

How Jesus Did Church – Discipleship

Luke 9:23-26

- I. For the next few weeks, I'd like to talk with you about Discipleship.
 - a. It's a word we use a lot in the church to talk about following Jesus.
 - b. To be a disciple is literally to be a disciple.
 - i. In Greek, math-ay-tes' or learner, pupil, student.
 - ii. It's a word the church has borrowed from education.
 - c. But like so many words we use often in the church its meaning has been obscured by use over the years.
 - d. I would like us to look specifically at what Jesus says about discipleship – today here in Luke 9.
 - i. Amazon.com has almost 107,000 books when you search for “disciple.”
 - ii. I would venture that some of those books are pretty good.
 - iii. But none carry the wisdom or authority of Jesus' words on the subject.
- II. In Luke 9:23, Jesus spotlights three things that are vitally important to an understanding of discipleship.
 - a. READ Luke 9:23.
 - b. He summarizes the idea as succinctly as he can.
 - c. And in doing so gives us a goal to shoot for, an ideal to aspire to.
- III. First, Jesus says that discipleship is rooted in self-denial.
 - a. It's interesting to me that Jesus begins his discussion of discipleship with self-denial.
 - b. Interesting because self-denial is not something we talk about often and by-and-large its not something we think we need much of.
 - i. We don't talk about it, because it's so foreign to our daily experience.
 - ii. We're used to self-fulfillment, not self-denial.
 1. If there's something we need, we go buy it (that's what credit cards are for, right?)
 2. If there's something we want, we take it.
 3. We've been raised with a philosophy of “If it feels good do it.”
 4. Our wants have become our needs and nothing stands in the way.
 - iii. This attitude is rooted in a warped cult of “self-worship.”
 - c. And in that reality, lies the reason that Jesus starts with self-denial.
 - i. As long as we put our needs in that primary spot, as long as we bow at the altar of worshipping ourselves – there's no room for God.
 - ii. In order to follow Jesus, in order to be his disciple we have to make room for him.
 1. The first step in that housecleaning – deny yourself.
 2. Get off the throne that God belongs on.
 3. Set yourself aside.
 - d. Self-denial means giving up all pursuits that might compromise your commitment to Christ.
 - i. In other words, you can't follow Jesus and maintain your own aspirations, plans and ambitions.
 - ii. That's what you deny in favor of Jesus' aspirations and plans for you.
 - iii. Self-denial is a first affirmation that you are giving Jesus first place – the place that he deserves. {Hint: There's only one place!}
 - e. You can't say YES to Jesus without saying NO to yourself.
- IV. Jesus then says that discipleship requires dedication.
 - a. Just in case you thought this discipleship gig would be easy – Jesus bursts that bubble.

- i. Once you move yourself out of that control seat – you then commit yourself [dedicate yourself] to staying out of that seat and allowing Jesus to occupy it.
 - ii. He says, “take up their cross daily.”
 - iii. Yielding yourself completely to the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.
 - b. Jesus talks about this dedication as a taking up of the cross.
 - i. For disciples, the cross is inseparable from Jesus’ suffering and death for sin.
 - 1. So when Jesus says, “take up your cross,” it can only mean one thing
 - 2. Are you ready to lay down your life in the service of God?
 - ii. That means more than “are you ready to die for Jesus?”
 - 1. We’re all to ready to answer YES to that question when its asked in the abstract.
 - 2. But it also means – are you ready to give up every area, every portion of your life for Christ?
 - a. Think of the think that you enjoy the most –
 - b. If God told you to give it up tomorrow – would you? Could you?
 - iii. Discipleship requires dedication.
 - 1. Not just dedication to Christ in the extreme moments of suffering, risk and trial.
 - 2. But also dedication to Christ in those everyday moments, those more mundane moments – those moments that consume our everyday lives.
 - 3. And a key word here is ... daily.
 - c. Deny yourself and taking up your cross go together.
 - i. First, you set yourself aside and then you dedicate yourself to Christ.
 - ii. And you do that everyday.
 - 1. I know how important that idea is to me.
 - 2. I’ve learned that it takes me only one day to drop my cross and move myself back into first place.
 - iii. You’ve got to commit yourself to Christ EVERYDAY!
- V. Finally, discipleship requires obedience.
 - a. Jesus says, “follow me.”
 - i. Take yourself out of first place.
 - ii. Give that position to Jesus.
 - iii. And follow his direction
 - iv. Sounds simple – it is and it’s also that hard.
 - b. Your daily obedience to Christ means living your live like Christ is in charge.
 - i. That’s what early Christians meant when they said “Jesus is Lord.”
 - ii. He’s the boss – he’s the charge.
 - c. The goal of discipleship is not simply giving up and giving in to God.
 - i. It’s about the changes in your life that obedience brings.
 - ii. When we deny ourselves, dedicate ourselves to God and follow His direction – we are on the road to becoming more like Jesus.
 - d. That’s our goal ... to become more like Christ.
 - i. And our obedience is what makes that possible.
 - ii. From time to time I talk with people who’s spiritual growth has stalled.
 - 1. More often than not, that stall can be traced to an area of obedience that is being neglected.
 - 2. It is our obedience to Christ that facilitates our spiritual growth.
 - 3. If we aren’t growing, we have to ask – are we being obedient to the guidance on Christ that we receive through the Holy Spirit?
- VI. Discipleship is being a student of Jesus Christ.

- a. Becoming a pupil, a learner.
- b. And putting into practice what we learn.
 - i. And as we learn we grow into the likeness of Christ.
 - ii. We become more like it.
 - iii. I like to describe it as “becoming who we will be.”
- c. Through self-denial, dedication, and obedience – we are on the journey of discipleship.
 - i. And we become more and more like Jesus.