

07/02/2023 Matthew 10:34-42 "Disciple-Making Disciple, Because, By, and In Jesus"

ENTRANCE

I have shared about DISCIPLESHIP over the past few weeks. Are you a disciple of Christ? Yes, you are from when you believe in Jesus and are saved. By the way, our Lord does not immediately take us into His perfect Kingdom, Heaven, where there is no pain, sorrow, and death upon our salvation, which may be the best for us. Yet, He calls us to a life of His disciple.

Let me remind you who the disciple of Jesus is. They are followers of Jesus, being transformed by learning from Him and growing spiritually, becoming more mature, faithful, and fruitful as they share Christ and His message with others, partnering with the Lord's mission of making disciples of all nations. Therefore, we live and die as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Last week, I shared part of Matthew 10: Jesus Sends out the Twelve, and I will share the rest of it. So, let me briefly review them. As we approach this text, we must not forget that the Lord has also sent you and me to be disciples who make disciples, in our current life, including all circumstances and problems we may have.

Jesus called His disciples to send them to proclaim the great news that "the Kingdom of God has come." He gave them the authority to manifest what the Kingdom was like by healing all kinds of diseases, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. And with instructions, bring no money, extra clothes, or sandals; instead, they accept hospitality, which means they should totally rely on God's provision.

There will be two responses when they search for worthy persons: They stay with those who welcome them, listen to their message, and give them peace and blessings. Yet, they should leave those who refuse them. Therefore, there should be persecution and hatred. Everyone will hate them because of Jesus.

However, they must not be afraid of them because. First, all the truths will be realized, and all the actions and even the heart motives of those who lived by those truths or didn't live will be out in the open. The Truth Never Fails Those Who Follow It.

Second, the worst thing the opponent can do to them is only to kill their physical body, which is temporary. They cannot touch their soul, the inner, eternal self, which will live forever with the Lord. The only One they need to fear is God, who holds their entire life-body and soul in His hands; then, they will not fear mere humans.

Third, God the Father is aware of and intimately cares for; even our hair, He counts, falls to the ground we cannot detect. And last, our willing obedience to the Lord's command before others will determine Christ's willingness to claim us before His Father in the court of Heaven.

And all these things are related to our relationship with the Lord: "It is enough for students to be like their teachers" to be like Christ.

Continuing that, today, the Lord says, 1) again, some tough things that they may have to go through, especially within their families. 2) But, second, the essence of following the Lord that makes it all possible, and 3) finally, the promise of incredible blessings for those who receive the disciples.

1. Tough things happen within the family: Sword instead of peace. (v34-36)

Let's look at v34 **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth.** Really? But, in repeating "I have come" three times, the Lord tells His disciples the purpose and outcome of His coming.

That is, He says, **I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.** It is shocking the Lord said that. Yet, when the Prince of Peace says that His meaning was that the peace He came to bring is not peace at any price. There will be opposition and conflict before harmony and strife before peace.

Jesus tells us precisely what it means, and applies the image of a sword to the home. One of the news anchors on NPR called Jesus a "maniac" because of what He would say.

35 For I have come to turn " 'a man against his Father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

The Lord points out that His coming can bring disunity and separation in the family.

Just like there are two responses of the world when the Gospel is preached: welcome, love, and accept it, or indifferent or neglect and hate it, the same thing happens in a family. While one family member coming to Christ sometimes leads to the whole family being converted, one member's conversion often leads to bitterness and permanent disruption of family relationships.

36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' Yes, well-meaning family members can be our worst enemies.

We must not misunderstand that Christians are to love their family with self-sacrificing love. Our Lord does not teach us to neglect our duty to our families. (Exodus 20:12). He also entrusted His disciples with preaching peace (10:13) and being peacemakers (5:9).

2. The essence of following the Lord (v37-39)

Then, why is all this happening? All of these questions are answered by what kind of relationship the believers have with their Savior and Lord and how they live in this life. In v37 through 39, the Lord repeats three times two key words of His relationship with his disciples: "Anyone who does something" is "Worthy of Me," which is the essence of His discipleship.

1) Love Jesus more

37 "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me; Anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Jesus says the very essence of His discipleship is to love Him more than what we love the most in this world, even our family members. Why He compares the love toward Him to the love between family? Our family is our Treasure. For most people, their family is what they love and cherish the most.

My story) Do I love my children? Yes. How much? I'll give my life for them if it is needed. Do I love my wife? Yes. I will do the same thing if it is needed. However, if the Lord asked me, "*B. Sung, do you love Me more than your wife and children?*" I say the same answer Peter did, "Lord, You know that I love You." I think Jenny would do the same.

Would you not die for your children? You would because they are precious to you, and we value them the most. (What about your spouse? I mean, the husbands? You better do that because that is how we should, the Bible commands.)

As we love our family, the Lord wants us to love Him with that kind of affection and emotion. Yet, more than that, which means if Jesus is not a better or higher treasure, He says we are not worthy of Him.

Christian Family

Let's think about Christian family relationships for a moment. For those who live without God, family is everything. But for the disciples of Jesus, family is not our possession but a gift from God for a limited time. In those relationships, we obey the Lord as a disciple-husband, a disciple-wife, disciple-parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren in how we treat one another.

My story) In the first few years of my marriage, I fought with my wife more than I had fought with someone in the 30 years before I married. Jenny and I are entirely different kinds of people. I agree that I'm from Mars, and she's from Venus. But the quarrel was because our personalities and faith were not mature enough.

I sincerely wanted to be a good husband, but part of me kept thinking, "*To what extent should I give in, give up, commit, and love? Is there no life for me? Even if I have a wife, I still need things I like, things I want to do, things that are meaningful to me and that I enjoy?*" But what really shattered those thoughts was how the Bible commands husbands to love their wives. Yes, we learn about family relationships from the Bible.

Husbands. How does the Bible say to love your wife? "Just as Christ loved the Church." How did the Lord love the church? "He gave up His life for her." "In this same way, husbands ought to love

their wives ... just as Christ cares for the Church." (Eph 5:25, 28, 29) Oh my... I realized that no matter how good I am to my wife, it will never be enough. (Of course, that doesn't mean I have to give in to her every request.)

Instead of giving up loving my wife, the more Christ and the command come into my heart and life, the more I am willing to give up the kind of marriage I dreamed of - a life where I love my wife. Still, I also love myself (in the way I want to). I would have liked and envied those men living that kind of life in the past. Still, as the Lord has been into my relationship with my wife, I have become more willing to give up myself.

So, is my personal happiness gone? It's quite the opposite! My love for my wife has deepened, and honestly, it's better now than our honeymoon. I enjoy great satisfaction in my marriage, and I am deeply grateful to God for giving me, my wife. Peace and joy have come to our home. We are maturing together in the Lord by being more obedient to Him and by treating each other through Him.

Likewise, in my relationship with my children, I do not regard them as my own but as gifts from God. As Jesus' disciple, I love and serve them and raise them to be His disciples as well. They, too, treat their parents in obedience to the Lord. We all prepare for each other's eternity through our temporary family relationships. It was a strange but good feeling to imagine that Laon in Heaven calls me, "*Hey, my brother, B. Sung.*" But we also may be blessed to love, serve, and fellowship even more on earth.

Because Christians love the Lord more, they may have discord or difficulties in their family; however, even in such a family, God's blessing can come through those who love thus, obey the Lord through family relationships.

Back to the text, "worthy" is a crucial word, emphasizing our priority which is to love or prefer the Lord Jesus more than family members. What does it mean *not* to be worthy of Jesus? It means we won't have Him if we don't love Him that way.

If that deepest, fullest love isn't for Jesus, we do not deserve the Lord. Because we treasure Christ above all things, we do not allow our supreme Treasure to be competed by another treasure, even those we love so much. Therefore, the question for all who want to be a disciple of Jesus is, "Am I to love Jesus like this?" Obviously, Jesus teaches us to believe in Him means to be His disciple, but He says we must know the cost of being a disciple and be willing to pay for it.

2) Take up the cross and follow Him

The second essence, or cost of disciples, goes further. **38 Whoever does not take up (refuse) their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

Repeating "worthy," the Lord says they must take up their cross and follow Him. What does it mean to take my cross? It's not your husband or wife, children, or people around you with whom you put up with. It's not your job or your old car you finally want to fix or sell.

No one in the Roman Empire in the 1st century, and certainly in Palestine, could have missed Jesus' point when He said, following Him by taking their cross. Simply it symbolized death. Just a few years before Jesus said this, a zealot named Judas gathered rebels to fight the Roman occupation. The revolt was quickly suppressed, and Roman general Varus ordered the crucifixion of over 2,000 Jews to teach the Jews a lesson. Their crosses were lined from one end of the roads of Galilee to the other.

The twelve knew immediately that to take their cross and follow after Jesus meant to abandon themselves, indicating physical death. Roman crucifixion was such a cruel, humiliating, and painful punishment that it was not used on Roman citizens but on foreigners involved in the rebellion, violent criminals, robbers, and slaves. Also, in the Jewish context, the person hung on the cross was considered cursed by God. Therefore, a cross is the willing sacrifice of everything one has, including life, for the sake of Christ.

3) To lose their life

The discipleship's third essence is the same as the second. **39 Whoever finds their life** clings to it **will lose it, and whoever loses their life, for My sake, will find it.**

Love of one's own life is often the greatest hindrance to total commitment to Christ. Even Peter, who swore that he would not betray Him even if he had to die, denied Him three times when his life was threatened.

However, earthly life is temporary, and the person who holds on to it above all else holds on to something they cannot keep: "Heaven and earth will disappear" (Lk 21:33) And in the process, they lose (also translated, kill, destroy) the eternal life they cannot lose. On the other hand, the person who has lost his life "for Jesus' sake" because of Him and for Him will find it. The MSG translation says, "If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to Me, you'll find both yourself and Me."

This is a shift from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered life. Giving up a self-centered life to follow Jesus, and being able to give up one's life when necessary to convey Jesus and His message, is something only someone who has sure faith that there is eternal life and spiritual death after the death of physical life. "The righteous will live by faith." (Rom 1:17).

A person's destiny does not end with life on earth. There is an eschatological life in the New World.

Whoever loses, kills, and destroys their life for Jesus on this earth will gain it after the Last Judgment, and whoever seeks their own life without putting Jesus first will be judged. Are you a disciple of Jesus not as you think but as Jesus acknowledges? If you are not, wouldn't you be willing to be His disciple?

3. Incredible blessings for those who receive the disciples (v40-42)

Now we come to the third, most positive, and final part of this section of the text, the sending of the disciples. When we are to live as mature, faithful, and fruitful disciple-making disciples, we do not always have to deal with people who hate and reject us, but many welcome and believe. The Lord says, **40 "Anyone who welcomes (receives) you welcomes (accepts) Me,**

This is an amazing and blessed truth to know, and we, the disciples of Jesus, must keep it in our hearts. As it is said, "A man's messenger is as himself" (Mishina); when we share the Gospel of Jesus, we not only share His message but the very presence of Christ our Lord. Jesus and His messengers are intimately linked in this harvest work.

It's the same as this time. Paul says about the Thessalonian believers, a model church all over the 1st-century Christianity, "You accepted what we said as the very word of God-which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you." (1Thess 2:13). Remember this, those who welcome, receive, and accept you because you share the message of the Lord, in reality, welcome and accept Immanuel's blessing, "God with us," His very existence and presence.

and Anyone who welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me" as we received the Lord, thus, the Father as well. This promise is given to anyone who accepts the message of Jesus, thus, who comes to love and obey the Lord. Jesus says, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and WE (God the Father and the Son) will come and make our home with each of them." (John 14:23)

The Lord continues, **41 Whoever welcomes a prophet who speaks for God** whose words were recognized as God's voice **as a prophet** And so, they **will receive a prophet's same reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.** Matthew pairs the prophets with the righteous.

One commentator says "Prophet" is a word of function and the word "righteous" is a status, which means we, disciples, not only share Jesus through all His teachings but also through our righteous life. Our very existence and every aspect of our life reflecting Jesus are the core of evangelism. Therefore, the Gospel is preached through the disciples who model and follow Jesus. Not only do people listen to God's words through disciples, but they also see God's words that appear in us and our lives. They experience living God in existence.

And the last verse, **42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water** (which was considered a small favor in the Greco-Roman world) **to one of these little ones who is my disciple**, The disciples of Jesus were the little ones with socially low status at the time.

Then He says, **truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.**" Jesus' point is that any service done, the simplest help given to the simplest disciple, will not go unnoticed or unrewarded by God.

The Lord shows us who does what He commands, even though they are the smallest ones and lack, how they are blessed existence. It could be our short words for others, a word of prayer, one time visit, a card sending, calling in Jesus' name, one time of serving them such as sharing food, inviting them to dinner, a small gift, etc.; those things are so blessed, Jesus says. In God's magnificent economy of grace, even the least believer can share the blessings of the greatest, and no good work of anyone will go unrewarded.

It reminded me that we are spiritual descendants of Abraham. God didn't say to him, "You will be a blessed person," but said, "You will be A BLESSING." That means the existence of Abraham itself is BLESSING. So that "All peoples on earth will be blessed through him." (Gen 12:3,4) So, how blessed are we, the disciples of Jesus, because we love Him and obey Him to make disciples in the place in life we are sent and called!

I felt the Lord was saying in my heart about His disciples, "You are a tremendous blessing and gift to those who accept what you do, just like Abraham. Accepting you is like accepting Myself and My Father in their lives. I will cleanse them from all their sins: "abandoning God-the fountain of living water. And digging for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!" (Jer 2:13).

I will free them from all entanglements: anxiety, worry, fear, brokenness, past hurts, broken relationships, uncertainty, compulsions, and addictions. I will bring peace: peace with God, peace with others, and peace with themselves. I will bring them the joy and true happiness that has been missing. Above all, I will give them Myself and the Father, who created and gives them abundant life.

I will be with them always to the very end of the age by sending My Spirit, who dwells within them and never leaves them, to be their help, guide, comforter, advocate, and teacher. The same blessing you will receive from the Father, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news of peace and salvation" (Isa 52:7), 'will be upon them, and the smallest service they perform for you will not be without reward."

Think about it. What reward do you expect when you stand before the Lord? What is your reward? Paul says, "After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! Yes, you (the believers of

Jesus with whom he shared the Good News) are our glory and joy." (1Thess 2:18,19). David says, "The saints who are in the land, "They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight." (Ps 16:3).

My thoughts) When I thought about this, I remembered those I serve, those who receive the word of the Lord with joy and longing and who desire to become His disciples. They are so dear and blessed to me that they make me happy. I felt the joy, satisfaction, and reward of ministry.

I thought of their faces and said to the Lord, "*These are my joy and blessing. They are my rewards. We will grow, serve each other, and rejoice in the Lord on earth. Then we will share that complete joy, blessing, and oneness in Heaven forever!*"

How difficult it is to change our temper, stubbornness, or even one attitude, but we will joyfully obey the Lord, denying ourselves more and more, growing mature as a disciple, becoming more like Him, "participating in the sufferings of Christ for His body, the Church" (Col 1:24) and "not being tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then I cannot please the officer who enlisted me." (1Tim 2:4).

CONCLUSION

Now I want to finish by letting you think about two things.

1. Who is Jesus to you?

I suspect there are still some of us for whom the Lord's words today are too heavy and difficult to digest. The question that has been on my mind since last week is this: "*Who is Jesus to me?*" "*Who on earth is He who demands such tremendous loyalty? Is He really the One with the right to request all these things?*"

The Lord asked His disciples at a crucial moment. "Who do you say that I am?" It would take many sermons to talk about who the Lord is. Still, I'll just ask you to think about the Lord seriously and deeply about what you already know from the Bible and what the Lord Himself claims about Himself. Your answer to His question will determine your response to His commands.

The other thing we must think about the Lord is that He first loved us that way before He demanded our supreme love and life-taking loyalty. Jesus the Lord had to experience a separation from His heavenly and eternal Father that He had never experienced before.

He was rejected by the Father who said, "This is My Son whom I love, with You, I am well pleased," because the Father saw Him as "to be the sin of the entire world" and poured out on His flesh the stern and unrelenting judgment of all the sins of the world. Why? Because of the Father's love for us and the Son's love toward His Father and us willing to be obedient even unto death to fulfill the Father's will and vision to save us.

2. The second I want you to consider is the heart of Jesus toward whom He calls His disciples.

Preparing for the sermon, I meditated on the Lord's heart for His disciples.

"They are those whom I have known and loved before the foundation of the world. They are those whom the Father has chosen and given to me, whom I have called and treasured; They knew and believed that I came from the Father, so I called them to be with Me, and they kept My word. I have laid down My life and My life's work for them.

I have entrusted to them My holy, blessed mission of saving the world from sin and building the eternal Kingdom of God by Father's will. I will be with them as Helper, Teacher, Advocate, Comforter, and Guide through My Spirit to the very end of the age, with all authority in heaven and on earth that my Father has given me.

And when I return to earth, I will call them to the eternal home that I have prepared for them, and I will transform them into glorified beings like Myself. Oh, they are My brothers and sisters who will share in the glory, love, and joy with my Father forever. I will have them fully where I am with that blissful and happy eternally."

So, please answer the Lord's question, "Who do you say that I Am?" Are you His disciple? Are you? If you are unsure, why wouldn't you fully accept Him, love Him, follow Him just as He did for you, and enjoy Him forever as He will do with you and for you?