

DISCIPLE

With Jesus | In Community | On Mission

SERMON TITLE: "With Jesus"

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SCRIPTURE: Matthew 10.1-25

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The earliest followers of Jesus didn't call themselves Christians. They didn't think of themselves as members of a religion. They considered themselves disciples – students and apprentices of Rabbi Jesus. So if this is who we're supposed to be, how do we begin to define 'disciple'?

Is being a disciple about knowing certain things? Doing certain things? Saying, believing, or rejecting certain things? If so, what? Is there a manual for this? How long does it take? And what's the point of it all? Or simply, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

In Matthew 1, the angel says that people will call Jesus "Emmanuel," which means "God with us." And Matthew closes with Jesus himself says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." This means that the entire gospel of Matthew is bookended with the idea of divine with-ness. In Jesus, God has come to be with us. But the gospel writers also talk about how Jesus called his disciples to be *with* him (Mark 3.14, etc). And this two-sided withness is supposed to change things. This is part of true discipleship.

We know very plainly what life with Jesus looked like for his first followers. But what about for us today? If we truly experience God's nearness in Christ, what shape will our lives take? How will it form us? How should being with Jesus as his disciple change who we are? This is what Matthew wants his readers to think about in Matthew 10.

In this passage, Matthew is doing something very particular. Yes, he describes the details of what the first followers of Jesus were doing and how they should do it. Jesus tells his friends what they should say (announce the kingdom's presence), what they should do (seek healing and restoration for people), how they could do it (by the Spirit's power). But Matthew 10 is not random encouragement about discipleship. It's not an FYI about what might happen if you're on team Jesus. Matthew 10 is the specific fruit that grows on the tree of being *with* Jesus. Everything in Matthew 10 is all the precise result of him being with us, and us being with him. Here's how:

In Matthew 4, Jesus says "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is a summary of Jesus' entire ministry. Then he calls his disciples so that they can be with him, and he's going to show them what 'kingdom come' is all about. Then it says, "And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, *and* healing every disease and every affliction among the people." That's Matthew 4.23. Now look at Matthew 9.35, "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, *and* healing every disease and every affliction." So, why does Matthew repeat himself? Because everything in between those two verses is what 'kingdom come' looks like.

In Matthew 5-9, there's a content piece, and there's a caring piece. Chapters 5-7 are the first part (Sermon on the Mount), and chapters 8-9 are the second part (people experiencing life change). I like how Luke says it, that Jesus was mighty in word and mighty in works. This is why Matthew repeats himself because these are the two legs on which Jesus walked as King among us. And you can talk about these two legs in different ways: mighty words and mighty works, heralding and healing, believing and behaving, teaching and reaching. But the point is, these are the two realities that define the presence of the kingdom of God as it has come in Jesus.

And this why Matthew 10 says what it says. Jesus' disciples are with him when he calls them in chapter 4. They go up on the mountain with him in chapters 5-7. They are with him for all of the mighty works of chapters 8-9. And so, chapter 10 is Jesus passing them the baton. It's their ball. It's their turn to do what he has been doing. Discipleship is never just taught or caught; it's always both. And both require being *with* Jesus. So, when we read what Jesus commissions his followers to do in Matthew 10, it's all the exact same stuff that he had been doing. And this drives home the simple point:

The ultimate result of life *with* Jesus is life *like* Jesus.

This is the broadest answer to our question “If we’re doing life with Jesus, how should we change?” And this doesn’t just sound good. It’s exactly what Matthew 10 says: “It is enough for the disciple to be *like* his rabbi and the servant *like* his master.” This is Genesis 1. We were created to be like him, and to enjoy and reflect all that he is. That’s the goal, that we would be WITH JESUS so much that we’d become LIKE JESUS to the point that the whole world would notice.

So, do some inventory. Do you deliberately spend time with Jesus – in his word, in prayer, with his people, talking about him? Are you with him by caring for others, pursuing truth, and asking him what he’s doing around you? Do you ever take a walk, and talk *to* him? Do you, in honesty, pour out your heart to him – whether it’s confession or confusion or gratitude or hope? He wants that! He is not God-with-us for us to neglect being with him. This is what he wanted for his friends in Matthew 10, and he wants the same for us today.

But what does this with-ness-that-leads-to-likeness include? Well, it mainly includes making sure that we’re walking on the same two legs that Jesus did. Remember, there was a content piece AND a caring piece. Equality AND diversity. Justice AND peace. Heralding AND healing. Doctrine AND duty. Teaching AND reaching. It’s different everywhere, even in Matthew 10:16, “I’m sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be as wise as serpents AND as innocent as doves.” Walking on these two legs is hard because it often feels like a contradiction. “Go be snake-doves” doesn’t sound easy. But however we define it, the most important thing is that we *do* it – that we’re with Jesus to the point of being like Jesus. Or as John says, “We have seen his glory, full of grace AND truth.” If we’re following Jesus closely, and truly spending time with him, our lives should be able to be described in similar terms.

Lastly, it’s clear that with-ness leads to likeness, but how are the two connected? What is the bridge between the two? Christian thinker Jamie Smith is helpful here:

“Jesus is a teacher who doesn’t just inform our intellect but forms our very loves. He isn’t content to simply deposit new ideas into your mind; he is after nothing less than your wants, your loves, and your longings. His ‘teaching’ doesn’t just touch the calm, cool, collected space of reflection and contemplation; he is a teacher who invades the heated, passionate regions of the heart. To follow Jesus is to become a student of the Rabbi who teaches us how to love. To be a disciple of Jesus is to enroll in the school of charity.”

What Smith is getting at is that with-ness leads to likeness when our loves are changed and our wants are transformed. The bridge between being *with* Jesus and living *like* Jesus is a bridge of us trusting him to change our desires. And we must ask ourselves, “Do I want my wants changed by Jesus?” This is what is happening with the force of Matthew’s story. These disciples spent so much time with Jesus, witnessing God’s ‘love and power’ and ‘grace and truth’ in his life, that they themselves began to long for the same. Their desire to partake in his kind of life grew more and more until they eventually carried on Jesus’ kingdom ministry just like he did. Is that what’s happening with your story? Are you communing deeply with Jesus? Do you want what he wants? To the point that you live as he lived? This is what we were made for. This is how we combat all rival rabbis. This is how we most honor Jesus. This is discipleship.

And we should seek to be with him because he has first sought to be with us. The gospel of ‘God-with-us’ is the basis for a discipleship of ‘us-with-God,’ and this is supremely seen at the cross. Hebrews says that he came to be with us by being like us, and that led him to the cross. Jesus came to be with us in all of the sin and hate and mess and evil of this world, but he wasn’t a spectator or bystander. Rather, he took it all into himself for us, to free us from its power. He came as a human, like us, and stood in our place so that we could have our Garden-of-Eden job description back – to be like him, to be his image-bearers. And this restoration of reflection happens as we trust him and depend on him and learn from him. And this is all a reminder that all of discipleship hangs on the teacher, and our teacher is also our Savior. Because of this, we can draw near to God, and live life with him, because he was first drawn near to us in Christ. And he is our Rabbi and our Rescuer.

Discussion Starters —

- What is a wrong way that you have understood discipleship?
- Personally, what keeps you from being with Jesus?
- Personally, what does it look like for you to be with Jesus?
- What stood out to you most about this passage/message?
- In Matthew, how does being with Jesus lead to being like Jesus?
- Who is someone you know who lives out grace and truth like Jesus?
- What is the connection (or the bridge) between being with Jesus and being like Jesus?
- Do you ever not want Jesus to change your wants? Why?