

## WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY? John 15:1-5

As we look around us this morning at our sanctuary, we may have several questions....such as....what in the world happened here??!! Why all this stuff? Are we facing something new here? Is this necessary to prove some point, or are we just waiting to take all this décor down because it represents some kind of sheer fun, a statement of taking liberties with the holy places is finally acceptable?!

A bigger question looms for us here. "What would Jesus say?" Would He understand our changing times? Would He have a word for us, and speak a word about the meaning of the interests of our current generation? Or worst of all, would He grab a rope for a whip and begin to overthrow the thrill seekers like He did once before with the money changers in the Temple??!! What do you think Jesus would do and say?

This week in Vacation Bible School I felt we needed to regain a grasp of "**What Jesus really did Say.**" We needed to honor the long stated PURPOSE for these summer extravaganzas and take a BIBLE exploring journey with our children and be a BIBLE teaching place. But where to start with so much to cover in our Bible? And what a challenge with this young crowd so highly stimulated, so demanding and so quick.

Since the Mountains are our native settings, a place of exploring and discovery, it seemed so easy and inviting to hear Jesus' call again right here: "**Come Follow Me!**" Remembering that Jesus walked the city streets, the hillsides and the dusty roads of Galilee with such power and purpose made the invitation more enticing. So we decided to "**TAKE A HIKE!**" with Jesus as His

first disciples did, to experience and seek out what it means for us to follow Jesus.

**1. First, He said to His disciples** that they were now to be His **FRIENDS!** What did Jesus mean by that? He no longer considered them nor would He call them only the usual moniker of learners in those days, "servants," the equivalent of "*students*" in our day. I do not see you as STUDENT DRIVERS, Jesus might have said, but "*licenced drivers!*" From here on you can navigate the waters of real life with the necessary spiritual strength!

FRIENDS! Imagine, FRIENDS of the LORD! Close companions every step of the way with the Son of God! We were to have a personal tour with Jesus right through God's Word, The Holy Bible, and then right on into whatever life brings to us!. "*I no longer call you servants; a servant does not know what his Master is doing. I call you my friends, my own family if you do all that I command you. For now you will know all that I am doing.*"

**2. Hearing His call** to follow is only part of it; **knowing what Jesus said about following** him is the other part .Do we have an exhaustive compendium of all that Jesus said, that we might "*hide it in our hearts that we might not sin against him?!*" Jesus was the living word of God, the word become flesh! All that He did was exactly, everything He had spoken. **He was the living word for us to read.** Yet as we have grown more precise in our high-tech generation, we still want the printed word. So we HIKE into the depths of His truth with his guiding presence right beside us to point out the really crucial parts for each of us.

It is a personal thing. Jesus is inviting us to a relationship of indepth friendship, something we all say we want, but seldom understand the depths of the requirements of such a relationship.

***"Where do we start?"*** asked the rich young ruler on one well known occasion. Confronted by an honest question, Jesus gave a most straight forward answer to the young, well educated boy of privilege, a boy from a good church. Jesus probed deep into his lifestyle and found an area of personal comfort and wealth and challenged his priorities. Jesus would say to us what He said to that young man, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. That is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it, Love your neighbor as your love yourself."* (When addressing his priorities, He might have gone on to explain, *"You can't accomplish this radical change of heart toward others if you don't start with the one essential priority, Loving God with all you have, first of all."*)

You see, When Jesus speaks to us about this eternal relationship, He comes with the biggest challenge right at the beginning. He doesn't want to give us any false impressions or false hopes. To start right means ***to put God first in your life***. No if's, and's or but's about it. Because as soon as you get started you find these words to be a radical change in our usual self protecting, self styled lives. You can't hope to accomplish this radical change of heart toward others if you don't first start with the one essential priority, Putting God first! That what Jesus was saying when he said to love God with all our hearts, souls, mind and, Luke adds, strength; just everything we are.

All else is to line up with the wanna bee's of this world. Jesus said, "I call you my friends because you can now walk the high places with me. You know the truth, and you are free to do it. You can navigate the swift currents, you can shoot the rapids of the rugged spots in life. You know the truth and will know more and more of it as you embrace this now. You can hike the high places with all the right equipment.

There is no person yet who has taken this recipe to heart, making God first priority, who has not found the deeper meaning of life, the real satisfaction, the spiritual strength to make it to the peaks where the great panoramas can be seen, and where the close assuring presence of God can be felt every step.

What about you? Are you taking Jesus at His word? What is your top priority in life? When we start at the first word He says to us, we surely are in for many more sessions to hear him calling and speaking. And no one who follows has ever been disappointed. As they say, "The rewards are out of this world!"

AMEN!

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