

J.J.

DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

Mark 8:34-38

Mark 8 : 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Pray

INTRODUCTION :

One of the movies that I liked was released 30 years ago. It's called the Demolition Man. It's the story of a police officer (Sylvester Stallone) and a crime lord (Wesley Snipes) who were cryogenically frozen in 1996. It means they were frozen but they are still alive. Many years passed and in 2032, Wesley Snipes was released by some people and they had to thaw Sylvester Stallone to catch him.

You might ask, Pastor what does this have to do with your sermon?

Tomorrow, it's 2024 and for 3 years from 2020 to the first half of 2023, it seems like as Christians we were spiritually frozen. Spiritually, we have either given in to fear, lethargy (tinatamad) or apathy (doesn't care) It's time that we need to be thawed. We have stayed too long in the spiritual freezer.

And today, I just want to remind us who we truly are and what we should really be doing.

We are disciples of Christ and we should be making disciples of Christ.

This church is has only one mission : The Great Commission.

Matthew 28: 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

By God's grace, everything that we do here, every mission or missionary that we support is focused on doing that one thing...to make disciples.

Why are we focusing on this?

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

When this church is focused on making disciples, then we know our Lord is with us.

Then there's nothing else that or who we need, because I know the Lord is with us.

NOW What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?

BACKGROUND :

1. The passage from Mark 8:34-38 can also be seen in the other synoptic gospels in Matthew 16:24-27 and Luke 9:23-26. It was also touched on somehow in John 12:27

IMPORTANCE : It means that this passage is very important that it has been remembered by all the Gospel writers and they wrote it and recorded by the Holy Spirit.

THE REQUIREMENT TO BECOME A DISCIPLE

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples

Background : If you're going to study the context in all three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, you will see that **there are two significant things** that happened before Christ declared His invitation.

First : Jesus feeding four to five thousand men (not counting the women) with just seven loaves and a few fish.

Significance : This is the reason why the crowd was following Him. Yes, He is the Messiah because, wow, we will never have problems with food. They were following Him because they were being fed, they were being healed.

In short : They were following Him because of all physical things that He is giving to them.

This is the reason why in the account of John, when Jesus went to the other side of the lake, the crowd followed Him there. Jesus said :

²⁶ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. (Nabusog kayo)

Second : When Jesus said that He needs to suffer and die, Peter said "No" and our Lord rebuked saying by saying "Get behind me Satan"

Significance : Yes, the disciples believed that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God but they had a different idea of what a Messiah is. It is a political Messiah – one who would overthrow the Roman government. And of course, these disciples if you will read the gospels had this idea that after Christ overthrows the government, they will have the power.

Application : Some of us think of Jesus only in this way, like the crowd and the disciples. Someone who can just provide for us, heal us, comfort us, answer our problems. Yes, he can do all of this but there is a reason why Jesus is called Lord.

But before we can make disciples, let us remember again what it takes to be a disciple of Christ.
"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Quick note : "*Whoever*" this means the invitation is for everyone.

1. Deny yourself.

deny themselves

Etymology : deny "aparneomai" (apo) to separate (arneomai) not to accept; to refuse

It means : to disassociate oneself; not to be identified with another

Illustration : There are people sometimes we don't want to be associated with, specially those who will tarnish our reputation or will not add to our credibility.

Example : Yikes, she's not my friend, she's so baduy, she's so kadiri to death or you know he's a known rapist or a known murderer, you don't want to associate with them.

SO : To deny yourself means you don't want to associate to who you really are NOT WHAT YOU THINK YOU REALLY ARE

IT'S who you really are without the Lord – a wretched sinner, one whose motives aren't always clean, whose thoughts aren't always pure, one who is prone to envy and jealousy, one who wants to be first always...one who only thinks about ME, ME, ME.

In short : We say to the Lord, I don't want to be identified with Jerry anymore because his motives aren't always pure, he always thinks about himself, he is full of pride, he is impatient, he easily gets angry, he is lustful, he thinks he's always right, **I want to be identified with you Lord, the one who is pure, holy, humble, loving and gentle and etc. I want to be seen as associated with you.**

We have been taught by this world that in order to be happy, you should think about yourself first.
This has been the running theme specially for the past few years.

But that's not God's way.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

And what is the greatest commandment. Is it to love yourself?

Matthew 22:36 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Do we love the Lord more than ourselves?

We have to remember our Lord knows that we already love ourselves...we are born as selfish people.

Illustration : Look at a baby. It wasn't born loving others. It's dependent on others. It's only aware of their needs. Look at their hands...it's always closed right? It's always about mine, me. And some people haven't gotten past that baby stage when their hands are always closed...when it's their needs first. That's our natural instinct and I'll explain you why later.

To be a disciple of Christ one needs to deny one's self.

2. Die to one's self

and take up their cross

Note : Most of the time when we hear the words “take up your cross”, we think it’s about we have to carry our problems.

Interpretation : During the time of Jesus, there were so many crucifixions, thousands and thousands and most of the time, they will be crucified along the road to serve as a warning to others. So when people see someone “carrying their cross”, they know that this man is on his way to his death.

Application : This means we say to the Lord, “Lord from now on, I don’t want to follow my own plans, I don’t want to follow my own will, I don’t want to follow my own ambitions. What I want is to follow you, your will, what you want for me, what you want to accomplish by making disciples”

This is the reason Paul says in Galatians :

Galatians 6: 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

How do we now live carrying your cross?

Carrying a cross is a process. It’s a step by step journey to our own death. It is the killing of our own internal instincts for the sake of another.

Two examples : I have a friend and we were walking in the field when suddenly there was a snake in front of us. I shouted “Ahas” (snake) and when I looked up, I saw my friend already around 50 meters running away. That’s what you call survival instinct. It’s an instinct to save ourselves first.

Example : There was a mom and her baby and they were caught in the middle of prairie field fire. It was already encircling them. There was no way of escape. She quickly dug a hole in the ground with her hands and put the baby there and then used her body to cover the baby. After the fire, people saw the burnt body of the mother and when they took her out, the baby survived.

The natural instinct is save ourselves first but because of her great love for her baby, that instinct was covered by sacrificing herself.

When there’s a situation that’s happening in your life, you say, “How do I carry my cross here? How do I begin the process of dying here?”

Remember the one word in one of our sermons, “Pleasing God”. We do not please God in order for Him to be pleased with us. He is already pleased with us and that’s why we want to please Him. And what does it take in order to please Him – **sacrifice**.

And sacrifice doesn’t have to be big.

- It can start with your time. It can start again by sacrificing your time on Sunday mornings in order to be present in church. Note : next year, we will be asking some of you on certain Sundays, you will lead the opening prayer.
- It can start again by picking up the phone and encouraging other people to attend church or inviting people back to church. It can start with that.
- It can start by opening your home on a Friday night for Bible study.
- It can start by you doing the Bible study – Remember God doesn’t look at ability, he looks at availability. And He equips whom He calls – e.g. Moses

That's how we die to one's self – by forgetting ourselves and putting Jesus first and putting others first.

When I was young, my Nanay used to sing this song to me.

*Let's forget about ourselves
And magnify the Lord and worship Him
Let's forget about ourselves
And magnify the Lord and worship Him
Let's forget about ourselves
And magnify the Lord and worship Him
O worship Him Jesus Christ our Lord*

3. Decide to follow Jesus.

and follow me.

Remember it's a process. It's deny yourself AND take up your cross AND follow me.
We cannot follow Christ if we do not die to one's self.

Let me explain : To die to one's self means to not follow the world, it means we want to follow the Lord.

1 John 2:16 For everything in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--comes not from the Father but from the world.

That's a decision we have to make.

Lord, I don't want sin in my life anymore. I want to follow you. I want to obey you.
You cannot pray, "Lord..." when you don't want to obey Him.

Look at what our Lord said :

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?

Remember : At the heart of sin is self. To follow the Lord means to die to one's self.

Illustration : When I was young, I always hear the advise from other people when I was having a hard time making a decision and most of them would say, "Just follow your heart." Or "Follow what your heart says and you will never go wrong." Sounds romantic or sounds philosophical... but here's the problem.

The Bible says,

*Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.*

QUOTE : As Christians, we don't follow what our heart wants, WE FOLLOW THE LORD. We don't follow what our heart says, WE FOLLOW WHAT THE LORD says.

So how do we follow the Lord?

Etymology : follow "akolothetou" it gives a picture of walking on the same road accompanying their masters

QUOTE : It's more than just saying, "Lord wherever you want me to go, I will go..." It's saying to Him, "Lord wherever you are, that's where I want."

That's why we love the song, "I just want to be where you are" by Don Moen

To follow Jesus is to follow His example when we can always finally say in a situation :

Luke 22:42... not my will, but yours be done."

Note : We need not only say this during times of trials but also during times of temptation.

Illustration : To follow Christ, remember is walking with Him. It means while you are walking with Him, you encounter an offense or a situation, you need to look at Him and ask, "What's His will in this situation? "Lord what do you want me to do in this situation?"

When we are tempted to look at things we should not be looking at, it's saying, "Lord I want to walk with you, instead of looking, you turn away."

How does one follow Christ?

A young man was eager to grow in His Christian life. He got a piece of paper and made a list of all the things he would do for God. He wrote down the things he would give up, the places he would go to minister and the areas of ministry he would enter. He was excited. He took that list to the church and put it on the altar.

He thought he would feel joy, but instead he felt empty. So he went home and started adding to his list. He wrote down more things he would do and wouldn't do. He took the longer list and put it on the altar, but still he felt nothing.

He went to a wise, old pastor, told him the situation and asked for help. The pastor said, "Take a blank sheet of paper. Sign your name at the bottom. Put that on the altar." The young man did, and then peace came to his heart.

Again, FOLLOWING CHRIST MEANS,
"Wherever you are, that's where I want to be."
"Whatever you will, that's what I want to do."

CALL A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

S.G.D.