



Week Commencing 2nd November 2019
Notes for next Sunday's sermon – "The cost of discipleship?"

We are week 4 into series called "We exist to glorify God by making disciples..."

Here's the outline:

13 Oct ...but what is a disciple?

20 Oct ...why make disciples?

27 Oct ...how are disciples made?

Noosa tri weekend – will be a one-off sermon, not in this series. Sunshine service, 5pm, Sat, 2nd Nov

10 Nov ...the cost (of discipleship)

17 Nov ...why disciples stagnate

24 Nov ...how disciples grow

Day 1: Read Mark 10:17-27 and Ezekiel 33:12-16

The Old Testament promises "life" to the righteous and those who truly repent of sin. So, Jesus answers the man's question "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" by drawing his attention to the last 6 commandments. The man is confident he has kept all these. Jesus "looked at him and loved him" and asks him to sell everything he has and follow him" and you will have treasure in heaven".

Jesus, because he loves him, is teaching him the road to true discipleship and eternal life. In the man's case this involves giving up his trust in performance and wealth. Jesus is seeking to move the man away from his normal existence and the things he trusts in to a new life based on fellowship with Jesus.

Jesus has identified exactly what will stop the man inheriting eternal life. This story echoes Jesus teaching in the parable of the sower Mark 4:19 "the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word making it unfruitful".

Mark10:22 "He went away sad, because he had great wealth".

Jesus does not call us to poverty or dependence on charity-but his love for us encourages us to identify those things that cause us to draw back from the call to "follow me".

DAY 2: Read Mark 1:14-20, 2:14 and Matthew 4:18-22

Picture the scene of fishermen at work close enough to the shore in their boats to hear Jesus call to "come, follow me" and "I will make you fishers of men". Note their response "At once they left their nets and followed him". Levi's response recorded in Mark 2:14 is amazing as he rises from where he was collecting taxes and follows Jesus, presumably leaving all the collected money behind [and his old life].

The work Jesus has for them is to make them "fishers of men". This is an allusion to Old Testament teaching about God's plan to restore his people "to the land I gave their forefathers". Jeremiah 16:14-16a. It also alludes to God's judgement of his people. See Amos 4:1-3 The call to be "fishers of men" is a call to the end time task of gathering men and women in view of the forthcoming judgement of God. Those called to follow Jesus will also proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom of God and the need for people to turn to God with radical repentance.

The Gospel calls people to repent or conversely to face judgement. Jesus emphasizes the urgency of the response. Those he calls down tools, so to speak, and follow him. Do we have that sense of urgency and priority in our response to Jesus call?

DAY 3: Read Mark 10:23-31 and Isaiah 25:6-9

Today's reading follows on from the passage we read on day 1 and also connects to the call of the 12 disciples.

Jesus makes a statement that shocks his hearers, in verse 23, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God". In case they haven't heard him clearly Jesus uses the absurd situation of a camel trying to get through the eye of a needle.

The disciples draw the conclusion in verse 26 "who then can be saved?".

The Old Testament teaching regarding wealth saw it as a mark of God's favour or blessing see Job 1:10, Psalm 128, Isaiah 3:10. The wealthy Jew was encouraged to give alms to the poor. So the thinking of the disciples is "if those who are righteous as shown by them being blessed by God cannot enter the kingdom then who can?"

Jesus is rejecting the understanding, common to Jews of his time, that one accumulated merit through good works. The rich, being able to give to the poor, were well placed to do this. Jesus is directing the disciples, as he did the wealthy inquirer in verse 21, to the truth that salvation involves radical commitment to Jesus whether you are rich or poor. So radical in fact that "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God". Peter's reply in verse 28 shows at least some understanding that salvation lies in being with Jesus in contrast to the wealthy man who, unable to let go of the wealth he really trusted in, "went away sad". Both the OT law and the gospel encourage wholehearted reliance on God which may entail leaving behind people or things we hold to be valued. Note that God takes nothing away without restoring it "a hundred times" but also with "persecutions" and "in the age to come, eternal life".

"Surely this is our God and he saved us." Isaiah 25:9.

This is the God of the gospel Jesus proclaims. Let us hold on to Jesus whatever the cost.

DAY 4: Read Mark 8:31-38 and Psalm 49:7-9

In verses 34-38 Jesus teaches about the cost of discipleship. This is in the context of his own predicted suffering, death and resurrection in verse 31. Peter cannot accept this and rebukes Jesus who in turn rebukes his friend. Note then that in verse 34 Jesus "called the crowd to him along with his disciples". The teaching to follow is not just for the twelve but for all who would follow Jesus. The sense of verse 34 following is to abandon the call that self makes on and say "yes" to God. Jesus uses the phrase "take up his cross"-the image of the death march, where the condemned prisoner carries the cross beam, on which he is to be nailed, to the place of execution. Once committed to this walk there is no turning aside. This of course was soon to be a reality for Jesus and by the time Mark's gospel was circulating a reality for many of Jesus's disciples. In verse 36-37 Jesus continues to teach on the value of life in its' deepest sense. The thinking suggests a reflection on Psalm 49:7-9." No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him-the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough-that he should live on forever and not see decay." One can win the approval of the whole world but ultimately no payment, no achievement, no amount of wealth can pay the "ransom". If one's life is given up [literally or metaphorically] for Jesus and the gospel it will be "saved." Only Jesus can pay the price.

To be ashamed of Jesus and his words-the gospel-in this life will be the same as standing before the triumphant Jesus," the Son of Man" and being rejected "when he comes in his father's glory with the holy angels. Daniel 7:14-14.

The cost of following Jesus is great, but the rewards are beyond imagining. "Whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it".

Reference: The New International Commentary on the New Testament "The gospel of Mark" William L. Lane.

The NIV Bible.

By Michael Thompson