

## **Introduction**

Discipleship is at the heart of what we are all about as followers of Jesus. The great commission left by Jesus before departing for the right hand of God was this: Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This was not a new thing but the very thing Jesus had been modeling all along.

[Read Text and Pray]

7 marks of discipleship

### **I. Discipleship is the Call of Jesus**

The Light of the world was shining in Galilee. He is the one who was walking by the Sea of Galilee. It is Jesus who called men to invest themselves in his enterprise. It is Jesus who was saying, "Follow me."

On one level His call was not that attractive. He was not a corporate mogul in a slick suit promising a huge salary and affordable health care. He did not dress to impress. In appearance he looked no better than any other man. He was no better than ordinary in every outward way. On the outside, he was a humble Jewish carpenter turned itinerant preacher. And what is he preaching? Repentance!?! But everything he is not in terms of the standards of this world, he is in terms of what is valued by heaven. He is far greater than the CEO of a corporate giant. Why he is the CEO of the entire universe. This is the God of the universe. He is the king of the world. He created it all, and here he is seeking rebels to come follow after him, and come home.

If you look at some companies today like Apple or Microsoft or Walmart or Exxon Mobil, you are looking at the most profitable companies among the Fortune 500. Could you imagine your wealth if you could have invested in these companies when they were just getting off the ground? Imagine Sam Walton or Steve Jobs or John D. Rockefeller or Bill Gates coming to you in the early days of their enterprises and asking you to invest with their company? You could not have known then how successful they would become. They could be assuring you of success, but how could you know

that they would not wind up on the scrap heap of failed companies like Enron, Solyndra, Betamax, Edsel, or Commodore Computers?

There is definitely a measure of faith in following Jesus. All things are in the process of being put under the feet of His kingdom. But this word shows us he is the king. And of his kingdom there will be no end. And just as he came walking by the Sea one day to call men to follow, this king is calling today right here right now. He is calling you. The king is calling you. Will you follow?

## **II. Discipleship is a Personal Call**

The way Matthew words this passage is striking to me. He could have said simply, "One day Jesus called four fishermen and they came to follow him. But no. There is more to be communicated than just that.

Matthew, then says, while Jesus was walking by the sea, he saw these men. They were fishermen and busy at work. Two were casting their nets. Two were mending their nets. These men have names. There is Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew. And there are John and James. They were the sons of Zebedee, and Zebedee was there with the two men. This account oozes with personal interaction. Jesus is the God of the universe but he has entered the reality of this world where people walk by the sea and where people work hard fishing to make a living, and people have fathers and brothers and families.

Jesus does not wave a wand from far off to mechanistically get what he wants. What he wants is to come into the thick of the personal situation and to summon personally these men to follow him. And he wants them in the midst of their lives to knit themselves to him, to know him and to follow him.

This is what he wants with all his disciples. He knows you by name. He knows what your life is like. He knows your struggles, challenges, victories, defeats. He knows your dreams and your secrets. He knows you. He comes to you where you are. And his call to discipleship is to know him, walk with him, learn from him. Yes, he is the God of the universe, but he is not off out there somewhere aloof. He is right here.

### **III. Discipleship is a Life Impacting Call**

It affects your every day life. Jesus is at work in the normal everyday circumstances. Again I am taken by Matthew's mention of the fact that this call happened in the course of a stroll Jesus was taking by the lake. While walking, he saw two sets of brothers and called them to be disciples.

The seemingly ordinary in Jesus' life was never ordinary. Extraordinary stuff took place in the context of the ordinary. If ever anyone really redeemed the time, it was Jesus. He used every circumstance and every opportunity to the full. Whether attending a wedding or feeding crowds in the middle of nowhere, or talking to a woman by a well, he used the encounters of a busy, busy life to impact others. He used common everyday situations to teach the truth and instruct the power of God.

And if you follow Jesus, he wants the whole of your life to be impacted as well. The smallest of the details of life are opportunities to display the transformation he makes in the lives of those who follow after him. Why Paul exhorted the Corinthians whether they ate or drank or in whatever they might do that they would do it all for the glory of God.

The call of Jesus to discipleship is a call to have your entire life impacted by him, not merely some religious component that is a small slice of your life that you give over to him so you can have the rest of it for yourself. Following him does not mean you say your prayers at night after living for yourself all day. It means serving him all the time, in the big things and the little things. It means honoring God with walks by the lake and cleaning the kitchen and repairing the car, taking the bus, driving your car, and flying on a plane. If you are a disciple of Christ, you no longer have a life; it is his, every part of it.

It is not only about your time but also your body. Paul instructs the Corinthians that sexual immorality is a sin committed against one's own body. And that is a sin against God because, as he says, "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God . . . You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body."

Discipleship is a life impacting call. As surely as Jesus always lived to obey his Father, that is also the life of the disciple of Jesus. The question before every Christ follower each morning is not "what do I want to do with my life today." It is rather, "Lord, what do you want to do with your life through me today?"

#### **IV. Discipleship is a Purposeful Call**

A. As Jesus took notice of the two brothers, Simon and Andrew, they were casting a net into the sea. Their approach was a little different than what we commonly think of when we think about fishing. You know Randy Slak manages the sporting goods department over at Walmart, and I dare say that he has a lot of tackle for catching fish in his department. And much of it has to do with rods and reels and line and lures. And while I will bet he has a lot different rods and a lot of different reels, I would guess that the biggest variety in the fishing department consists of the variety of lures that a fisherman might use to bait a fish. That is how we do it. We bait a hook with a worm or a lure and we try to deceive a fish into biting. When he bites the hook, he is snagged. Now we can reel him in.

Simon and Andrew were not casting lures, however. They were casting their nets. They cast the net out into the lake where the fish were in order to draw it together to capture the fish.

And Jesus, looking at the two brothers, said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Now Jesus then went on and encountered James and John. They also were fishermen. They were mending their nets, and Jesus presumably said much the same to them. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

B. The call of Jesus reflects a threefold purpose.

1. First, they were to follow him. Jesus is calling them to become his disciples, his followers. He was calling them to submit to him, learn from him, own his cause, and do what he does. He was calling them to follow his teaching, his path, and his ways. It was a call to deny self and live for him. This is the call to all who would come after Christ today. Coming to faith in Christ as one's savior is inseparable from the call to come learn from and

live for him. There is no such thing as a Christian who does not follow Jesus. The ones who follow him have seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and they own him as Lord. He is our King, our Leader, our Savior, and our God and we worship him.

The purpose of Jesus' call to follow was to learn from him, live for him, and become like him. That's his purpose in calling us as well.

2. The second aspect of his purpose was to do accomplish a work in them. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Three words are key, "I will make." These were fishermen. They were not men who fished. They were fishermen. This is what they knew. They knew how to maneuver the lake in their boats. They knew how to cast the net, to wash and to mend their nets. Fishing was not something they did on the side. This was their identity. It was their livelihood. And Jesus was indicating that if they followed him, he would empower and transform them to be something different, something better. He wasn't calling them to change themselves. He was calling them to follow and he would do the changing. He would bring about the transformation. The task of being what Christ has purposed for us to be is not our responsibility. What we have to focus on is following, learning, and obeying. He will do the changing. He will do the transforming.

This is the confidence that Paul had as he wrote to the Philippians brothers and sisters in Christ. He said, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus."

This promise of Jesus should encourage each of us. The main thing we need to be concerned with is following. He will bring about the changing. Do what he tells you. Think like he tells you. Adopt attitudes he commends. And in this way he will make you something you could not make of yourself. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

3. The third aspect of Christ's purpose for his followers was what he was going to make them to become. And here it is. These men knew what it meant to fish for fish. Jesus would transform them into fishers of men.

Now there is a lot that is part of being a disciple of Christ. It impacts all of life as we have already underscored this morning. But of all that it means to be a disciple of Jesus, here is one thing being a disciple of Jesus surely involves. Being a fisher of men is at the heart of being a disciple of Christ Jesus.

So what is it to be a fisher of men? It is to be catching men and women, boys and girls for Christ. It means doing what Jesus did. Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom—It is at hand. And proclaiming the need to be ready by turning from sin. It means calling them to also become followers of Christ, owning his cause, serving his purpose, and obeying his voice.

Jesus himself is fishing when he comes to these fishermen. He is fishing for them. And then what does he do? He calls them to himself. He takes them into his life, under his wing, and into his living breathing laboratory of hands-on learning.

C. So there are many purposes unto which Jesus calls even his disciples today, but at the heart of his call is that each disciple be a disciple-maker. Each one of us by being a disciple of Jesus should be fishing for men. All of us should be in the life-endeavor of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

We need to share Christ wherever we go. We need to be involved in relationships in which we are helping grow one another up in Christ to be what he will make of us. Evangelism is not only for the evangelists. Growing and maturing the body is not just for the pastors. It is for us all. And my vision for the continued maturity of Grace Community Church is a vision that sees more and more of us meeting together in discipling relationships, spurring, teaching, and encouraging each other more and more, growing more and more into the likeness of Christ. And that means we will also be vigorously sharing the gospel with people all around us as well.

## **V. Discipleship is a Costly Call**

This call was not simply to ask these men to spend the day with Jesus. It was a call to spend their lives following him. For them it meant leaving the family business. It meant leaving their current occupations. It meant

leaving their comfort zones. For James and John it meant leaving Zebedee. It meant leaving all their hopes and dreams of a pleasurable life on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The call to come and follow Jesus is a call to come and die, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer is known for saying. To be a disciple of Jesus is to live in denial of self. It is to live like Jesus lived, not to be served but to serve and to give our lives for the benefit of the many. It is to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. It is to pursue his purpose. It is to love Jesus more than anything or anyone else. It is to hate everyone and everything else as compared to how much we love him.

Jesus warned people to count the cost. He said if you want to build a tower, you sit down and figure out if you have enough resources to complete it because you will be a laughing stock if you run out of funding when it is only half built. A king headed into battle carefully considers if he has the soldiers necessary to win the battle. If not then he seeks terms of peace. "So therefore," he said, "any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." The cost is high. The price is great. He asks for everything. Salvation is not something you can buy, but it will cost you everything.

## **VI. Discipleship is a Worthy Call**

It is attention grabbing in this short narrative that when Simon and Andrew heard the call of Jesus, they left their nets. When James and John heard the call of Jesus, they left the boat and their father. Jesus called and these men left it all. This wasn't the first time they had met Jesus. It is not the first time that they had considered who he was. Andrew was present down in the region of the Jordan where John the Baptist was baptizing. He heard John say of Jesus, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He had gone to get his brother Simon Peter to bring him to Jesus.

They had some time to count the cost. And they decided he was worth it.

Following Jesus is costly, but really it is not. Everything it costs to follow Jesus is more than returned by his mercy and grace. Jesus promised, "Whoever would lose his life for my sake will find it." It costs your life but

you find it. On the other hand whoever keeps his life will lose it. Jim Elliott, the martyred missionary to the Auca Indians of Ecuador has famously said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Isaiah asks in 55:2-3, "why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me [says the Lord] and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food; incline your ear, and come to me that your soul may live and I will make an everlasting covenant with you."

Jesus assured his disciples that "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29)

You just cannot quantify the blessing that comes through Christ. It is a weight that cannot be measured. It is a joy that cannot be told. But such it is both in this life and in the one to come.

## **VII. Discipleship is an Urgent Call**

Here is the final aspect of discipleship that jumps out at us from this text. Did you notice that when the two sets of brothers were called both responded suddenly? Jesus called and immediately Simon and Andrew left their nets. Jesus called and immediately James and John left the boat and their father and followed him.

There is an urgency to Jesus' call. Here is not a telemarketer trying to sell you siding for your house or a subscription to a magazine. Here is the king of the ages calling you to follow. You dare not wait. You dare not put him off. Today is the acceptable time. Today, do not harden your hearts. With haste is the way that we should respond to the call of Jesus and it is the way we should urge others to respond to the call as well.

Furthermore, the urgency of the response says something about the way we should live our lives for Jesus. Time is short. We all have this built-in longing to coast, to veg, to just take it easy. But Christ calls us to be diligent, to be urgent. He says, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no can work." (John 9:4) Coasting



is not an option in this life. The time is urgent. The cause is worthy. The souls of men are at stake and the glory of God hangs in the balance.

### **Conclusion**

In that spirit, I call you on behalf of Jesus Christ. Come! Follow! Take up your cross! Take up your nets. By the grace of God I urge you who have been caught for Christ to cast the net of the gospel out that other souls may enter into the joy of the Lord.