**August 27, 2023 Matthew 4:18-22**

***What is a Disciple?***

**Scripture:** *Matthew 4:18-22 NRSV*

*(18)As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen. (19)And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." (20)Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (21)As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. (22)Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.*

**Notes:**

1. What is a ***Disciple***?
2. Who does Jesus ***invite*** into discipleship?
   1. ***Everyone*** is invited to be a disciple,
   2. Jesus invited his first disciples to learn from ***him***.
3. What is the ***call***?
   1. The call comes directly from ***Christ***.
   2. He invites us to join him in ***God’s mission*** to the world
4. The call has two levels of ***commitment***:
   1. Follow Jesus in personal ***relationship*** and commitment.
   2. We are ***sent*** out to “fish for people”.
5. How should we ***respond***?
   1. The first disciples responded “***at once***”
   2. The first disciples left ***everything***:
   3. The first disciples followed Jesus ***unconditionally***;
6. Jesus’s call for a ***response*** has not changed today;
   1. A disciple responds to God’s ***prevenient*** *grace*
   2. A disciple accepts the offer of ***saving*** *grace*.
   3. A disciple accepts God’s offer of ***sanctifying*** g*race*
   4. A disciple grows because of God’s ***sustaining*** *grace*.
7. How far are you ***willing*** to go?
   1. Jesus ***came*** for each one of us.
   2. Follow Jesus’s ***example***.
8. He is ***asking*** something from each of us.
   1. Become an ***obedient*** child of our Lord and Savior.
   2. Lay your ***will***, lay your ***life*** down at the feet of Jesus and become a ***disciple*** of Jesus.
   3. Realign your ***priorities***, and put Jesus ***first***.

**Script:**

What is a Disciple? Growing up as soon as I heard the word disciple, I knew they were talking about the twelve men who followed Jesus and continued His work after His crucifixion. But man was I wrong. I later learned that a disciple consisted of everybody they ever spoke of in scripture who followed Jesus from one place to another. I was still wrong again. Eventually I came to realize that a disciple was anybody in scripture who followed Jesus and learned what he taught and strived to live by this. Again, I was wrong, but I was getting closer.

What is a disciple, who do you think are disciples and what does it take to become one? Are you a disciple? Do you meet the criteria of being a disciple from your perspective? I guess the question I may want to ask first is do you even want to be a disciple?

Today in our time together, we will address this term disciple and get a better understanding of what it is. Jesus came to earth to reveal the loving heart of God and invite people to live in a personal relationship with him. He came to die on the cross for the sins of humanity. He rose from the dead to validate everything he said and did in his earthly ministry. But he did not undertake this grand divine mission by himself. He invited men and women to follow him, men and women to be discipled by him, and share his message and teachings with the world when he returned to his Father. Our passage today addresses this issue so would you stand with me as we share in the reading of Matthew 4:18-22?

*(18) As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen. (19) And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." (20) Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (21) As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. (22) Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Matthew 4:18-22 NRSV*

Today’s text invites us to answer three important questions: Who does Jesus invite into discipleship? What is the call? And how should we respond? As I grew in my knowledge of Christ and the meaning of discipleship; I continued to draw closer and closer to the true meaning of discipleship. But these three questions will hopefully clear up any misconceptions and questions that you may have.

Who does Jesus invite into discipleship with him? The short, simple answer is everyone! That includes you! You don’t have professional religious training? Good. You don’t need it. Were Jesus’s disciples trained religious leaders? Were they educated by experts in religious matters? No and No. Jesus was a carpenter, the first disciples were fishermen, and Paul was a tentmaker. They all came from the everyday, workaday world of common labor. Jesus’s first disciples learned about life from the experience of hard work and discipline. They learned from success and failure. They learned from interacting in family relationships. They learned from the hard knocks of life. Jesus invited his first disciples to learn from him through on-the-job training. He still invites disciples to learn from him in this manner today.

What is the call? John tells us that Jesus already had a relationship with the first disciples when he called them to follow him (John 1:40-42).

*“ (40)One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. (41)He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). (42)He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).” John 1:40-42 NRSV*

The call to Christian discipleship comes directly from Christ. He invites us to join him in God’s mission to the world—partners with Jesus. This is not a generic call; the call is personal. Jesus called his disciples by name. He invites you personally as well. The call has two levels of commitment: Very simply, Jesus says, “Follow me” (Matt. 4:19). Follow Jesus in personal relationships and consecrated commitment. Tell men, women, youth, and children about the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Like the first disciples, we are sent out to “fish for people” (v. 19). The call requires laser-focused attention on our assignment to share with God in his mission to our world. Forsake everything that demands your attention; live exclusively for the kingdom of God.

How should we respond? The first disciples responded “at once” (Matt. 4:20) and “immediately” (v. 22), without lingering contemplation, procrastination, second-guessing, or turning back. The first disciples left everything: employment, livelihood, family, familiarity, and obligations. The first disciples followed Jesus unconditionally; there were no loopholes in their level of commitment. The first disciples accepted the call as more than mental assent; they accepted the call to action—every day for as long as Jesus needed their service. Jesus’s call for a response from his disciples has not changed today; what he required of his first disciples; he requires of us as well.

In his book *A People of Grace*, author Sam Barber offers important definitions for “disciple” and “discipleship.” He says,

A disciple responds to God’s *prevenient* *grace* by accepting the offer of *saving* *grace*. A disciple becomes aware of and then accepts God’s offer of *sanctifying* g*race* and grows in Christlikeness because of God’s *sustaining grace*. Then a disciple takes up the mission of God to join with God in helping someone else along his or her journey of grace. A disciple is a person of grace. We call the process of growing in our relationship with God and inviting others along with us in the journey of grace *discipleship*.[[1]](#footnote-0)

How far are you willing to go for the one who gave it all for you? He came to this world to offer redemption not just to the righteous, but also to those who are wandering this world lost and broken. He came for each one of us, because as we said last week, we are his masterpiece. He taught what it meant to love, what it means to be grace filled, what it means to be faithful. He set the example, all we have to do is follow that example.

He is calling your name, just as he called mine; “Kevin follow me, learn from me, imitate my way of life. My child, I love you so; so much that I am willing to lay down my life for you; come and commit your life to be my disciple. He is asking something from each one of us today. For some there may be a calling into service at local charities. For some there may be only a call to be His child; allow me to let you in on a little secret, you are already His child. Some of us are obedient, but the rest of us are disobedient; you can’t be somewhere in between. If you are not obedient, then you are disobedient. Become an obedient child of our Lord and Savior.”

Hear his word, read his commands and obey them all. Yes there may be times you stumble and fall, but pick yourself up, find another brother or sister to lean upon and start over again. If you are a thief, stop stealing. If you are a gossip, stop gossiping. If you are a liar, stop lying especially to yourself when you think that others are believing what you are telling them. If you are cheating in any aspect of the word; stop it, stop cheating, stop cheating others and especially yourself. Lay your will, lay your life down at the feet of Jesus and become a Holy disciple of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And let me close with this; Jesus may not ask you to quit your job or forsake family responsibilities. In fact one of the most important ministries a person will ever have is the ministry to their family. However, he will ask you to realign your priorities in life. He will ask you to put him first in your life; to seek God’s kingdom first and maintain a primary citizenship in heaven as you live and work for him on earth. “Sold out,” “all in”—those phrases describe a true disciple of Jesus.

1. . Sam Barber, *A People of Grace: Becoming Disciples Together* (Kansas City: Foundry, 2023), 51-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)