

Sermon Title: **They Followed Jesus**

Bible: John 1:29-42

Where & When: Baptism of the Lord Sunday at Gilroy UMC on Jan. 19, 2020

Audience: about 34 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you sent us your son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ suffers with us, heals us, and is risen before us. We want to follow Jesus. Please lead us to your way, and your will. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Who Disciples?

The United Methodist Church's mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Whose disciples? Disciples of the Methodists? Disciples of the church? Please do not be surprised. Unfortunately, Jesus was not a Methodist. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ!

John the Baptist is really great in terms of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us look at the verses 35-37: "35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus." At verse 35, "two of *his* disciples," whose disciples? Who is the "his" being referred to here? Is it Jesus? Jesus did not have disciples yet. Is it John? John had his own disciples already, as they were anticipating the Messiah. Yes, John had his own disciples with him, and introduced Jesus to them as the one to follow. John's

disciples followed Jesus. They became Jesus' disciples--not anymore John's disciples. Now, John the Baptist no longer had any disciples, because John's disciples became Jesus' disciples. How do you respond to this? "Oh, poor John?" Or "Great Job, John?" How did John feel about losing his own disciples?

When Jesus started his ministry, there were already many religious groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests, and scribes. However, they did not follow Jesus. On the contrary, they argued with Jesus, and bothered Jesus' ministry. At the end, they made a plan to kill Jesus. John the Baptist was different. John knew himself and the one whom he was waiting for. John guided his own disciples to wait for the one who is coming. When John saw Jesus, John gave up his disciples. John's disciples followed Jesus.

2. The United Methodist Church as One Denomination

There are many good denominations in the world: Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist. How many denominations do you know or experience? I heard that the United Methodist Church is the third largest denomination after Roman Catholic and Southern Baptist, in the States. I love the mission of the United Methodist Church, because it is not to make disciples of the United Methodist Church. It is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Because of this mission, the United Methodist Church welcomes and invites all people to God's table, regardless of membership or age, and accepts the baptism of other denominations. The United Methodist Church is not the only denomination, but it is definitely one of many good denominations.

3. Gilroy UMC as One Church

As you know, there are many good churches in Gilroy. This church is one of the good churches. But this church is the number 1 (and only) United Methodist Church in Gilroy! What made you come to this church? Were you born and raised as a Methodist? Or did you choose this church? In my case, I chose and decided on the United Methodist Church as my denomination. When I was dating my wife (at that time, my girlfriend), there might have been tons of reasons why I wanted to marry her. But these reasons did not make me propose to her. My gut told me that she was the one. I wanted to spend time together with her, when I met her in 2005. I wondered about her future life. I felt I would like to be there in her current and future life.

There might be some logical reasons why I chose the United Methodist Church and why I was appointed to this church. But there are always some things that I cannot explain with reason. So I say that my gut told me that this is the one. To me, this denomination is the one, and this church is the one, like a marriage. And then, I am counting many blessings. Do you follow me? To me, I do not choose the church just only for many logical reasons. Somehow, my gut told me this is the one, and then, I am counting many reasons or blessings. I became a better pastor, after I came to this church. And I hope that this church is getting better as well. As the church makes me a little more awesome pastor, I hope that I can help the church to grow and to be healthier. Probably, because of different reasons, you are here. I hope that this church is the one for you!

4. We Are Disciples of Jesus Christ

The United Methodist Church is great, but not perfect. Our church is awesome, but not perfect. For our faith journey, it is very important to have a good mutual relationship between the church and ourselves. Do we feel God's presence more and better through this church? Do we become better Christians in our faith community? Can we challenge ourselves in God's love and grace? Can we make this church a better place of love and grace? As we need this church, this church needs us. We are disciples of Jesus Christ. As we follow Jesus, Jesus guides us and leads us to his way and his will. This church is and will be the place of God's love and grace, because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. Our presence matters, because God uses us for this church and the world. You and I are disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us keep on following Jesus!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for calling us to this church. Through this church, we are following Jesus more and better. And we are also making this church a better place. Please bless this church to make disciples of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions.

1. How can we make ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ?
2. How can we make Gilroy UMC as a better faith community?
3. What is your prayer for the 2020 General Conference and the UMC?