

During this Easter Season, we are learning what it means to be Easter People. We invite you back each week to see what Christ calls us to be and to do as Easter People, and most specifically, what Christ is calling you to be and to do. Today, we will look at how Christ calls Easter People to be Followers. What does it mean to be a follower?

My best friend gave me this birthday card that says, “Jesus on Twitter.” Here is Jesus looking at his phone, and he says, “12 Followers so far. Sweet!” Being a follower today, in particular on social media, means something a little different. If we “follow” someone, we read their posts and keep up with the things going on in their lives. We’re interested in what they have to say. It can also get to an obsessive, stalking-kind of interest, if we’re not careful, but we’re engaged in what they are putting out into the world.

The disciples were followers of a different kind. They were literal, physical followers of Jesus. In the first century, it was an incredible honor for a rabbi to ask someone to follow him. When the disciple accepted the invitation, it was expected that the student would leave his family and job to be with the rabbi 24/7. They would live together, eat together, travel together. They did everything together -- learning, studying scripture, and serving. The disciples literally followed the rabbi everywhere he went.

Anne Cetas said, “The disciple’s calling, as described in early Jewish writings, was to ‘cover himself in the dust of the rabbi’s feet.’ He followed his rabbi so closely that he would ‘walk in his dust.’”<sup>1</sup> This gave the disciple unlimited access to the rabbi to ask questions and to watch how

the rabbi was living out the scriptures. A close relationship would form and ultimately, over time, the students would become like their rabbi.

As a rabbi, Jesus invited the twelve disciples to experience this kind of relationship with him. They left their jobs and their families and devoted every inch of their lives to building their relationship with their Teacher and learning his ways. They covered themselves in their rabbi’s dust.

In this scripture today, Jesus invites Simon Peter to “follow me” (v. 19b). Even though he had been following Christ for years, this was a new call. He would not follow Jesus in a literal, physical way. Jesus will no longer be with him in person, yet he tells Peter how to follow him without his physical presence.

To be a follower of the Risen Christ, Peter is to carry on Jesus’ work by feeding his lambs and tending his sheep. Jesus placed a new call on Peter’s life as a follower – to build his church. In this work, Peter will feed Christ’s lambs and tend his sheep. Christ calls us to do specific work that feeds and takes care of his sheep as well. It may be a new call – something you never thought of before. Where is God calling you to serve? What particular sheep is Jesus calling you to feed and take care of?

Being followers of the risen Christ doesn’t always mean we choose how or whom to serve. We aren’t always called to do something we like to do. There are moments when we take the initiative when we see a need, but being a true follower is being led by Jesus. There is risk in following Jesus. Jesus may lead us into risky situations where we are called to be vulnerable with others. And, most definitely, Jesus will call us to lay down our

---

<sup>1</sup> Anne Cetas. <https://odb.org/2005/09/13/walking-in-his-dust/>

lives for others. We saw this last Saturday when Lori Kaye jumped in front of her rabbi at the Chabad in Poway.

Jesus may not ask us to literally lay down our lives, but he will ask us to “put aside our own concerns and listen attentively to another person’s pain. He will call us to look not only to our interests but also to the interests of those around us. We lay down our lives when we go the extra mile to assist someone who is in desperate need, when we give significant time to be with another person experiencing difficulty, and when we risk public criticism for supporting a just but unpopular cause on behalf of others.”<sup>2</sup> We are called as Easter People to follow Christ in real, and often risky, ways.

As Easter People, as Followers of the Risen Christ, we must be Followers who live our lives as the hands and feet of Jesus. We are called to Follow Christ in a new and different way. Not a literal, physical following, not following on social media, but certainly we are to follow so closely that we cover ourselves in the dust of our master. We may have to risk everything we know and love to follow Jesus, but he leads us to a life filled with love. Jesus is leading you to feed and take care of his sheep. Will you follow him and serve out of love?

---

<sup>2</sup> Trevor Hudson, *Pauses for Pentecost*, 2017.