“For from you sounded out the word of God…” I Thessalonians 1:8a

“Live to Give: Obedience”

Scripture: Matthew 28:16 18-20; Matthew 6:24

Introduction:

Matthew 28:16
[16] Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

Matthew 28:18-20
[18] And Jesus came and spake unto them saying "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [19] Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 16:24
[24] Then said Jesus unto his disciples If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Sermon Introduction:

Many people do not understand what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus. They expect it to be convenient and comfortable. Don't get me wrong. They CLAIM to follow Him-but they do so on their terms and not His. This morning I want us to try and correct any misconceptions we may have about this because growing authentic disciples is one of our purposes as a church.

Today we come to consider one of the reasons we exist as a church-and here it is: We live to give OBEDIENCE—and when I say obedience--...I'm talking about obeying Jesus’ great commission by making DISCIPLES. But like I said a moment ago, there is a great deal of confusion these days when it comes to understanding what a DISCIPLE of Jesus is--so let's start with a definition. A good synonym for the word “disciple” would be "follower" but the New Testament teaches that it is more than that. God's Word tells us that a DISCIPLE of Jesus is someone who has a growing and deepening RELATIONSHIP with Him ...and is also committed to becoming more and more LIKE Him in their thoughts and attitudes and actions. They don't just FOLLOW Jesus--they pattern their lives after His. You could put it this way. A disciple is a CHRISTIAN who is committed to becoming more and more CHRISTLIKE. We see this definition reflected in verses like Romans 8:29 where it says: "[29] For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."
That's discipleship--becoming more and more and more like Jesus.

But in order for us to FULLY comprehend this word--we need to go deeper and with that in mind I want to point out three things that Jesus says about discipleship in the last verse of our text for this morning--and here is the first.

(1) A disciple of Jesus Christ LAYS something DOWN.
Genuine Christ followers lay down their rights ...their desires ...their plans. They commit to living every minute of every day not as they would want--but as Jesus would want. This is what our Lord was referring to when He said "If anyone would come after Me, he must DENY HIMSELF ..."

But please understand--this is more than the kind of self-denial where we decide to give up something or other. No--genuine disciples of Jesus are committed to learning how to renounce their right to rule EVERY single moment of their lives. This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 6:11 when he says [11] "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord". and in Romans 13:14 [14]"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." It is a radical commitment where you show your love for Jesus by committing your entire life to Him.

I'm saying that following Jesus is an all encompassing--total commitment. It's making Him Lord of all. Now--if this sounds difficult--that's because it is. On your own it is impossible. the lusts thereof. It is a radical commitment where you show your love for Jesus by committing your entire life to Him. I'm saying that following Jesus is an all encompassing--total commitment. It's making Him Lord of all. Now--if this sounds difficult--that's because it is. On your own it is impossible.

So how do we do this? How do we discipline ourselves to lay down our will and yield to Jesus in everything? How do we learn to truly make Him Lord? If you say, "Well, by coming to Sunday School where we study the Bible together" or "by being active in Ladies Bible study or Men's Bible study" well, you would be partially right. And I say PARTIALLY because if you just STUDY the Bible, well that would help make you a STUDENT of Jesus--but not necessarily His DISCIPLE. I mean, there are a lot of experts on the Bible's teachings about the life of Christ who don't follow Him day after day. You see being a DISCIPLE is more than knowing ABOUT Jesus and ABOUT how He wants us to live. Being a DISCIPLE is KNOWING Jesus--it's enjoying a personal relationship with Him ...through which He not only TELLS you how to be a good husband or wife or parent or child or employee ...but He also empowers you to be that Christlike husband or wife or parent or child or employee. To be a DISCIPLE you need to KNOW Jesus so well, that you recognize His voice when He tells you what to do and what not to do.

And you and I--as Christians--get to know Jesus like this--we develop a deep relationship with Him--well we do it in the same way we get to KNOW anyone else--by spending time with Him ....learning to rely on His friendship and guidance--learning to tap into His RESURRECTION power. So hear me on this fellow disciples.

The only way to lay down your own will. ...the only way to die to self ...and give the reins of your life to Jesus consistently is by spending time with Him consistently ....using prayer to talk to Him and listen to Him every day. Call it your daily quiet time or personal devotions or whatever but to lay down your own sinful desires and learn to let Jesus lead you through life you have to spend time with
The truly amazing thing about all this is that Jesus WANTS to spend time with us. As He says in Revelation 3:20, "[20] Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Almighty God WANTS to build a relationship with you and me. He wants to talk with us and walk through life with us! He WANTS to guide us to understand His written Word. He WANTS to empower us to live Christlike lives.

Many of us give up a chance to go into the throne room of Almighty God and talk to the Creator and Redeemer of the Universe. Every new day greets us with the opportunity to get out of bed or set aside part of our lunch hour or part of our afternoon and spend a time in conversation with God Himself, but most of us pass up these conversations for a few extra minutes of sleep ..or so we can watch our favorite TV show or shop or whatever. Over and over and over again we ignore the invitation of God Himself to spend time with Him in prayer or to study His Word with Him "leaning over our shoulder" helping us to understand. We miss out on the loving guidance of the only omniscient Being in the universe--and because we do--we fail in our attempts to live our lives in ways that both please Him ...and fulfill us.

Listen--do you want to be a genuine disciple of Jesus? Do you want to make progress in becoming more Christ like? Then you have to LAYDOWN your life such that you let Him make every decision. And the only way to do that is to spend time with Him regularly--time in which you say "Jesus, You call the shots today...You increase...I decrease. Help me to be like You."

(2) But that's not all you need to know to understand discipleship...because a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ also Takes something UP.

The more we become like Christ, the less we are like the world around us. Going against the flow--embracing a Christian world view--is costly. We have to give up sinful habits that we developed before we became Jesus followers. We may lose friends who cannot understand the way our RELATIONSHIP with God changes our lives. We may miss out on promotions because of our Christian ethics. Doing what Jesus would do will take your time. I'm saying that in a very real sense, following Jesus--being His disciple--means you have to take up your cross. In spite of what the health and wealth gospel advocates say, it can be HARD--even PAINFUL--to follow Jesus Christ.

You may think, "Well, pastor, it isn't hard for me. I'm a Christian and I haven't had to bear a cross." And if that describes your life, then you are not alone. As I inferred earlier, we live in a day of casual Christianity. Casual Christians want the forgiveness the cross of Christ brings ...they want warm, fuzzy moments on Sunday mornings but they offer no commitment to Jesus on Monday mornings. In short, they want the crown without the cross.

Listen--if you re feeling a little uncomfortable right now because you realize my words are hitting close to home. I mean, if your Christian walk is more casual than committed ...then I would suggest you ask yourself this question,
"How close am I really following Jesus?"
If you’re following Him closely it’s going to be hard. In fact I would go so far as to say you can’t have the crown without the cross. You can’t have a growing relationship with our Lord unless you are living out your faith in a way that it costs you something. I say this because in this verse Jesus didn’t say that TAKING UP YOUR CROSS was an optional thing. He said that following Him--includes cross bearing. So--if your faith isn’t costing you anything--if it hasn’t been hard for you to follow Jesus, could it be due to the fact that you aren’t going against the flow? Could it be because you aren’t really laying down your life and living as Jesus would want?

Now-I must add here that following Jesus--even though it means difficulty and hardship--paying the cost of being His disciple is WORTH it. There is no greater joy to be had in this life than walking with Jesus—even though doing this involves hardship. I say this because the trials that come just push us closer to Jesus. They deepen our relationship as we learn to trust Him to help us through "cross-bearing" experiences.

Okay--let's review. Genuine disciples lay something down ...they take something up ...and then finally ...

(3) A disciple of Jesus Christ LIVES something OUT.

Listen to Jesus' words one more time: "[24] If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Now, the literal translation of this last phrase would be this, "let him follow Me day after day after day." In other words being a disciple of Jesus is a process that takes a life--time. It's more of a marathon than a sprint ...a marathon we don't complete until we cross the finish line and arrive in Heaven. Only then do we finally finish the race. Only then are we finally FULLY like Jesus.

By the way, the word, "disciple" means 'learner" and as a Christ-follower you are always learning. This is why there is no such thing as a "know it all" disciple. This is why genuine disciples are humble. They know they don't know it all!

In the Christian life, we never reach a point where we can say, "I have arrived and know all that need to know." Spiritual growth is a never-ending process of learning and applying God's truth to our lives. To be a Christ-follower means to be a lifelong student. It's something you live out day after day after day. Consider the Apostle Paul. He was, without a doubt, the most influential Christian in the history of the New Testament church. He wrote more than half of the New Testament. He started several churches and helped spread Christianity throughout the known world. He was given the title of "Apostle" which was the highest title authority in the early church. He used his authority to settle matters of doctrine and church policy. Yet, in spite of all of his influence and power, Paul never reached a point where he said, "I have arrived. I know all that need to know." In fact, he said just the opposite. In verse 10 and 11 of Philippians 3 he said that he wanted to know Christ and be like Christ, then in verse 12 he writes, "[12] Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" Paul was saying, "I'm still learning. I'm still a student. I will be one all of my life." That's what following Christ is all about: being a lifelong student. I like how Colossians 2:6-7 puts it. It says, "[6] As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
[ 7] Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving .."

We need all the opportunities to learn about Jesus that we can get because being a disciple of Jesus is a life-long thing. We keep on learning Discipleship is something you live out.

Let me put it this way. There is no such thing as INSTANT discipleship. Many times we expect to become like Christ fast. But the radical reformation that turns a sinner into someone who thinks and feels and acts like Jesus takes a lifetime.

Invitation

Well, how are you doing when it comes to LIVING out your FAITH? Are you making progress on this marathon journey all Christ followers make? How are you doing on your studies? Are you involved in weekly Bible study? To be a disciple of Jesus you need this kind of thing every day of your life.

We close our service each week with a time of evaluation. And today I'd like all Christ followers present to prayerfully examine their walk with our Lord. Ask yourself, "How am I doing when it comes to dying to self? Am I letting Jesus guide my every decision?"

Maybe this morning you need to bow your head and say to God, "I accept Your invitation to come into Your presence."

"I'm committing to spending time every day talking to and listening to You God." You may need to say, "Forgive me Father for all the ways I ignore the crosses You call me to bear."

" Forgive me for going with the flow of this fallen world because it's easier to do that than to stand up for you and live out my faith." You may need to say, "Father, forgive me for in essence dropping out of school Forgive me for being so lax in learning how to be more and more like Jesus."

Some of you may need to come forward and say, "I have heard all this and I want to sign up."

"I want to follow Jesus. I'm beginning the journey today. I've asked Jesus to forgive me of my sin and to lead me through life." Some of you may feel God leading you to join this church body. Won't you respond now as God leads?

Horace Deaton
Pastor - Magnolia MBC - Magnolia, Tx.
Instructor at Heritage Baptist Institute

An Inside - Out Kind of God

I. Man's Method

A. Genesis 3:6
1. We see Eve fall into sin in 3 stages
2. She starts outermost and moves in
B. Good for food
1. A superficial examination
2. She saw it was not wooden fruit or otherwise inedible
3. At this point poison, thorns, etc. were not an issue.(again, her point was only superficial).
C. A delight do the eyes
1. As Eve's gaze lingers, she makes a second judgment
2. That it is beautiful is a more sophisticated judgment than good for food in the Garden.

3. Still superficial

D. Desirable to make one wise
1. Huge leap
2. We cannot tell if something is desirable to make me wise by looking at it. She leaps from the external to the internal.
3. She makes the inside last

E. Consider works-based salvation
1. By my own power I will
   a. Do same thing I think I must be good
   b. Do something which looks good
   c. Become good myself
2. Like Eve, it starts on the outside and moves in
3. In nature, the only thing that starts on the outside is rot.
   a. The goodness of a seed starts at the core and moves out.
   b. The rot of a tomato always begins on the outside and moves in.

II. God's method
A. Ezekiel 36:25-32
B. V.27 - a new heart causes us to follow God
1. We do not get a new heart for being good, we are made good by our new heart.
2. We are indwelled by God's Spirit on the inside, causing an outside change.

C. VV. 28-29
1. We then enjoy fellowship with God, more external than our heart
2. Then we enjoy external blessings, more external still

D. Ezekiel 11:19-20
E. II Cor. 5: 16-19
F. God recreates us to cause good works, for the inside out.

Jason Gatlin
Member - Alvin Missionary BC
Student - Heritage Baptist Institute

A Tangled Web
II Samuel 11 & Psalm 51

Introduction:
A. It was a time when kings went forth to war.
B. Yet King David remained at home in his palace.
C. In failing to lead his army into battle David opened the door of temptation.
D. Once opened, events were set in place destroyed many lives.
E. One writer noted: O, what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive.
F. From this thought we are taught a valuable lesson.

I. The Fertile Ground of Conspiracy.

A. David was not were he should have been
B. According to James, when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin. James 1:15
C. David looked upon Bathsheba and he acted badly. He sent for her.
D. The conspiracy of sin never changes.
E. Sin appeals to three areas of human weakness. I John 2:16
II. The Deadly Effect of Conspiracy.

A. The pretense of friendship.
B. The betrayal of a close friend.
C. The arrogance of leadership.
D. The high cost of personal sin.
E. The effect of personal sin on others. II Sam 12:14 & 18

III. The Effective Rescue from Conspiracy.

A. God cares about you. II Sam 12:1
B. Note the testimony of a godly friend. Nathan II Sam 12:1
C. Consider Nathan's godly counsel. II Sam 12:1-4
D. Identify the arrogance of a sinful heart. II Sam 12:5
E. Learn of the contrition that resulted by confronting sin honestly. II Sam 12:13

IV. The Contrite Heart Escapes from Conspiracy.

A. David confessed that his sin was first of all against God. Psalm 51:1
B. Let us consider the words mine iniquity, my sin, and my transgressions.
C. David had become a broken vessel in the hands of The Potter.
D. It was the confession of a contrite heart.
E. Read carefully Psalm 51:1-13

Conclusion:

A. David was broken and now useful in Gods' service.
B. See I Kings 15:15
C. What must happen in your life before you become a broken vessel to God's will?
D. Can you truthfully say, Here am I send me?

Pastor Grace MBC
President Heritage Baptist Institute
Dr. Carl E. Fitzgerald

MACEDONIA CALL--TO TENNESSEE

The Tennessee State Association of Missionary Baptist was started 1982. Eleven churches form the Association. In 1983 there were (13) churches in the Association, in 1984 there were (14) churches. In 1985 (15) churches, 1989 (17) churches, in 1991 (18) churches, in 1992 (15). There were (29) at one time in Tennessee. Today there are (11) churches in the Association. This shows the decline of Missionary Baptist Churches in Tennessee. Some of the churches have closed the doors and some do not fellowship any more. There are major cities where there is a need for a Missionary Baptist Church. I know about (18) churches that have closed their doors.

Will you pray about coming to Tennessee and starting Missionary Baptist Churches?

Toby W. Cribbs
Publicity Director Tennessee Missionary Committee

GODS MERCIFUL LOVE AND CARE

We've all traveled the mountain tops, With God's blessings all around, But when we are in the valley below, Sometimes we don't understand, But there is one thing that we know God is always with us there, He will carry us through the valley, With his merciful grace and care Putting his loving arms around us, His presence we'll surely feel. Just putting our trust in Him, And submitting totally to his will.

Dovie Brown
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