

For fans of America's Favorite Pastime, this month, October, is their favorite time of the year. Why? It's postseason time, that's why. It's a chance for the New York Yankees to remind everyone they are still the gold standard by capturing their 28<sup>th</sup> World Series. It's a chance for the Saint Louis Cardinals to remind everyone they are not that far behind by capturing their 12<sup>th</sup>. It's a chance for the New York Mets to summon their 1986 magic and win their 3<sup>rd</sup>. It's a chance for the Seattle Mariners to play in one. It's a chance for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays to remind American citizens from sea to shining sea that there is, indeed, a Major League Baseball team in Tampa Bay, FL. It's a chance for long time Vero Beach residents to reminisce about the days of Dodger Town. And it's a chance for Atlanta Braves fans to practice the Presence of God by taming their tongues. For all Atlanta Braves fans everywhere believe that anyone who speaks words of positivity about their chances in the postseason will be guilty of pronouncing a curse upon them, thereby dooming them. But for followers of America's Favorite Pastime, October isn't just the postseason. It's the final script to yet another summer in the sun. It's not just a chance for the New York Yankees to win a 27<sup>th</sup> World Series. It's also a chance for Yankee followers to reminisce about the Babe, Whitey Ford, Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio, Reggie Jackson, and Derek Jeter. It's not just a chance for the Saint Louis Cardinals to win a 13<sup>th</sup> World Series. It's a chance to remember the great Stan Musial and Rogers Hornsby. It's not just a chance for the New York Mets to get a 3<sup>rd</sup> World Series. It's a chance to remember Darryl Strawberry's home run in the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup> 35 years ago to give them their 2<sup>nd</sup>. It's not just a chance for the Seattle Mariners to make it to a World Series. It's also a chance to remind everyone that there are people in Seattle that do care about American things. It's not just a chance for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays to remind people that there is a Major League Baseball team in Tampa Bay. It's also a chance to finally win a World Championship after the close calls of 2008 and 2020. And for Braves fans, it's not just another chance to practice the Presence of God by taming the tongue. It's also a chance to practice Intercessory Prayers so they won't do foolish things like run off 3<sup>rd</sup> base in the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup> or put Charlie Leibrandt in to pitch in the bottom of the 9<sup>th</sup>.

There is a big difference between being a fan and follower, isn't there? A fan observes from a distance. They have a conversational knowledge. But they are not invested enough from that arm's length to sweat every pitch, bemoan every bad call, and rejoice in every homerun or single. They only want the championship. But a follower doesn't observe from a distance. They have intimate knowledge. And they are so invested that they live vicariously through their team. Every Pitch becomes their pitch. Every bad call becomes their bad call. Every homerun becomes their homerun. Every single becomes their single. Every championship becomes their championship. And every Hall of Fame moment becomes their Hall of Fame moment. In the passage before us today, you are going to see two types of individuals: (1) Fans of Jesus and (2) Followers of Him. You are also going to see that there is a big difference between the two. You see, people of God, each miracle Jesus performed was a homerun in the eyes of the Galileans. And as the homeruns started to accumulate, the news about Jesus' championship pedigree began to spread not just in Galilee and in Israel, but also in Gentile lands. As a result, people began to ascend to the stadium of Capernaum in Galilee to see the show and hope that maybe they just might be able to catch a foul ball or get an autograph. But amid the fame, Jesus does something surprising. He doesn't take a bow or plead His case to be a first ballot Hall of Famer. Instead, he calls 12 ordinary men to follow Him, not at a distance like the fans. But up close and personal instead. We call them the 12 disciples. So, my question to you today is simple: are you a fan or a follower? There is a tremendous difference between the two. And to see that, please turn with me to Mark 3:7-8 and 3:13-19.

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. <sup>8</sup> When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. . . <sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve<sup>[a]</sup> that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

#### Fans vs Followers:

##### 1. Fans see to follow. Followers follow to see (8, 14-15)

- **Road Trip Through State Nicknames:** (1) If, on this Sunday afternoon, you decided to take a road trip right through the center of the United States, one of the first state signs you'll see is one: "You are now leaving the Sunshine State." (2) Then you'll see a sign that says: "Welcome to the Peach State." (3) Then "Welcome to the Yellowhammer State." (4) Then "Welcome to the Magnolia State." (4) Then "Welcome to the Creole State." (5) Then "Welcome to the Natural State." (6) You'll finally arrive at your destination when the state sign says: "Welcome to the Show Me State." (Which is?).
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The crowds who flocked to Jesus were a lot like those who live in Missouri. They said: "show me" and I'll believe. But a follower says: "Lord I will follow because I know that I will see as we walk forward."
- **The Difference Between Fans and Followers in the Text:** (1) In verse 8, we start to get a sense of how far the news of Jesus doing things no one had ever heard of (like healing leprosy; making demons subservient; and making the lame walk) had traveled. It spread to Judea and Jerusalem. Judea is in Israel, but in a completely different region, as was Jerusalem. And it spread Idumea, the regions across Jordan, Tyre, and Sidon – these were Gentile territories. (2) But the significant thing here is why they came: "when they heard all that he was doing." They heard and saw and then they followed. (3) In contrast, the disciples were sent out. The Gospels tell us they had nowhere to stay at times. They didn't have any food, etc. But they went because they were sent. They followed first and then they saw the provision.

- **App:** We are a lot like the crowds, sometimes. “Show me, Jesus,” then I’ll believe. What Jesus desires for us, however, is the opposite: believe and I’ll show you. That’s how the heroes of the Bible operated. Will we?
2. **Fans need a blessing. Followers need to be a blessing (7, 14-15).**
- **Advertising Slogans:** (1) Advertisers have a way of making their product seem all about you to get you to buy it. (2) L’Oréal – Because You’re Worth It; (3) Burger King – Have It Your Way; (4) Gillette – The Best A Man Can Get; (5) UPS – “What Can Brown Do for You?”
  - **Main Idea of the Point:** Fans of Jesus have a view of faith that’s much like those advertising slogans.” It’s the type that says: “Jesus, what can you DO for me? What blessing can YOU give me? Followers of Jesus have a completely different approach that say: “Lord Jesus, as your follower, what can I do to be a blessing to others and build the Kingdom of God?”
  - **The Crowds Forcing a Retreat and the Disciples Sent Out to Heal:** (1) The passage opens with the image of Jesus being worn out from his public ministry to the point that he had to retreat. Then, what follows is something that you don’t expect, but are not surprised by: the crowds following Jesus to His place of solitude. They want something from him just like the people who would come from all over Israel and Gentile lands that we just talked about. They want a blessing. They were the lepers, the unclean, the downtrodden, the broken. They were the Woman at the Well and the Roman Centurions all coming to Jesus for a blessing. (2) In contrast, the disciples were sent out to “preach” and “cast out demons.” The idea is Jesus sent the disciples out as an extension of himself because the needs were great. They were sent to be a blessing. And they followed.
  - **App:** The fans mentality is “give me another blessing today, Lord.” But a disciple’s mentality is “Lord, how and where can I be a blessing to others?” You get more of a blessing by being a blessing than you do by encountering Jesus just to be blessed.
3. **Fans are fickle. Followers are called (14).**
- **Hiding From God in the Golf Business:** (1) Between college and seminary, I spent several years in the golf business. I’d had a devastating experience my senior year in college with an internship and I wanted nothing to do with church. (2) I’d fallen away from my faith to the point I didn’t pray or even go to church. (3) But one day, I got in my car and drove to Bethlehem Baptist Church. Before I got there, I said “ok, Lord, say to me what you need to say.” (4) When I turned on the radio and flipped through the channels, I stopped my dial on the one with these lyrics: “Nobody stood and applauded them. So, they knew from the start this road would not lead to fame. All they really knew for sure was Jesus had called to them. He said ‘come follow me and they came. For Jesus had called them by name.”
  - **Main Idea of the Point:** Fans of Jesus seek Him much like the crowds do in the New Testament. But followers of Jesus are faithful to Jesus because they are called to be, regardless of what life throws at them.
  - **The Word Never Used to Describe the Crowds, But Always Used to Describe the Disciples:** (1) In verse 14, there is a most important word that describes the essence of following Jesus. It’s the word “appointed.” It means to designate. (2) You’ll never see it used in the New Testament in reference to the masses because the masses are fickle. They’ll shout “Hosanna” on a Sunday and “Crucify” on a Friday. (3) But you will see it used in referenced to the disciples. (3) You’ll also see this word attached to those he “appointed”: twelve. (4) Twelve is the number of divine government in the Bible. God designated these individuals to be voices of how God was going to relate to all of humanity from that point forward. (5) But I love how this great calling starts. The text says he appointed the twelve to “be with Him.” Their time with Jesus became the basis for their declaration and ministry to the world.
  - **App:** We tend to think only preachers are called. They are not. You are also. We are all a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” We are set apart to declare the glories of His riches to others. You are just as much a baton carrier of the Gospel as the Disciples. And you can’t expect to pass the baton unless you are “with him” when no one else is looking.
4. **Fans disguise. Followers demonstrate (16-19).**
- **The Most Intelligent and Resource Reptile in the Animal Kingdom** – (1) Isn’t a snake or an alligator. It’s a chameleon. (2) They have the rarest of eyes: eyes that can see with a 360-degree arc of vision completely around their bodies. That makes them perceptive. But they can also (3) regulate their body temperature to protect themselves from danger. Such a quality helps them adapt to their environment and aids them greatly in their survival.
  - **Main Idea of the Point:** Fans of Jesus often wear disguises. They can appear one way in church and another way in the world. But followers of Jesus, those who truly stand on His Word and believe in His Promises, will always show themselves to be.
  - **The Contrast in the List:** (1) In the list of the disciples here, there is a contrast between the first 11 and the last 1 mentioned. (2) Judas was the betrayer who wore a disguise. He hid his disguise so well that when Jesus said: “one of you is going to betray me,” Peter asked: “which one does he mean?” He didn’t think of Judas. (3) On the other hand, the disciples showed themselves to be true believers by the way their lives turned out after the NT. All of which, less John, were martyred: (a) James – martyred in Jerusalem; (b) John – preached into his 80s in Ephesus; (c) Andrew – took the Gospel to the Ukraine, Romania, and Russia; (d) Philip took it to Greece, Syria, and Turkey; (e) Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas – took it to India; (f) James the Less – martyred in Jerusalem at 94; (g) Thaddeus and the Zealot – took the Gospel to Beirut.
  - **App:** Jesus said: “my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.” May we hear his voice today, for the sake of the call. Amen.