there is more action.

In fact, the journey of Christian discipleship, which we see here, is twofold: continued training, and a simultaneous activity of "show and tell." Look at the end of our Bible section today to see that. Andrew had only one day of training, one day of instruction at Jesus' feet. But look what he is off doing. He is telling. It's the first thing he does after learning about Jesus himself.

It's a lesson for us to take to heart. You don't have to know everything, you really have to know only one thing, to start this activity of show and tell. If you know Jesus, if you know he lived and died to save you and me, you know enough to start.

I chose the phrase "Show and tell" for this reason. Show and tell starts at a kindergarten level; it's an activity even younger than that can get into. Now that doesn't mean this activity needs to remain at that same level,

depth. As you get more mature in your faith, as you learn more, you have more to show - more knowledge to share. You can get into greater depth.

So this is a lifelong activity. You and I don't graduate out of this important discipleship activity. That's one side of the picture. And the other side is: even the person who is just a beginning Christian can be in on a foundational level of this. Show and tell can be as simple as: this is what I heard, here is what I know. Take a look. Come and see for yourself.

As a congregation, and individuals, this is the accompanying activity of discipleship that goes hand-in-hand with the regular studying / learning / treasuring of Jesus' word that we have as our ongoing joy.

And with those two fresh in our minds... There are two components of growth for our church that God desires, which correspond to the two of those activities. And there's an aspect of urgency for both parts of our discipleship that stands out when we consider the present circumstances in which we live.

Take an example of growth for a moment, to lead us to our final takeaway today. Think of something hundreds of years old at the time of Jesus' birth. And it is living still today. What might it be? "Some of today's giant sequoias had been climbing toward the sky for over a thousand years in North America's Sierra Nevada mountains." The secret to living so long, and growing so large? At least a part of it anyway. A giant sequoia's "skin" has two things going for it. It is chemically "supplemented." Tannin, and other extractives, protects the trees against rot-causing fungi and bacteria and against insects like wood-boring beetles. Additionally, the bark is thick? How thick? Got a guess? Up to 2 ft or 3 ft thick. And so fire rarely reaches the vascular cambium (that produces new cells). Strange as it might sound, in a fire that is not too hot - a situation where many other trees still come to a sad end - Giant sequoias thrive. The fire clears brush around the tree, and loosens soil, exposing minerals. Up in the crown of the tree, the fire's heat dries cones so that they crack open, letting the seeds fall down. And the resulting young seedlings have good conditions in which to grow.

So why have I told you about Giant Sequoias? That thick skin they possess is something we might strive to replicate. I'm sure you're not thinking of a 2 foot thick fiber suit to slip into. Eww! Ouch. Can you see where I'm headed yet? It is this: adding the right supplements for nourishing and bolstering our faith so that it is repellant and more resistant to spiritually-rot-causing sources and the fires that can attack our faith. That happens when we are active in hearing Jesus. Faith, and strengthening of faith, comes from hearing the message of Jesus. And that very same source is what equips and prepares us for telling others. May the Lord bless us, as individuals and as a congregation, with such growth. Amen.