

Sermon Notes



Lesson 29 / December 3, 2017

DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 4:18-5:48

Key Verse

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’
Immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

Matthew 4:19-20

Discussion Questions

1. How does Jesus demonstrate his authority in his calling of the disciples and in the Sermon on the Mount?
2. What did discipleship cost the first disciples? What does it cost us today?
3. Why do you suppose the disciples responded “immediately” to Jesus’ call?
4. In the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12), what are the blessings we receive as disciples?
5. How should disciples live, according to Matthew 5?
6. How can we be perfectly righteous? What role does grace play in Jesus’ demands?
7. How does Jesus call people to discipleship today? How do we respond?
8. Is following Jesus easy or hard? What makes following Jesus worth the cost?

Question 57: What is a disciple?

Short Answer: *A disciple is a follower of Jesus.*

Full Answer: *A disciple is a follower of Jesus, called and blessed by God, who surrenders everything in devotion to Jesus as king.*

Question 58: As disciples, how shall we live?

Short Answer: *As disciples, we shall honor Jesus as our king.*

Full Answer: *As disciples, we shall honor Jesus as our king by seeking after his kingdom and surpassing righteousness and by embodying surpassing love for God and neighbor.*

Summary

At the heart of the Christian faith is the simple call to follow Jesus. Shortly after his baptism and temptation, Jesus undertakes what we call his “public ministry.” He begins traveling and preaching the same message as John the Baptist about the coming kingdom of heaven (3:2; 4:17). Jesus comes as a king and he establishes his reign by gathering to himself a people who will populate his kingdom and live under his rule. His will be a kingdom of disciples (= followers).

Jesus calls his first disciples as he walks along the shore of the Sea of Galilee (4:18-22). When he sees some fishermen hard at work casting their nets into the sea, Jesus issues them his infamous call: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The call itself is straightforward, but the fishermen hear urgency in the call. They *immediately* walk away from their boats and they become disciples of Jesus. They will now become fishers of men, casting the net of the gospel and drawing people by faith so that they too are brought into the boat of Jesus’ kingdom.

Being a disciple of Jesus does not mean merely liking him on Facebook or following his Twitter feed (@Jesus #followJesus), but it does mean fully surrendering our lives to him and devoting ourselves to walking in his ways. For these first disciples, Jesus’ call requires them to literally leave behind their careers and their families to be physically present with Jesus in his travels. For other disciples, Jesus’ call requires them to stay where they are, in their current homes and careers, but to live in a new way as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, where Jesus is king.

As crowds of people gather around Jesus and contemplate his call, Jesus preaches a sermon we call the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matt 5-7). This sermon functions like a constitution for his kingdom, as Jesus presents the attributes, blessings, and demands of life in his kingdom.

The sermon begins with the Beatitudes (Matt 5:2-12), a poetic series of blessings that together paint a portrait of the attributes of his followers who are poor in spirit and meek and who mourn and are persecuted even as they show mercy and seek peace. Jesus’ kingdom will be a kingdom of downtrodden misfits, a kingdom of those who have received the least from this world and who have the least to offer to this world. Indeed, the more bankrupt you are in spirit before Jesus, the more fitted you

are for discipleship in his kingdom. We check our privilege at the door of his kingdom.

The Beatitudes also set forth the overwhelmingly unbelievable and too-good-to-be-true blessings of discipleship. God blesses us by setting his favor upon us and bestowing to us his good gifts. We do not merit such blessing – indeed, we are poor in spirit – but he gives to us freely, by his grace. He gives to us a place in the kingdom of heaven, he makes the earth our inheritance, he comforts and satisfies us, and he makes us sons of God and allows us to see God himself. Such is the upside down way of Jesus: that we bring nothing into his kingdom, but we stand to gain everything. As followers of Jesus, let us never forget the magnitude of blessings we receive.

Jesus next sets forth his demands for how we ought to live as his disciples (Matt 5:13-48). Jesus calls us to live with such excessive righteousness that we will be perfect even as God is perfect (Matt 5:20, 48), and he lays out a series of radical rules for discipleship. Gone are the days of easy law-abiding, when the law of Moses simply required avoiding murder and adultery and the like. Now Jesus calls for our righteousness to penetrate to our very core, to the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts, so that we are internally transformed in our anger, lust, deceit, etc. Move over, Moses, there’s a new lawgiver in town! No wonder the crowds were astonished by the authority of Jesus’ teaching (Matt 7:28-29).

His demands may seem impossible, but remember that Jesus himself possesses perfect righteousness, having resisted the devil’s temptations, and he promises to satisfy our own thirst for righteousness (Matt 5:6). Indeed, he forgives our sins (Matt 6:12), blesses us with his righteousness, and enables us to live obediently before him, and one day he will finally perfect us too. He does not promise it will be easy, but he does promise it will be worth it.

Even today, Jesus continues to establish his kingdom and he gathers people into his domain. The blessings of his kingdom are immense and the demands are daunting, but his call to discipleship is simple: “Follow me.” He calls universally to every person regardless of who you are or what you have. He requires only that you respond with faith and surrender, and that you come empty-handed, prepared to receive his blessings and to live in his ways. He is calling. Will you follow?