

Tire Kicking

*The I Am and the Logos: The Gospel of John #4, Which Also Doubles As a Father's Day Message
John 1:35-42*

Come. Take up your cross. Follow me. For he who loses his life for my sake will truly find it."

Well Happy Father's Day to all of you. This is the day all car salesman at all car dealerships all across this nation have been looking forward to for quite a spell. For it's the day men are most likely to sojourn to a fine automotive establishment or two in search of a new means of transportation. That's why I call Father's Day *National Tire Kicking Sunday*. *National Tire Kicking Sunday* has raised the debt ceiling in many a man's household.

Kicking the tires has always been our way of doing research on an automobile before we buy it. We're interested in it. We're contemplating purchasing it. It's Father's Day so this is day we're most likely purchase it. But we haven't decided yet. So, we show up at the car lot to do a little bit of tire kicking research. But there is a second half to this little scenario. Our tire kicking triggers one of the individuals at the car lot hired to watch for tire kickers like us. When they see us, they make a bee line straight for us while we are engaged in tire kicking. When Mr. Tire Kicking Spotter arrives, the sales pitch to move me from a tire kicker to a tire owner begins. It comes in the form of three questions: "What is it that you are looking for? What is it that you want? How can I make it happen?"

I love today's passage in the Gospel of John, but not because it happens to be the next passage up for investigation. I love it for three reasons: (1) It's the passage where we leave the world complex theological truisms like: "In the beginning was the Word" and arrive in the world of Jesus' public ministry. It's here, in John 1:35-42, that things start to get real and relatable. (2) I love it because the first actions in Jesus' public ministry are not turning water into wine or raising the dead. They are inviting those who would become his disciples to "come and see." (3) I love it because it marks the first time Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John. He spoke four simple words that come to us in the form of a question: What do you want? In Derrick's English, that translates to "why do you kick the tires?"

That's an interesting first choice of words for Jesus to use to begin His public ministry, aren't they? "What do you want?" It also implies that there are people who want to follow Jesus for the wrong reasons. Reasons like "what do I have to benefit? Or "what can I not afford to lose?" There are people who follow Jesus for good reasons. They believe Jesus can change their lives. So, they follow. That's a good thing. But you are going to see today that Jesus beckons us to follow Him for His reasons. Chief among them is simply because it is the Master who calls. So, the question I ask you is the same one Jesus asked two thousand years ago. "What do you want?" Why do you kick the tires? Why do you follow Jesus?

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

1. The Wrong Reasons (35-38a)

- **What Not to Do on Father's Day:** (1) Imagine this scenario: It's Father's Day. It's your day. Unfortunately, the credit card company didn't get the memo. (2) You signed up on the ole CC to get your wife flowers for your anniversary because you always forget the date. But you checked the wrong occasion box. Now they come on Father's Day. You don't like flowers very much. But your wife does. (3) So you say to her: "Excuse me dear. I know it's not Mother's Day. It's my day. But the credit card company sent them by mistake. But here on this Father's Day, I'm going to be selfless and give them to you. It's what I'm supposed to do." (4) How well do you think the rest of that Father's Day is going to go? (5) It's possible to do the right thing, what you are supposed to do, for the wrong reasons. Following Jesus is no exception.
- **The Significance of the Question:** (1) There is movement in v35-38 that puts the whole passage in motion. (2) These two disciples of John the Baptist move away from following John the Baptizer and towards following Jesus when their teacher says: "Look, the Lamb of God." (3) In the ancient rabbi/disciple relationship, it was the rabbi who came to a prospective disciple and said: "Come follow me." We see that in the Gospels. But here, it's different. These two disciples follow before the divine invitation in v39 of "Come and you will see." But they do so at a distance. (4) As a result, Jesus turns completely around and speaks for the first time, saying: "What do you want?" Boy! What a question. It's one that implies that there are many different reasons for following Jesus. And that includes the wrong reasons.
- **The Wrong Reasons:** (1) What do I have to gain? – "What do you want?" "Lord, I want to follow you because it can benefit and prosper me in some way." The Seven Sons of Sceva in Acts 19 had that attitude. They noticed Paul casting out demons and wanted to harness that power for themselves. When they tried, Paul wasn't the one who called attention to their impure hearts. A demon did. But the best example is a familiar one: Judas Iscariot. "Lord shouldn't we take this perfume, sell it and give it to the poor?" Judas didn't ask this because he cared about the poor, John says, he asks because he controlled the money and was a thief (Jn 12:6) For someone whose basis for making decisions is

always, “what do I have to gain,” messages like “take up your cross and follow me” will always be met with stiff resistance in the heart. Why? Participation is always on that person’s terms, not Jesus’. (2) What can I not afford to lose? – There are some people who follow Jesus because things are going well in their lives, and they know they are going well. The one fear they have in life is that someday things might not go well, and they might lose it all. In order to keep that from happening, they say: “Lord, I want to follow you to prevent that from happening.” Consider the Rich Young Ruler . “Do you follow the law,” Jesus asked him. “Oh, yes, Lord, I have since I was a child.” “One thing you lack,” Jesus said, “sell all you have and give it to the poor. Then, follow me.” He walked away instead. Why? “Lord Jesus, I can’t afford to lose this.”

- **App:** Biblical faith is radically different: “What do I have to gain?” Jesus: “if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it.” “What can I not afford to lose?” Job: “Naked I came into this world. Naked I will depart. May the name of the Lord be praised.”

2. Good Reasons (38b)

- **Henry II of England:** (1) You’ve heard of Henry VIII, I’m sure. He was quite a colorful Henry. But have you ever heard of Henry II? During his reign, he had problems from every angle, particularly from France. (2) So, he came up with what seemed to him like a good idea. He had five sons – one of them named Henry, of course – and strategically married them off to princesses of foreign countries in order to prevent wars. (3) It turned out to be a good way to prevent war. But not a good way to think about why your sons should get married. It’s why most of their marriages splintered. (4) Good reasons and best reasons are sometimes very different things.
- **Three’s Company:** (1) There are three disciples involved in this narrative. (2) The two disciples of John the Baptist are unnamed at first. But one of them is unmasked at the end: Andrew. The other is Peter, who learns from Andrew. That leaves one that is still masked. Who is he? He’s the writer of this Gospel. John doesn’t mention himself by name in this Gospel. He often just says “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He’s not going to even say that here because John the Baptist has just said “I’m not worthy to untie His sandals.” Who am I to insert myself in this narrative? John was thinking. (2) But when Jesus asks them “what do you want,” their answer reveals a lot about their sincerity: “where are you staying?” (v38). They wanted to sit, to dine, to talk, and to be with this One the Baptizer pointed to and said: “Behold!” Good reasons.
- **The Good Reasons:** (1) He is the Christ (the Anointed One) – That’s Andrew and John’s reason. They wanted to follow the anointed one. That’s a good reason. It’s the reason many of the original twelve continued to follow Jesus. He was going to usher in the Messianic age, subdue the Roman occupation, and put Israel back on the world map like she was during the time of David and Solomon. Jesus would do exactly that. But not in the way they expected. That’s why all of the disciples but John completely abandoned Jesus after Gethsemane and at the cross. Their idea of deliverance and Jesus’ idea was completely different. A good reason and His reason are very different things. (2) I’ve got to prove I can do this – That defines Peter in a nutshell. Throughout the Gospels, he wants to prove himself, to himself, to his peers, and to Jesus. “Jesus, you walked on water. I can walk on water. I can do this.” That’s a good reason to follow Jesus. But then he drops beneath the waves like a sack of hammers. Why? Because forgot to add something to that statement: Through Christ who strengthens me.
- **App:** We are a lot like these three cats. We believe He came to deliver, and he gives us the power to overcome. But the great thing about Jesus is that he takes your good reasons for following Him and shows you His reasons for calling you along the way. He corrects your misunderstandings of Him in way that only comes by following him each and every day.

3. His Reasons (37; 39; 42)

- **The Master Has Come And Calleth for Thee:** (1) There’s an old hymn that goes like this: the master has come, and calleth for thee. He stands at the door of my heart. No friend so forgiving, so gentle as he. Oh, will you let him depart? (3) Patiently waiting, earnestly pleading. The master has come and calleth for thee. (3) Why do we follow Jesus? Simply because the master has come and calleth for thee.
- **What Are His Reasons?** (1) Because the Master says “come” – Why did Andrew and Peter leave their catch? Why did John and James leave their father in his boat? Why did Nathanael leave the fig tree? Why did Philip leave the cave? Why did Matthew leave the tax collector’s booth? Simply because it was the master who called. (2) Because the Master says “come” and “learn” – Do you see that word in v37 that says “disciple.” It means “learner.” It implies that the way of Jesus is not natural to you and me. It’s something that can only be learned by following Jesus. Forgiveness isn’t natural. Unforgiveness is. Turning the other cheek isn’t natural. Striking one is. Seeking the Kingdom and his righteousness first isn’t natural. Building your kingdom and ruling over your domain is. (3) Because the Master says “come” and “see” – He tells us those exact words in v39. But did you notice how many references to seeing occurred in the passage: John the Baptist saw Jesus passing by and said: look, the Lamb of God” (v36); Jesus saw them (v38); Jesus tells them come and see (v39); Jesus looks at Simon (v42). That’s why followers of Jesus see the same events as everyone else...but see them very differently. You can’t see things from Jesus’ perspective unless you walk with him and see his perspective. (4) Because the Master says “come” and “begin again” – Jesus looks at Simon in v42 essentially says, you will, one day, be called Cephas (Peter). When God performs a great work through a person in the Bible, he often changes their name: From Jacob to Israel, from Saul to Paul, and from Simon to Peter. (5) How did it happen? Simply from the Master’s call to come.
- **App:** There’s another old song that says “I’m going to lay down my burdens down by the river side.” Every time I think of that song I think of this passage. Laying down burdens at the riverside to Jesus began right here. There are a lot of burdens in our world right now on this Father’s Day, at home and abroad. But it is impossible to ask Jesus to bear the burdens of the world without laying your burdens down by the riverside just like these disciples. And you can do that. You can follow. You can learn. You can see. You can begin again. Simply because the Master has come and calleth for thee. Happy Father’s Day.