

Message - Rob

Turn with me if you would to Matthew 28:16-20. If you don't have a bible with you today, you can use the bible that is in your row and turn to page _____ to follow along.

Read – Matthew 28:16-20

Pray

Often times when we read this passage, or hear a sermon on this passage, we would tend to look at this passage through the lens of what it means to evangelize...."Go and Make Disciples..." And although that's a significant piece of this passage, tonight I want us to take a little different approach and look at the idea that we have to "**be a disciple before we can make disciples.**" Verse 16 says "then the 11 disciples went to Galilee..." (they were already disciples before Christ told them to go and make disciples). And this overarching thought for us is powerful because we reproduce who we are.

And so today, we need to answer 2 questions.

1. What is Discipleship?
2. What are the qualities of being a disciple?

1. What is discipleship? what does it really mean for you and I to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? The word, "disciple" is basically a New Testament word, appearing about 270 times in the Gospels and Acts. Jewish and Greek writers prior to Jesus used it to mean "one who learned through instruction from another or "pupil". But Jesus applied the concept in a unique way. Where others expected their followers to grasp their ideas or theology, Jesus' disciples were expected to grasp who He was as a person.

III. Dr. George Ladd wrote a book called, "A Theology of the New Testament" and in it he wrote, "Discipleship to Jesus was not like discipleship to a Jewish rabbi. The rabbis bound themselves to the Torah; Jesus bound his disciples to himself. The rabbis offered something outside of themselves; Jesus offered himself...."

When we look at this idea of being a disciple, we have to understand that being a disciple goes much deeper than just going through the routines or the motions of Christianity. We can't call ourselves a disciple of Christ by simply checking off the list off "I went to church", "I gave my money", "I helped out at such and such event". These are important things, but discipleship is more than that! ***Discipleship is about living the lifestyle of Jesus himself!*** It's about taking on the attributes, it means taking on the attitudes, and it means taking on the actions of Jesus and living that out on a daily basis!!

The second question that we need to answer today is this...."what are the qualities of being a disciple?"

Let's get into our notes.....

1. A Disciple dies to self-interest - Luke 9:23. "And Jesus was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' " And then in Luke 14:25-27 – "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple". What Jesus was saying is that if you and I are really going to be his disciples, we have to die to our own will, our own agenda, our own plan, in order to accomplish his will, and his agenda, and his plan.

III. One of the classic books on discipleship is titled, "The Cost of Discipleship" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was a German pastor during WWII and because he opposed Hitler and the Nazis, he was imprisoned where he died before the war ended. And in that book he wrote, "The cross is laid on every Christian. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." (The Cost of Discipleship, p.99).

Friends, true discipleship puts Jesus Christ above everything and everyone else. Paul understood this when he wrote in [Galatians 2:20](#) – "I have been crucified with Christ and it's no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me!!"

And we have to ask ourselves today, "How am I doing in dying to my own self-interests?"

And let's start with the basics.....do we put God first or ourselves first when it comes to **gathering** together for church? What about when we have opportunities to **grow** spiritually? Do we take advantage of the opportunities we have? Or what about when it comes to our **Giving** of our time....serving others? Our using our gifts? Or giving of our finances? You see what happens is this.....if we're not doing well in these 3 areas, it means that we are refusing to die to our own self-interests!!

If we are going to do this thing.....we have to make some changes and it begins with who you and I see in the mirror every single morning!! We have to shed some of that selfishness and die to our own self interests.

2. A disciple Imitates Christ - To imitate means to copy, to reproduce, to emulate. And to be imitators of Christ, it will involve three key things that can be found in Ephesians 5:1-7. You may want to write these down in your notes.

a- We need to Imitate His love – (vs. 1-2) Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Friends, there is nothing greater than God's love and HE wants us to imitate His love to those around us. John 13:35 says, "By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

*b- We need to Imitate His holiness – (vs 3-5) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.
4Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

ILL.- A father came home from work one day and he saw his little daughter who had been playing in the mud. He said to her, "My, you're pretty dirty." In her childish way she replied, "Yes, I know daddy, but I'm prettier clean." The truth for us is this.....WE are ALL PRETTIER WHEN WE'RE CLEAN!! Being clean, innocent, and pure is what this idea of holiness is all about! As God's HOLY people, we need to stay away from those things that can get us dirty! [Leviticus 19:2](#)
"Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy."

c- We need to Imitate His wisdom – (vs 6-7) "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7Therefore do not be partners with them." The wisdom that you and I need will only come from God, God's word, and the Godly people that he sends into our lives. People with empty words will not help you imitate God's wisdom. This passage says to stay away from those people because their life is filled with disobedience and it will lead you to living a disobedient life as well. If you want wisdom in your life, I would encourage you to read Proverbs...one per day, and you will notice the change!!

3. A Disciple Surrenders to God's authority - [Romans 13:1](#) says, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, **for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God".**

Friends, you and I cannot be a disciple unless we are willing to give up control of our lives to Jesus as our authority. We have to simply surrender all authority that we think we have if we are going to be a true disciple. We have to surrender to the government authority, the spiritual authority, and even in the relational authority that oversees our lives. We have no authority without first being under authority!!!! And if I'm honest with you today, this issue right here is the cause of most conflicts in the world, in our country, in our homes, in marriages, in our schools, and even in the life of the Church, universal.

III. I once read about a lifeguard on a beach who saw a drowning man. He walked into the surf but didn't go out to rescue him. People gathered on the beach and yelled and screamed at the lifeguard to go out and rescue the drowning man. The lifeguard waded a little deeper, and kept his eye on the drowning man, but the yells and screams of the onlookers didn't motivate him to swim out. Just when it seemed the man was going down for the last time, the lifeguard swam out with strong strokes and grabbed the

man and brought him back to shore. After some spitting and coughing, the man was conscious. But rather than hailing him as a hero, the onlookers were angry at the lifeguard and said, "You coward! You saw he was drowning, why didn't you go out sooner?"

The lifeguard patiently explained, "You can see that he is much bigger and stronger than I am." If I had gone out sooner, he was thrashing and kicked so violently that he would have probably drowned both of us. As long as he was trying to save himself, I couldn't save him. But when he got tired, and gave up, and surrendered his will to my will, then I knew I could save him."

And friends, that's a great lesson about not just salvation but also about surrendering fully to God's authority. As long as we think we are strong enough to save ourselves, we won't surrender to Jesus. It's only when we surrender and realize we are hopelessly lost, and in desperate need of help, that Jesus can come and rescue us!!

III. There's an old hymn that speaks to this point of surrender and it goes something like this....

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, In his presence daily live.
All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow, Worldly pleasures all forsaken, Take me Jesus, take me now. I surrender all, I surrender all; All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

Friends, are you fully surrendered to God's authority in your life today? Are you fully surrendered to that authority that God places in your life today?

Living as a disciple of Christ means that we have to come to Jesus and say, "Jesus, I give up. I give you full control of my life."

If you and I want to be a disciple, this is critical!!

4. A Disciple Commits to abiding in Him - JOHN 8:31: "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.'" Abiding in Christ is one of the requirements for you and I as His disciples. To abide is much more than visiting His Word once a week or even once a day. To abide means that we are living in, and being rooted in, His Word. To be His disciple, we must know and live in His Word. I'm not going to spend much time on this point today but for this point and point #6, I want to encourage you to study John 15, and you will gain a better understanding on what it means to abide in him!!!! Mark it down for some homework!!!! I'll give you a quiz in a few weeks!!

5. A Disciple Inspires others. [1 Thessalonians 1:3](#) – "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance **inspired** by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." As a disciple of Christ, inspiring people should not be a difficult thing to do!!!! Our inspiration should come because of the hope that WE have in Jesus Christ and that hope should be passed along to others!! Our life, our words, our actions, and our stories as disciples should be inspiring for others!!!

6. A Disciple Produces Fruit - JOHN 15:8: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit; showing yourselves to be my disciples." Again, this point and point #4 I want to encourage you to study and saturate yourself with this 15th Chapter of John so that you can better understand what it means to produce fruit. But for our purposes here today, Producing fruit is an absolute requirement for becoming and being His disciple. There is no such thing as a "fruitless disciple". And the fruit that we will bear, if we look at the full context of John 15, we will learn that bearing much fruit means that we will produce new believers and more disciples. As a disciple of Christ, we don't have a choice. We must produce fruit.

7. A Disciple Loves others – JOHN 13:35: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." The word translated in this verse as *love* is the word for "unconditional love" in Greek. It is the word *agape* which implies an unlimited love, and identifies us as true disciples. Now the problem comes when too many Christians love one another in word but not in deed. Agape love is more than meeting together in rows in a church sanctuary or in a classroom circle. It is more than meeting together in a home as part of a small group. Jesus prayed in John 17:11 that His disciples would "be one as He and the Father are one so that the world might know that the Father sent Him into the world." This oneness comes from agape love ... from the distinctive love that disciples have for one another. Now I want to just give a little side note here.....sometimes I think that we confuse this unconditional love with letting people get away with things. Parents, if you don't set up boundaries for your kids, and to hold them accountable and responsible for their actions, that's not love! Unconditional love includes boundaries, and accountability, and consequences for their actions. WE could take a look at the story of the Israelites in the OT, and know that God had an unconditional love for them, even though they kept messing up and living disobedient lives. BUT, they had to deal with the consequences of their actions. A true disciple loves, but doesn't let people off the hook!!

8. A Disciple Evangelizes the lost. Here's where Matthew 28:19 comes into play a little more deeply for us – "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded."

Evangelizing the lost is more simple than we think....It starts by **investing** in relationships with lost people. From there, it moves on to **initiating** spiritual conversations. Once you are at that place in your relationship with an unbeliever, you can **inspire** them by telling your story about how you met Christ. And then you can **invite** them to the community and **include** them in the life of the church. Evangelism is not a difficult thing to accomplish but it's just a natural flow of building relationships with people.

And next week, you and I have the opportunity to continue the evangelistic efforts in the life of the church by INVITING people to join us here for Back To Church Sunday. I hope you do invite somebody. Don't miss the opportunity to bring somebody with you. You never know what God will do in their lives if you step out in obedience and invite them.

Conclusion

So let me wrap it up for us today.....as you look at this list, what is one area of today's lesson that God speaking to you about? Maybe there is more than one area, but what is the one that sticks out in

your mind the most? Can I encourage you to allow God to do a great work in your life this coming week in that one area!!!???

Maybe it's

dying to self

Imitating Him

Surrendering to his authority

Committing to Abiding in him

Inspiring others with your story

Producing fruit

Loving others

Evangelizing the lost

Whatever it might be, allow God to do a great work in you this week!

Pray