

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

(Mark 8:27-38)

- Intro: Maybe you remember playing the childhood game of "Follow the Leader."
- One person was the leader.
    - #Everyone else was a follower.
  - Whatever the leader did.
    - #Followers did.
  - If the leader spread her arms.
    - #Followers spread their arms.
  - If the leader hopped on one foot.
    - #Followers hopped on one foot.
  - Whoever didn't do what the leader did.
    - #Was out of the game.

Our Gospel Lesson for today is about following the leader.

- It's not a game.
- It's about:
  - #Discipleship.
  - #Faithfulness.

### I. It's Obvious Who The Leader Is.

#### A. Peter Knew.

1. Jesus had been quizzing his disciples:
  - a. "Who do people say that I am?"
  - b. Mark 8:27.
2. Disciples came up with multiple choice answers:
  - a. John the Baptizer.
  - b. Elijah.
  - c. One of the prophets.
3. Then Jesus got personal.
  - a. "Who do you say that I am?"
  - b. Mark 8:29.
    - Question is meant for all.
    - "You" is plural.
      - #Y'all.
        - \*As they say in the South.
      - #All y'all.
        - \*As they say in Texas.

4. Peter answered for them all.
  - a. "You are the Messiah."
  - b. "You are the Christ."
    - Those titles mean:
      - #Anointed.
        - \*In Biblical times.
          - +Kings weren't inaugurated.
            - =They were anointed.
          - +Priests weren't ordained.
            - =They were anointed.
          - +Prophets weren't consecrated.
            - =They were anointed.
      - #One chosen by God.
        - \*Jesus was chosen by God to be the leader.
          - +Peter got it.
            - =Sort of.

B. But Peter Didn't Get What That Meant.

1. Jesus' disciples were on the way.
  - a. Not just to Caesarea Philippi.
    - North of the Sea of Galilee.
    - In the foothills of Mount Hermon.
  - b. But to understanding who Jesus was.
2. In the paragraph right before our Gospel Lesson.
  - a. Story unique to Mark's gospel.
    - But never assigned for any of our Sunday readings.
    - Mark 8:22-26.
  - b. Jesus healed a blind man.
    - Spit in his eye.
    - Laid his hands on him.
  - c. But it took two "takes."
    - First time the man said:
      - # "I can see people, but they look like trees walking around."
    - Second time.
      - #Man could see clearly.
3. Peter was like that blind man.
  - a. He could see who Jesus was.
  - b. But he couldn't see clearly.
4. Jesus began to explain what it meant for him to be the Messiah.
  - a. Undergo great suffering.
  - b. Be rejected.
  - c. Be killed.
  - d. After three days rise again.
    - Mark 8:31.

5. Peter.
  - a. Couldn't see it.
  - b. Didn't get it.
  - c. Scolded Jesus.
    - In Matthew's version of this story Peter said:
      - # "God forbid."
      - # "This should never happen to you."
    - Matthew 16:22.
  - d. Was looking for a different kind of Messiah.
    - Revolutionary political leader.
    - Military hero.
      - # Who might kick the Romans out of the country.
      - # Restore independence to Israel.
6. Jesus said:
  - a. "Get behind me Satan."
    - Mark 8:33.
  - b. You're not the leader.
  - c. I'm the leader.
  - d. We're going to do this my way.
7. Jesus was on the way.
  - a. Not just to Caesarea Philippi.
  - b. But to Jerusalem.
    - To suffering and death.
    - To cross and resurrection.
      - # There would be:
        - \* Deliverance.
        - \* Liberation.
      - # Not from:
        - \* Romans.
      - # But from:
        - \* Sin.
        - \* Death.
8. Before there was Frank Sinatra there was Jesus.
  - a. Who did it his way.
  - b. Jesus is the:
    - Messiah.
    - Christ.
    - Anointed one.
    - Leader.

## II. How Are We At Playing Follow The Leader?

### A. Deny Yourself.

1. In a world of:
  - a. Self-gratification.
  - b. Instant gratification.
    - Denial of self is definitely counter-cultural.
2. We want:
  - a. What we want.
  - b. When we want it.
    - Most of the time that means:
      - #We want it now.
    - Think about the financial crisis in this country.
      - #It can be tempting to blame the lenders.
        - \*Too greedy.
        - \*Too many bad loans.
      - #But what about the borrowers?
        - \*People like us.
        - \*People who don't want to deny themselves:
          - +Bigger house.
          - +Newer car.
          - +More stuff.
3. Does all of our stuff?
  - a. Make us who we are.
  - b. Make us feel better about who we are.
    - Book.
      - #John Powell, S.J.
      - #1969.
      - #*Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?*
    - Answer:
      - #"I'm afraid to tell you who I am."
      - #"Because you might not like who I am."
      - #"And this is all I've got."
4. Those of us who have been baptized.
  - a. Who have been anointed.
    - By water.
    - By Word.
  - b. Who have been marked.
    - By the cross of Christ forever.
  - c. Have a new identity.
    - Child of God.
    - Disciple.
    - Follower of the Lord Jesus.

- d. We can deny ourselves.
  - Without losing:
    - #Our identity.
    - #Our sense of self.
  - Still know:
    - #Who we are.
    - #Whose we are.
  - It's part of following the leader.

B. Take Up Your Cross.

1. Cross is about suffering.

- a. Who likes to suffer?
  - Unless we are masochistic.
    - #None of us likes to suffer.
  - Unless we are sadistic.
    - #None of us likes to see others suffer.
- b. We tend to avoid suffering at all costs.
  - Physical.
  - Mental.
  - Emotional.
- c. Isn't our drug culture a symptom of that?
  - When I became a jail chaplain.
    - #1978.
    - #There were 5000 people.
      - \*Confined in the Missouri Department of Corrections.
  - When I left chaplaincy.
    - #In 2006.
    - \*28 years later.
    - #There were 33,000 such people.
      - \*Confined in the Missouri Department of Corrections.
        - +An increase.
          - =28,000 people.
          - In 28 years.
          - =1,000 people per year.
  - Much of the increase.
    - #Due to our society's so-called "War on Drugs."
  - Our drug culture is a symptom.
    - #We don't want to deal:
      - \*With the ups and downs of life.
    - #We want to smooth out the bumps.
      - \*We want:
        - +To get high.
        - +To stay high.

2. Life is up and down.
  - a. If you have:
    - Visited someone in a cardiac intensive care unit.
    - Had an EKG done on yourself.
  - b. You know that the lines:
    - On the monitor.
    - On the strip of paper.
    - #Go up and down.
    - \*That's life.
  - c. When they go flat.
    - That's when there is no life.
    - Or the wires have come loose.
  - d. How can we appreciate up, if we haven't known down?
    - How can we appreciate joy?
      - #If we haven't known sorrow.
    - How can we appreciate rest?
      - #If we haven't known work.
    - How can we appreciate success?
      - #If we haven't known struggle or disappointment.
    - How can we appreciate up?
      - #If we haven't known down.
  - e. Life is up and down.
3. Our life of faith is up and down.
  - a. Some days we are full of:
    - Faith.
    - Hope.
    - Love.
    - #Some days we are not.
  - b. So we keep coming back.
    - To the Word.
    - To the font.
    - To the table.
    - To our leader.
    - #Who took up his cross for us.
    - #Who is on the road with us.
      - \*Through all the ups and downs.
    - #Who brings:
      - \*Good out of evil.
      - \*Life out of death.
      - \*Resurrection out of crucifixion.
    - #Who empowers us.
      - \*To take up our cross.
      - +It's part of following the leader.

- c. There is such a thing as redemptive suffering.
  - Last week our adult Bible study class.
    - #Focused on "Making Sense of Suffering."
  - We identified five views of suffering in the Old Testament.
    - #Suffering because of what others have done.
    - #Suffering because of what we have done.
    - #Innocent suffering.
    - #Suffering that makes no sense.
    - #Redemptive suffering.
      - \*Suffering for the sake of another.
      - \*Suffering for the benefit of another.
  - Jesus took up his cross.
    - #For us.
    - #So that we might be empowered to take up our cross.
      - \*For the sake of another.
      - \*For the benefit of another.
        - +It's part of following the leader.

### C. Lose Yourself.

- 1. Chicago Cubs.
  - a. Dubbed "lovable losers."
    - They haven't won a World Series since 1908.
    - #Hey, anybody can have a bad century!
  - b. But I doubt that their new owners.
    - Recently shelled out \$845 million.
    - #In order to be losers.
- 2. We don't like to lose.
  - a. Sports.
  - b. Card games.
  - c. Church votes.
- 3. But Jesus dares to claim that we win by losing.
  - a. How can this be?
  - b. When I was in college.
    - Some of the guys in my dorm.
      - #Were into a card game.
      - \*Sheepshead.
      - #I hung out with them.
      - \*I learned to play.
      - #I haven't played sheepshead.
      - \*In almost 40 years.
      - +So I'm not sure I remember all of the rules.
    - Most of the time you won.
      - #By accumulating the most points.

- But once in awhile a "leaster" would be called.
- #Winner was the one:
  - \*Who got the fewest points.
  - \*Who lost the most tricks.
  - \*Who gave away the most points.

4. Jesus.

- a. Lovable loser.
- b. Loving loser.
  - Loving all of us losers.
  - Losing himself.
  - #So that we might find:
    - \*Forgiveness.
    - \*Life.
    - \*Salvation.
  - #So that we might:
    - \*Lose ourselves.
    - \*Outdoing one another in:
      - +Loving.
      - +Caring.
      - +Sharing.
      - +Serving.
  - #It's part of a following the leader.

Concl: It's Rally Sunday.

- We're back on the way.
  - #To learning who Jesus is.
    - \*Sunday School.
    - \*Youth group.
    - \*Confirmation class.
    - \*5x5 small groups.
    - \*Adult Bible study.
  - +Actually we never stop that.
    - =Except for Rally Day.
    - So that we can eat pancakes.
- We're still on the way.
  - #To understanding:
    - \*Who Jesus is.
    - \*Where he is heading.
    - \*Where he is leading us.
  - #To denying ourselves.
  - #To taking up our cross.
  - #To losing ourselves.
  - #To following the leader.



