

Sunday, June 4, 2023 am

Closer to God (45) Disciples of Jesus (2) – More Scriptures

As we continue our 2022-23 theme, last week we began discussing “discipleship”. We addressed what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, noting that a disciple is more than a mere learner, but one who is seeking to emulate the life and teachings of his “master”. Of course, our Master is Jesus Christ. We addressed Luke 9:23-24 where Jesus described what is involved in being a disciple. 1) The desire must be there; 2) We must deny ourselves; 3) We must be willing to take up our cross; and 4) We must follow Him. This is a summary passage of what is involved in being a disciple. Today, we want to notice some passages that will elaborate upon that passage. There are at least 5 passages worthy of consideration that help understand what a disciple of Jesus is.

I. Luke 14:26-33 – the COST of discipleship

- a. In the midst of His teachings, Jesus issued this challenge. This likely involves teachings as the end of His ministry is approaching. Luke 9:51 speaks of Jesus steadfastly setting His face to go to Jerusalem. It follows the “transfiguration” (Luke 9:28-36). If so, Jesus has been teaching now for some time and amassed a following. The declaration of this text is a call to commitment to follow Him. We are reminded that it is a SERIOUS decision that is not to be entered into lightly.
- b. **Hating family** – vs. 26 begins with a startling statement. Are you willing to hate your parents, wife and children, siblings to follow Him? Does Jesus actually advocate hating such? NO!
 - i. Jesus taught the need to love and take care of our family and others – Matthew 22:37-39. Jesus never taught us to hate others.
 - ii. He did not hate others – John 3:16, Romans 5:6-8 – He died for sinners.
 - iii. Jesus kept perfectly the LOM which taught, “Honor your father and mother” (Exodus 20:7, cf. Ephesians 6:2). He was always compassionate to others. The only one Jesus strongly rebuked were the hypocrites and corrupt. And He even grieved for them. Matthew 5:43-45 – He taught that we are to love even our enemies.
 - iv. cf. John 19:26-27 – on the cross He made provisions for his mother to be taken care of.
 - v. It is my belief that this was intended to shock His audience as to the seriousness of the commitment. In reality, the challenge is **to love less**, anyone or anything that hinders your devotion to Him. Lord willing that will not be necessary.
 1. Consider Matthew 10:34-37 and 19:29. In Jewish culture, and in some cultures and environments today, changing faith came at a tremendous cost. They might be disinherited, shunned or even worse.
 2. Consider examples like Genesis 29:31-33 – Leah was “unloved”, a word that literally meant “hated”. A study of that story we find that Jacob showed favoritism and loved Rachel more. But he did still love Leah. In fact, 6 of his 12 sons (and Dinah – Gen. 30:21) were conceived with Leah.
 3. Psalm 5:5, David said of YHWH, “you hate all workers of iniquity”. Yet we know that God loves all mankind which is why He sent Jesus.
 - vi. But if we TRULY desire to be His disciples, we will put Him before any other relationship. Are you counting the cost of discipleship?
- c. **Hating his own life** – Jesus goes as far to say, you must be willing to sacrifice your life for Him if that is what is called for. Consider this in light of our previous discussion.
 - i. Should we really hate ourselves? See Ephesians 5:28-29 – we love our own bodies, and ought to love our wives to the same degree. Recall in our text last week, Luke 9:24-25, *For*

whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

- ii. **But we might also consider this as to priorities.** What are we willing to give up for Him?
Romans 12:1 – we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. Luke 18:22 – the rich, young ruler was told to sell all that he had and give to the poor. Money stood in his way of putting Jesus first. Does He come before you money, your comforts, your hobbies and interests, your pride, relationships, etc.?
 - d. **Taking up his cross** – as we noted in our lesson last week, this describes a willingness to suffer or endure whatever hardships or hostilities that might come with serving Jesus. When Christians behave properly, with love and compassion, if they do not compromise they WILL BE hated by the world. We are seeing that more and more as Christianity is seen as more evil than debased behaviors (and of course the way some professed Christians act does not help our cause).
 - e. **Count the cost** – Jesus is calling for us to take this seriously. He does not accept mediocrity.
 - i. **Building a tower** – Jesus gives the illustration of one intending to build a tower and does not first determine what the cost is going to be. We have seen buildings and business before that a foundation is laid and construction is started, but then it stops and never resumes. In time it falls into disrepair and becomes an eyesore and people begin to question, “Why the failure?”
 - ii. **A king going to war** needs to first assess his strategy and determine if he has the resources to win. If not, it behooves him to do what he can to settle before he loses everything.
 - iii. As Christians, we must realize that being a disciple is free to receive, but it will cost us everything! That is the point.
 - f. Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple – this is the call for TOTAL commitment. Are you willing to give up whatever hinders? Are you willing to give up time to devote to growing in knowledge and serving Him? Will you sacrifice comforts for the sake of your brethren and His causes? Will you give up ANYTHING at all? Some give up some things, but they do not give Him their all. He has to be master over ALL of you. If there is some area that you have not surrendered to Him, you are not totally His! Consider one who does many or most things right. Others see him or her as godly, but there is some area(s) where he struggles and is not faithful to God. IT IS THAT AREA that is hindering him from total commitment.
- II. John 8:31-32 – if you abide in My word...
- a. Speaking to those who believed in Him, Jesus declared, *“If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*
 - b. Here, being a disciple is tied to making His word our home. We must understand that His teachings and realize that His teachings is just as much a part of being His disciple as following His example.
 - c. 2 John 9-11 – recently, we established that the “doctrine of Christ” in this text would have reference to His teachings, INCLUDING that of the apostles. As Paul noted in Galatians 1:11-12, cf. Ephesians 3:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13 – they were commended because they welcomed the word as if it were from God.
 - d. Also consider that we are ABIDING in His word. This means it is more than knowing it, but LIVING it! The word is defined as, “to remain in the same place over a period of time” (L&N 85.55). This is not just the occasional and convenient obedience. It is constant and progressive obedience. Matthew 28:19-20, a disciple has learned, *“to observe all things I have commanded you...”* The tense (present) implies CONTINUED observance. Recall when Jesus said, *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”* James 1:21-25 calls for us to be doers of the word and not hearers only.
 - e. IF we abide in His word, we are going to study regularly and will not willfully neglect assembling with the saints, because that is WHERE we learn more about Him (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- III. John 13:34-35 – by this all will know...

- a. A powerful passage where Jesus emphasizes “a new commandment” “that you love one another.” This was certainly not anything new, but it was reemphasized and refined as Jesus taught this.
- b. We cannot emphasize enough, how much we need each other in a world that is increasingly hostile toward true Christian faith.
- c. IF you are striving to be a true disciple of Christ, you are going to prefer to be with other disciples of Christ. Romans 12:10, 1 Peter 2:17 we, “love the brotherhood”, Philippians 2:3-4, we esteem others better than ourselves and look out for their interests.
- d. And, be reminded that Jesus: 1) Gave us an example (“as I have loved you”) and 2) It is to be evident to others. The way we treat each other and prefer one another as brethren is pivotal to how effective we will be at reaching others. People who are searching for the truth want to find a place where they know people really care about what is truly important. They are watching and, as this verse implies, they have the RIGHT to judge us by the way we treat each other!

IV. John 15:8 – that you bear much fruit

- a. In a text where Jesus describes Himself as the vine and we are branches, He notes that we need to be bearing fruit.
- b. An effective disciple is one that is productive.
- c. What is fruit? Typically, we associate it with converting souls, and that is the ultimate “fruit”. In whatever way we can, we ought to be striving to reach the lost (Mark 16:15, 2 Corinthians 5:11 – knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, Cf. Acts 5:42 & 8:4 – daily in the temple and from house to house they taught and preached Jesus).
- d. What is fruit? It can also be many other things. Simply defined, fruit is produce or that which is produced by planting and watering. Bearing fruit means that we are growing. It could be knowledge – growing in His word (2 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 2:2); it could be our good works (Titus 2:14); It could be our relationship with one another as brethren – growing closer to each other (see III); growing more Christ like – Galatians 5:22-23 – the “fruit of the Spirit”; Hebrews 12:11 (after chastening) speaks of producing “*the peaceable fruit of righteousness*”; etc. Colossians 1:10 says, *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*;
- e. The point is: As a disciple, we are going to be growing and if we are truly dedicated to Him and His will, it WILL become known in time. You will be maturing in various ways and thereby producing fruit.

These are some passages that address what is involved in being a disciple of Jesus. But for that life to begin, you have to become a Christian. Consider Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus, instructing his apostles, noted that to “make disciples” they have to obey the gospel (being baptized). BUT as noted, it does not end there. That is just the beginning of a life devoted to learning from and emulating Him in all that we do. That is what true disciples do. We approach His will with a desire “to observe all things that I have commanded you”.

What about you? Are you striving to be His disciple? If you faithfully serve Him, you WILL draw closer to God. In our next lesson we will begin to address how being a disciple is seen in our relationships. Are you a faithful disciple of Jesus? How can we help you? Think about it!.