

Lake Cities Community Church
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August 9, 2009
Series: "On Your Mark"

"The Adventure of Following Jesus"
(Mark 10:32-45)

One of my favorite places at Disney's Magic Kingdom is Adventureland. It has rides such as the Jungle Cruise, Pirates of the Caribbean and the Swiss Family Treehouse. Adventureland celebrates the spirit of those who were willing to forsake comfort and to embark on dangerous adventures.

Also, while we were on our vacation I read "The Hobbit." And I learned that Hobbits do not like Adventures. Early in the book a hobbit named Bilbo Baggins meets an old wizard named Gandalf. Gandalf says to Baggins: "I am looking for someone to share in an adventure, and it's very difficult to find anyone." Baggins responds, "I should think so - in these parts! We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them... Bilbo had decided that the wizard was not quite his sort, and wanted him to go away. But the old man did not move. He stood leaning on his stick and gazing at the Hobbit without saying anything, till Bilbo got quite uncomfortable" (*The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien, p.5-6).

I think that most of us are like Hobbits. We prefer predictability, comfort and dinner to be on time. And then Jesus comes and says, "I'm looking for someone to go on an adventure with me. Are you willing?" And we squirm under his patient, long gaze being at the same time enchanted and terrified of the proposition - because adventures are exciting,

but they are also dangerous. Turn with me to Mark chapter 10, verses 32-45, and we consider together what it means to truly follow Jesus.

Following Jesus is Dangerous

In Disney World – though Adventureland is fun - there is no real danger. The pirates are fake, the crocodiles are made of fiberglass and the tree house has handrails! But following Jesus can lead you into real danger. Look at verse 32: [Mark 10:32a](#) They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful.

Picture with me Jesus out in front with the rest of 12 disciples and other followers lagging behind. And as they march along, the mood is dark, nerves are on the edge and emotions are high. There is something about Jesus' determination that has cast everyone into a state of amazement and fear. Our closing song today will be, "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus of Galilee." That is what they are doing – they are amazed and they are afraid. Maybe it is beginning to dawn on them that their lives are in danger. Or maybe Jesus' repetitious teaching on his own death is starting to sink in. And Jesus does not comfort them with the familiar "fear not." Just the opposite --

[Mark 10:32b](#) And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, [Mark 10:33](#) saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. [Mark 10:34](#) "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

If they had not realized it before it is now crystal clear that following Jesus is dangerous. This third passage includes the most detail: they will mock him, spit on him, scourge him and kill him. Yet Jesus does not run from the danger but walks steadily toward it. They have reason to be amazed and afraid. They are heading into the teeth of a storm.

Trevor, Hayden and I were at the Finding Nemo ride at Disney at 9am one morning. This is a very tame ride, and there were very few people around. But then right next to us an altercation erupted between an irate man and a cast member. They began yelling at one another and cursing to the point that I thought it would come to blows. And I thought – “What in the world could go so wrong at 9 in the morning the Finding Nemo ride?” But, my first reaction was to shepherd my children away from the danger. “Come on kids, this way – into the gift shop.” When it comes to danger, we tend follow the advice of Monty Python: “Run away! Run away!” But Jesus leads his followers into the danger he has just predicted.

That reminds me again of Bilbo: “Do we really have to go through it?” groaned the hobbit. Their path had led them to the dangerous and dark Mirkwood forest. “Yes, you do!” said the wizard, “if you want to get to the other side. You must either go through or give up your quest.” “No, I meant, is there no way around it?” asked Bilbo.

“There is,” responded Gandalf. “If you care to go 200 miles or so out of your way north, and twice that south. But you wouldn’t get a safe path even then. Before you could get round Mirkwood in the North, you would be right among the slopes of the Grey Mountain, and orcs of the worst description. Before you could get round it in the South, you would get into the land of the Necromancer; and even you, Bilbo, won’t need me to tell you tales that that black sorcerer. Stick to the forest-track, keep your spirits up, hope for the

best, and with a tremendous slice of luck you may come out one day..." "Good-bye! Be good, take care of yourselves - and DON'T LEAVE THE PATH!" (The Hobbit, p. 138)

One of the paradoxes of Christianity is that *the most dangerous path is the safest path, if God is leading the way*. God led David to Goliath. He led Daniel to the Lions. God led Joseph into prison and Gideon into battle. Moses faced the armies of Egypt and Elijah faced the prophets of Baal. Ruth chose to follow Naomi into poverty instead of living a life of comfort. Esther risked her life and position to stop a genocide.

Following Jesus is not for the faint of heart. But if, like Gandalf said, you stay on the path, you will be OK! Jesus often leads down difficult. Peter said, "You too have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:21).

The Disciples Response (35-41)

Jesus concludes his teaching and the disciples respond in verse 35-41. James and John take the initiative: [Mark 10:35](#) "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." [Mark 10:36](#) And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" [Mark 10:37](#) They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory."

Can you imagine a more inappropriate response to what Jesus has been teaching? It would be like you coming to me and pouring out your troubles, and me responding by saying, "That's too bad. Hey, can you get me tickets to the Cowboy's opening game? I heard you have connections." That I would use my relationship to try to secure benefit for me,

while you are suffering, is selfish and shallow! The only good thing from the disciple's comment is that it reflects they do believe that the Kingdom of God is coming – but there is still so much they do not understand. Jesus responds in verse 38:

Mark 10:38 "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" Mark 10:39 They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. Mark 10:40 "But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." Mark 10:41 Hearing *this*, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

Jesus teaches that not only will he suffer but they will too. The jealous disciples' pursuit of positions will soon be replaced by severe trials. They will drink the cup of suffering and be baptized with fire. Specifically, James will be captured by Herod, and taken to executioner where a great sword will separate his head from his body (Acts 12:2). John, tradition tells us, will be boiled in hot oil by the Roman government. But he is delivered by God and banished. Each of the remaining disciples, Judas aside, will face a horrible death because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Following Jesus is indeed a dangerous business.

Following Jesus requires sacrificial service (42-45)

Jesus now has one more thing to teach us about following Him. He picks up on the topic of the Kingdom of God and teaches his disciples that His Kingdom has very different values from the world.

Mark 10:42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. Mark 10:43 “But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; Mark 10:44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Most scholars see verse 45 as the key verse in the gospel. Mark presents Jesus as, first and foremost a servant. We have seen over the months that Mark is more interested in showing us what Jesus does, than in recording his teaching.

Jesus is pointing out that the world values positions of power, status and prestige but He values service and sacrifice for others. Pilate has power, Herod has great authority. Rome is in the driver’s seat. But the way of Christ is to serve and to suffer.

Tony Campolo makes a helpful distinction between power and authority. He argues that the world seeks power and power corrupts. But Christians seek moral authority which comes through sacrifice and service. He gives the example of Mother Teresa who years ago spoke against immorality at Harvard University. Any other speaker would have been booted off the stage. But, they listened to her, because she spoke with authority earned through service on the streets of Calcutta. Jesus did not have power, but he was known as a man who had great authority, because he was a great servant.

Application

From that point let’s talk for a moment about application. Our first lesson is that we must take servanthood seriously. Nothing is more adventurous than to take on the role of a

servant! We have something in the church called service teams – and that is a great name for them. These are the men and women who set-up, greet, usher and tear down. It is hard work and for most people, it is not the most desirable work. You have to come early and stay late, probably separating the family for that day. In the summer you will get sweaty, and probably need a changes of clothes. It is hard work. And even though we have grown over the past six months we have had more people drop off that list than who have signed up. We need more servants! Now, I know that some of you had to drop off for very legitimate reasons – I am not trying to lay a guilt trip on anyone! But this is a very practical application. The service teams are modern day foot-washers. Before ministry could start in the ancient world – a servant had to wash the people’s dirty feet. Before ministry can start today – we need to lay foam squares in the nursery and stack chairs!

Another area of great service in the church is the nursery. Recruiting enough nursery volunteers is very difficult. And anyone who ever has coordinated a nursery schedule knows well the words “no thank you.” It is so difficult many churches have abandoned the volunteer nursery entirely and hire out workers. And I am not saying that is necessarily wrong, but I can’t think of a more important area of sacrificial service than to serve those who are the weakest and most vulnerable among us. The Children’s Ministry team has this past week reorganized volunteer so it is a perfect time to get involved. Level of service are very clear and information is in the back of the sanctuary.

My purpose is, again not just to drum up volunteers, but to impress upon us that if we truly embraced Jesus’ teaching about serving - opportunities like these in churches all over the country would have waiting lists – for serving is the path to greatness in God’s

kingdom. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "You do not have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don't have to know Plato and Aristotle. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

My final application is this. If you are facing a fork in the road. And on one side of the fork you can put the word "safe" and on the other side the word, "dangerous" and if you wonder this morning which path the Lord is leading you down. May I suggest that you probably have your answer. When Jesus knocks on your door and says, "I'm looking for someone to take an adventure with me, and then stares at you," gather up your courage and follow him. Some of you have already done this - you are on the difficult path - but you are now wondering why in the world you did that. Be encouraged, though the way is difficult, be strong in your faith and keep following Jesus. The dangerous path is the safest path, if Jesus is leading. For others, God may be calling you down that path soon. Be ready to take up the adventure of following Jesus.

In conclusion, on Bilbo Baggin's journey he stops and spends several weeks with the elves in safety and comfort and I love what Tolkien says: "Now it is a strange thing, but things that are good to have and days that are good to spend are soon told about, and not much to listen to; while things that are uncomfortable, palpitating, and even gruesome, make a good tale, and take a deal of telling." Safe lives make little impact. Live a life of adventure for God - fill up your life with stories that will be told and retold to your children and grandchildren and great grandchildren.