

“What’s a Disciple?”

Mark 8:27-38

Introduction

➤ **What is a disciple**

- **The definition is “a student of a mentor, teacher, or other figure.”**
- And although that is true, I don’t think it really sums it up
- For being a disciple of Christ is not just learning about Him

Chuck Swindol says this in his book, “Improving your serve” – “Let’s play ‘Let’s Pretend’. Let’s pretend that you work for me. In fact, you are my executive assistant in a company that is growing rapidly. I’m the owner and I’m interested in expanding overseas. To pull this off, I make plans to travel abroad and stay there until a new branch office gets established. I make all the arrangements to take my family and move to Europe for six to eight months. And I leave you in charge of the busy stateside organization. I tell you that I will write you regularly and give you directions and instructions. I leave and you stay. Months pass. A flow of letters are mailed from Europe and received by you at the national headquarters. I spell out all my expectations. Finally, I return. Soon after my arrival, I drive down to the office and I am stunned. Grass and weeds have grown up high. A few windows along the street are broken. I walk into the Receptionist’s room. She is doing her nails, chewing gum and listening to her favorite disco station. I look around and notice the wastebaskets are overflowing. The carpet hasn’t been vacuumed for weeks, and nobody seems concerned that the owner has returned. I asked about your whereabouts and someone in the crowded lounge area points down the hall and yells, "I think he’s down there." Disturbed, I move in that direction and bump into you as you are finishing a chess game with our sales manager. I ask you to step into my office, which has been temporarily turned into a television room for watching afternoon soap operas. “What in the world is going on, man?” □ "What do you mean?" □ "Well, look at this place! Didn’t you get any of my letters?" "Letters? Oh yes! Sure! I got every one of them. As a matter of fact, we have had a letter study every Friday since you left. We have even divided the personnel into small groups to discuss many of the things you wrote. Some of the things were really interesting. You will be pleased to know that a few of us have actually committed to memory some of your sentences and paragraphs. One or two memorized an entire letter or two - Great stuff in those letters." □ "OK. You got my letters. You studied them and meditated on them; discussed and even memorized them. But what did you do about them?" □ "Do? We didn’t do anything about them."

When I read that, I thought that is so appropriate because so often we say things like a disciple is a learner, I am just learning about God

- I talk about His letters
 - I have small group which looks into His letters
 - I have even memorized some of His letters
- Awesome – are you doing what God says
 - What????

We need to be reminded on occasion what real discipleship is and the passage before us this morning – we have Jesus Himself, a pretty good source, on what being a disciple is supposed to look like

- if you are taking notes this morning, I think we see three things in our text that really mark what it is to be a disciple

What’s a disciple?

Mark 8:27-38

#1 – Confessing Christ – Mark 8:27-30

#2 – Trusting Christ – Mark 8:31-33

#3 – Following Christ – Mark 8:34-38

- Let's consider those one at a time

What's a disciple?

Mark 8:27-38

#1 – Confessing Christ – Mark 8:27-30

- Our scene shifts from the small town of Bethsaida in our study last week, when Jesus healed the blind man – if you missed it, I think it is so important!

But our text last week, the story happened outside of the city of Bethsaida

- as we get to our text this morning, Jesus and the disciples have moved 25 miles north, to an area known as Caesarea Philippi
 - it is really a beautiful spot – **pictures of Caesarea Philippi**
 - it is one of my favorite places to visit in the nation of Israel because as you can see the landscape is beautiful with its staircase river and waterfalls
 - its historical sight because there in the caves' walls statues of Roman gods would be put up and worshipped
 - and it is a great place because of the biblical story of what happened there

Jesus takes His disciples on a little retreat in the north and there asked them an important question

- “who do men say that I am?”

And the disciples gave various answers like John the Baptist or Elijah back from the dead, some prophet

- just like today if you went to the beach and said, who is Jesus to you?
 - You would get answers like – a good teacher, a good example, a phony, my cousin who makes good tacos
 - You would get a wide variety of answers – well, nothing had changed in 2,000 years – there was a wide variety of what people thought of Jesus in His day
- but then Peter pipes up and says, “you are the Christ”, the son of the living God
 - now we need to understand what Peter was saying

Some people believe Christ is Jesus' last name

- like his parents were Joseph and Mary Christ – that is not the way it was, and His name is Jesus Christ
 - but that is not reality
 - Christ was not a last name – it was His title, meaning Messiah - Peter is saying, you are the one we have been waiting for – the coming King of the Jews

And this confession of Peter was so important, that in Matthew's account of this, we learn Jesus goes on to say

“Blessed are you, Simon, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” – Matthew 16:17-18

- Jesus tells Peter, known here as Simon
 - Peter you didn't come up with what you just said, but my Father who is in heaven, He has revealed this to you
 - On this rock – I will build my church

Now there is confusion about what the rock in that statement referred to

- some believe, I'll bet Peter believed Jesus was speaking about him
 - on me, the rock you will build your church – did you hear that John, you can call me rocky from now on – I am the foundation of the church

But I personally believe Jesus was talking about the confession – you are the Christ, you are the Messiah, you are what we have been waiting for

- you see I believe Peter was a great guy, especially after the Holy Spirit got a hold of his heart

But the rock the church is built upon is the confession all of us must make – Jesus you are Christ – You are what I have been waiting for, what I have been waiting for

- and understand that – you understand why Jesus was asking the question
 - if one of us were walking around saying – what do people say about me – it would be seen as extremely arrogant
 - hey Christy – what are people saying about me on Facebook?
 - hey Jim – what do your friends think of me?
 - what do they think about that study?
- if we really asked that – we would rightfully be seen as arrogant, egotistical
 - but Jesus was neither of these things
 - He was asking because the question of who He is – especially who Jesus is to you – is the most important question you will ever answer

You see, your confession identifies who you are?

- just like a pagan in that same place Jesus was teaching would say, Caesar is Lord
 - and it would identify them as citizens of Rome
 - so your confession identifies you – speaks of your citizenship

You see before we can truly be a disciple – we have to come to that place in our lives where we confess, where we recognize who He really is – He is Christ – He is Lord – He is the one you are longing for in your heart

- You see it is not enough to just know what the world says about Jesus
 - Its not enough to just know what pastor Rob or myself says about Jesus

It will always come down to the fact – who do you say that I am?

- And the foundation of the church and the foundation of your being a disciple is the confession.. “You are the Christ, the son of the living God!”
 - We must confess – He is Lord
- Not just a good example, not just a good teacher, but Lord of our lives
 - Who do you say that He is

Confession is where it begins, but it is not where discipleship ends

- you see it is one thing to say with our lips – Jesus you are Lord
 - and it’s another thing to live it out, as we see as the text continues....

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#2 – Trusting Christ – Mark 8:31-33

- Being a disciple doesn’t just stop with knowing who Jesus is to you, we also must be willing to trust Christ
 - think about what was happening here in the story?

Right after Peter has the great revelation of who Jesus is, Jesus starts talking about His death and suffering which must take place – Now what is He doing???

- You know – I was thinking how horrible it would have been to be Jesus’ campaign manager – with all the elections that occur –we watch debates, and it seems I get too emotionally involved, because I am just watching debates, saying, don’t say something dumb, please
 - Can you image what it would have been like trying to promote Jesus?

You know what I am saying - Jesus was obviously a guy with natural charisma – people were just drawn to Him – people felt comfortable around Him

- He was the kind of guy who was a campaign manager's dream, until he opened His mouth

You remember the story in John chapter 6 where Jesus feeds the 5,000, and after he does the people want to anoint Him King right then and there – “hey, they think, we will never go hungry again if this guy is in charge”

- and no doubt the disciples thought this is it, this is the moment we have been waiting for
 - and then Jesus opens His mouth and actually says to the people, I will put it up on the screens because if I don't some of you who are new to Christianity won't believe Jesus said it
- They are about to make Him king and Jesus says....

“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” – John 6:54-56

- Are you kidding me?
 - These people want to make you king and you follow that up with eat my flesh, drink my blood

Now for those of you who are weirded out by that – Jesus was talking symbolically about communion and Him being the bread the life

- Jesus was no cannibal or vampire
 - But none the less – He said it!

And the people didn't get it – the huge crowds left in groves – so much so, Jesus said to His disciples in the same chapter – are you going to leave also?

- it was not a great PR move on the part of Jesus
 - and this chapter is another example

On the heels of Peter saying – you are the Christ, the son of the living God

- Jesus says, I am going to Jerusalem to suffer and die
 - Now the reaction of the disciples is so important for us to notice

Peter hearing Jesus say, I am going to be rejected by the elders in Jerusalem, I am going to suffer and die

- the Word says – Peter pulled Jesus aside
 - now right there that is amazing to me – Peter has already confessed that Jesus is God
 - so He is pulling who he knows to be God aside – to correct Him

Lord all this talk about suffering and death, that is crazy talk – Suffer – ah not so Lord

- now we can understand why the disciples would feel this way
 - and it was all the disciples – I know Peter did the talking but Jesus looked at the disciples before He spoke – He saw their hearts – what they all were thinking
- And we can understand why they were saying this – they were His disciples – and what happens to the master, happens to the disciples
 - They were thinking – if you suffer and die – that means we are going to suffer and die
 - And that is not what we signed up for

You see I believe it was easy for Peter to declare Jesus as the Christ

- what do I mean??

Remember Christ was not a last name, it was a title, it meant Messiah, Chosen One – King

- And as Peter watched Jesus do miracles and fulfill prophecy, the answer was obvious – this is the awaited King

But that was easy for Peter to accept if you will, because if Jesus is King and I am one of His right hand men, then I am pretty important person myself

- King Jesus and Prince Peter, I like the ring
 - Friends, it was easy for Peter to see and accept Jesus as a conquering King
- But when Jesus started talking about being a suffering servant, it wasn't so easy to hear from God anymore – the answer from Peter's lips was “not so, Lord”

Now before we get too critical of Peter and the rest of the boys

- isn't this exactly what we do?
 - it is easy for us to confess Christ – when things are good in our lives
 - when the road is marked with blessing and triumph – oh Lord I will follow you everywhere
- But then there is a season of suffering
 - A season of hardship
 - And immediately if we are not careful our hearts turn
 - Not so Lord – this can't be you – this can't be what you want for me
- Oh it easy to confess Christ the King, but it requires a real disciple to trust Christ in the trial, in the suffering

A real disciple of Jesus isn't one who just accepts the perks and the benefits, but shies away from pain and sacrifice –

- A real disciple of Jesus isn't one who gets to pick and choose what he will do and what he won't

A real disciple confesses Christ for sure

- but a real disciple also trusts Christ with his life

Even and especially when it doesn't make sense what your Lord is doing

- A real disciple of Jesus isn't one who can utter the words – Not so Lord – for that phrase just doesn't make sense to a disciple

But friends, I point this out because it's not really the message we hear anymore in Christianity today

- We are told that Jesus has come to ease your cares, to set you free, to be a blessing to you
 - To give you your best life now

And listen, I do believe God wants to bless your life, but I find the problem is the way we are being told to get that from the Lord today

- we are told to focus on ourselves and our life
 - we are told to look within and find the blessed you
- And I am being critical of this type of teaching, not to be critical of other pastors or ministries – but I am sharing this with you because in reality the message that is becoming popular in Christianity today isn't biblical and in reality doesn't lead to peace and happiness at all

Jesus says later in this chapter - if you seek to save yourself, if the focus is on you, and what you think is best for you and your self – Jesus says you will be miserable – look at verse 35

- Spending time focusing on yourself will lead you to loose it, literally, loose it
 - But in contrast to that, if you loose your life in Him, if it stops being about what you think is best for you and yourself, and starts being about Him and what He says is best, - trusting Him –
- then actually what you wanted all along and have tried to achieve by being so self focused, happens as you become focused on self not at all

Peter at this moment in his life was happy to be a disciple of Jesus if that meant following Him to a palace or to a crown, but if that meant following Jesus to pain and a cross, well then “Not so Lord”

- and Jesus rebukes Peter
 - He calls him Satan
 - I feel like deservedly so, the Lord has called me so many things over the years – dummy – slow to believe – block head – all of those
 - But Satan – I don’t feel that has ever been a name for me from the Lord
- But Peter – the one who Jesus had just said received revelation from the Father – the one whose confession of faith was the rock on which the church would be build
 - No doubt was walking around the camp saying – did you hear what Jesus called me – the rock – rocky – dun, dun, dun...
 - You are the Christ – and I am your right hand prince – dun, dun, dun...
 - Oh suffering and death – I feel another revelation coming on – Not so Lord
 - Satan – no, my name is Rocky!

But why would Jesus call Peter Satan?

- because the attitude of his heart and mark my words precious church, the attitude of our hearts when we are willing to confess Christ, but not willing to trust Christ
 - that heart is not from God, it is from our enemy

I love the NIV translation of verse 33...

“But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” – Mark 8:33 (NIV)

That mindset is just of this world, it’s from our enemy

- and its from the enemy because it goes against everything truly being a disciple is all about
- A disciple confesses Christ – knows who Christ is
 - And a disciple trusts Christ – even and especially when He makes no sense

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- in opposition to what Peter was demonstrating as a disciple and what their current thinking on being a disciple would have been in that day
 - Jesus said you have to follow me – that didn’t mean just following Him around the country
 - It meant to follow His example
- And Jesus describes that in two ways
 - Deny yourself and take up your cross

How do I follow Jesus’ example?

#1 - Jesus says to “deny yourself”

- Now what in the world does that mean????
 - I have heard and so have you, many a sermons that use this verse to teach self denial
 - If you are going to serve Christ – then there are a few things you need to give up – from now on you do not smoke, you do not chew, you do not go with girls that do – you don’t go to movies and you better not dance and don’t wear any fancy underpants – I just made that up this morning

- But we think that is what Jesus is talking about – but I think that is missing the point
- It is not self denial, but deny yourself – what’s the difference????

Well, you see the word “deny” means to disassociate from – it is seen in what Peter would later do to Jesus, he would deny him, he would say I have nothing to do with that man

- Now that is different than self denial– self denial lifts up and glorifies self, it is what you can do
 - It is what you can give up, what you can endure for the Lord
 - It really glorifies you and your flesh
- To deny yourself is to have nothing to do with you

We see this so clearly in the example of Jesus and His life, you want to look what deny self looks like, look to Jesus

- He wasn’t glorifying the things He did or didn’t do – but Jesus told the Pharisees who were all about that kind of stuff, Jesus told them in John chapter 5:30...

“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the Will of Him who sent me” – John 5:30

When we hear Jesus say that – when we hear Jesus say, I of my own self do nothing – and we think it is hyperbole, that Jesus is making us feel better

- But I believe Jesus said it and lived it as an example to us of what it really looks like to deny self
 - I of myself can do nothing – it is not about me, it is about the Will of my Father
 - And as you and I, stop focusing on self both in sinful way saying – how can I fulfill my desires, or in a righteous way – how can practice self denial to show how strong I really am
- And instead we come honestly, Lord I can do nothing, I bring nothing to the table
 - Help it not be about me at all
 - That is deny yourself

How do I follow Jesus’ example?

#1 - Jesus says to “deny yourself”

#2 – Jesus says, “Take up your cross”

- Now you say okay I didn’t quite get what it meant to deny self, but I’ve got this one down, I know what this means to take up my cross– it means I bear my burden, endure my sickness, my marriage, it is my cross to bear

Hey before you tune out, think that through for a moment – what was the cross for Jesus???

- The cross for Jesus wasn’t a sickness to bear, a bum rap to endure, a bad lot in life –
 - No - the cross for Jesus was the instrument by which He lived for others, the instrument by which He gave His life in sacrifice for other people
- and I believe that seen in this context, we have an understanding of what it means to “take up my cross”
 - I don’t believe it means I bear my burden, for if that was the case, Jesus actually dropped his burden and someone had to carry it for Him
- No, to take up our cross is to live a life for others

You see the connection to the first thing, to deny self

- If I am going to be a disciple of Jesus, then like Jesus, I need to deny myself, life is not about me, and then, live for others, also like Jesus
 - It was a huge moment in our country’s history when then President John F Kennedy challenged Americans “to ask not what their country could do for them, but ask what they could do for their country

And it is huge moment in our walks with the Lord when I stop thinking how will others meet my needs, how will this church fulfill me, how will my spouse fill the void and I begin to think how can I be blessing to this fellowship, how can I be a blessing to my spouse, how can I be blessing to others around me

I know early on in my Christianity and I wasn't at this church - but I struggled with the thought, this church isn't meeting my needs, what is wrong with that pastor, what is wrong with this congregation, and it was a huge day for me, when the Lord prompted my heart, what are you doing for others??? – how are you meeting people's needs

- and I started teaching children's ministry, later I volunteered for the Youth department, and the more I got my eyes off of me, you know what happened, church has been fulfilling ever since

Church has been meeting my needs ever since

- And why? – because our real need is not to think more about ourselves, and focus on ourselves, our real need is to deny all that, and have a real focus on living for other people
 - And as backwards as that seems, you know who has known that all along – it's Jesus, who designed and created you, and knows more about you, then you do
 - This is why when Jesus says, follow Me, do it My way, not your way....
 - Oh it seems counterintuitive to our self focused hearts
- But church – here is the final question – are we ready to be a disciple?
 - To put ourselves, and our ways down
 - And Confess Christ – you are my King
 - But not just say it – live it and Trust Christ – Lord I don't see what You are doing right now, but I am going to trust You know what is best
- Confess Christ, Trust Christ and then follow Christ
 - Lord – just like You did – I am going to deny myself – not self denial, but I am going to have nothing to do with self
 - In fact – I am going to take up the cross – I am going to live my life for the benefit of others
- That is what it means to truly be a disciple