



DISCIPLE

With Jesus | In Community | On Mission

SERMON TITLE: The Invitation

DATE: May 31, 2020

SCRIPTURE: Selected Scriptures from the Gospel of Mark

PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

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?

Here are the main points from today's message and the call-outs that were on the screen.

Even though we don't think of it this way, we all have been "discipled" by somebody, probably several somebodies. What if a lot of what we have learned about being a "Christian" from the church has come more from church traditions (denominations/non-denominations) than from Jesus? Could that be a reason that many Christians feel that something is missing in their spiritual lives? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today? Jesus wasn't the first person in history to have disciples. The Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbis had disciples. To be chosen as a disciple you had to be the top of your class. If you made the cut, you had two main goals. First, to be with your rabbi. Second, to become like your rabbi. You wanted to be with your rabbi to learn from him to be like him so you could do what the rabbi did. In the stories of Jesus calling his disciples, he turned the whole idea of discipleship upside down. The best of the best students chose their rabbis by following them around until the rabbi decided they had what it took to become a rabbi themselves. Jesus chose 12 men who were ordinary, middle of the bell curve, average guys. He chose them—they didn't choose him. Unheard of! And he chose them to be with him so he could send them out to preach—send them out to do what he did.

So what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in our world today? To be a disciple of Jesus today means the same thing as it did in Jesus' day. A disciple of Jesus is someone whose highest purpose in life is to be with Jesus to become like Jesus and carry on his kingdom vision for the world. At FG, we talk about how this happens in three contexts—or three rhythms of life. So another way to describe a disciple today could be—A disciple of Jesus is someone who lives their life with Jesus, in community, and on mission. Look at Mark 2:13-14—notice—Jesus called the 12 to be with him. He called "12" to live in community with him. And, he called the 12 to do what he did—to carry his mission forward.

But sadly, the number of disciples in the church today seems to be dwindling. The last thing Jesus said before he ascended back into heaven was this (my paraphrase)—"As you go, and wherever you go, make disciples of people who are near you and who are far away, baptizing them and teaching them everything I have taught you." That's our main mission as a church. It's our prime directive. But it's not happening like you would expect. Why not? Two reasons; First, discipleship is not happening in the church today because many Christians think they are disciples when they are not. This is not meant as condemnation. It's meant to be thought-provoking. My concern is, what many of us call "Christianity"—what many people call "following Jesus" is not what Jesus calls discipleship. If that's true, we have to find out from Jesus what discipleship really is to get back on track. Hopefully, this series will help with that. But there is an even greater problem. I'll build up to it this way. Read Mark 8:34. This verse and those that follow is perhaps the greatest passage on discipleship in the NT. But I want to focus only on one thing in this verse that rarely gets emphasized when we talk about discipleship from this passage. —#1—notice that the invitation of Jesus is to become a disciple or an apprentice, not to become a Christian. In this text, there are only two groups of people. There are the disciples, and then there's the crowd. All through Mark's Gospel, he uses these words as a way of getting his readers to ask themselves, "Where am I? Am I a disciple or I am just a face in the crowd? Second, notice that this invitation is for anybody. "If anyone wants to be my disciple" or "Whoever wants to be my disciple." Again, this just didn't happen back then. This was the greatest privilege ever! What it means is this: Every single one of us—no matter who you are/no matter what you've done...no matter what you know or don't know...no matter where you've come from or how bad you've messed up—Jesus invites every single one of us to be his apprentice. You see—#2—Discipleship is not happening in the church today because many Christians do not see Jesus' invitation for the great privilege that it is. Why are so many Christians content with being faces in the crowd rather than disciples of Jesus? Could it be that we don't see Jesus as amazing enough, attractive enough, smart enough, powerful enough, valuable enough to put him in the center of our lives and

have everything else revolve around him? Oh, for sure, we believe he's important enough to take us to heaven when we die, just not important enough, beautiful enough to tell us how to live now. ...Sure, there will most definitely be things you will have to say "no" to in order to say "yes" to Jesus, but isn't he worth it? Jesus' invitation, "Come, be my disciple" is the greatest privilege you will ever be offered. Don't just be a face in the crowd—come, be a disciple of Jesus with us and find out what life is really all about.

Discussion Starters — Begin by going around and having different ones read the following passages from the Gospel of Mark; Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-14; 3:13-14; 8:34.

- Who are some of the people who have been the greatest shaping influences in your life? What made those people so special?
- When you think of the word "Christian" what comes to mind? When you hear the word "disciple" what comes to mind? What's the difference?
- What are some of the ways we have confused being a "Christian" or even being "a follower of Jesus" with how Jesus spoke about being his disciple?
- There is no shortage of "Christians," but a whole lot less "disciples" in the church today. Why do you think this is?
- What are some of the reasons that discipleship is not happening in churches today?
- How could it be that many of us have forgotten what a great privilege Jesus' invitation, "Come, be my disciple," really is?
- What would have to change in your life if you began to take Jesus' invitation to be his disciple more seriously?