

As Disciples are Called

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to begin a new series today of the next few weeks on Luke 5 and into Luke 6. Last time I did these Bible talks we studied Luke 3 and 4 under the title of the, I can't remember what the title was, something about preparing the way of the Lord.

And here the title for this series is called The Saviour's Kingdom Grows. We're going to be looking at how the kingdom grows as various people are called as events begin to unfold.

And we're going to begin by reading our passage which is on page 860 of the Bibles. The Saviour's Kingdom Grows and today it's the Saviour's Kingdom Grows as disciples are called.

And we are going to read chapter 5, 1 to 11, but I'll read the last two verses of the previous chapter, chapter 4. So beginning at Luke chapter 4, verse 43.

But Jesus said to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.

[1 : 14] And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret.

And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land.

And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let your nets down for a catch.

And Simon answered, Master, we've toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets. When they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

[2 : 22] For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Now let's pray together. Lord God, how we praise you for everything good that you give us.

You give to us life and health. You bring people into our lives who enrich it. And you, above all, you give us the means of grace and the hope of glory. As we come together for these few moments, coming from our ordinary lives, to which we will return shortly, and listen to your voice, we pray that as long ago the disciples heard it by the Lake of Galilee, that we may hear that same voice, and that when we hear, we will follow.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. At the darkest point in the Second World War, Winston Churchill spoke those memorable words about the way ahead.

[3 : 49] He said, I can offer you nothing but blood and toil and tears and sweat, but at the end, victory.

Blood, toil, tears and sweat, and at the end, victory. That seems to me a very good description of the Christian life. There is more to the Christian life than blood, toil, tears and sweat.

God graciously gives us many good things to enjoy. But the Christian life is a struggle. The Christian life is difficult. The Christian life is tough.

And unless we were assured that at the end there was victory, it would be very difficult to keep on going. So as we begin this little series of studies, we are looking particularly at the idea of

discipleship.

Verse 11. When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. They became disciples. Now the focus here is on Simon, on Peter.

[4 : 52] He is one of the first apostles to be called. But that's not the emphasis here. Luke is not emphasizing the setting apart of this special group called the apostles.

We'll come to that in our final study in chapter 5. These men, Simon, Peter and the others, were disciples before they were apostles. And that's so important to remember.

Everyone comes to Christ as a disciple. We are not apostles. There are no apostles today. But we are all called to be disciples.

And so in these moments, let's ask ourselves, what does a disciple look like? What does it mean to follow Jesus from this passage? As disciples are called, the kingdom advances.

Sometimes it advances dramatically, as on the day of Pentecost. More often it advances in this way, as individuals respond to the call of the king.

[5 : 53] So three things about what a disciple is, what a disciple looks like. And I think the first thing is, a disciple is someone who obeys.

Verse 5. At your word, I will cast down the net. Now, the reason I read verses 44, 43 and 44 of the previous chapter, was to show Luke's emphasis.

Luke emphasizes all the way through that Jesus comes primarily to preach the word of God.

Indeed, he is, of course, the word of God himself. He's primarily offering himself the word of God.

And Luke is concerned that we hear the word of God. Now, there's no contradiction, of course, between the living word and the written word. Those who were around in the first century heard that Jesus Christ made flesh.

If we didn't have the written word, all we would have were traditions becoming fainter and more contorted as they passed down the centuries.

[7 : 02] So the written word is needed to point to the living word. So this is the first emphasis here. Your disciple is someone who hears and who obeys.

Now, you notice, first of all, the crowds here. One occasion while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, verse 44, the previous chapter, he was preaching in the synagogues.

Synagogues had obviously become too small to contain the crowds that were flocking to hear this new teacher. Not just in the synagogues, but in the middle of daily life.

This is the emphasis of the Bible, all of us. We hear the word of God, not just from pulpits, not just in churches. We listen. We all hear the word of God in our daily lives.

But the book of Proverbs says, wisdom stands in the marketplace, in the streets. Wherever people are, wisdom is speaking. And Christ offers himself.

[7 : 59] Everywhere people live, everywhere where people work, everywhere where people gather. So the crowds here. There's no evidence so far that these crowds were responding, though.

They, many of the, he had come for different reasons. Obviously, it'd be a sensation. No one had spoken like this. No one did the kind of things this man did.

And probably they came in the hope that he would see one of his famous miracles. But, although the crowds here, there is an individual who obeys, who responds.

Remember the word here in the Bible is not just meaning, meaning being present when the words are spoken. Those of you who are parents, who have brought up children, will know this very well. You never listened to me. You say, oh yes, dad, I heard what you said. But, in other words, I was present when you spoke the words. But a disciple is not just someone who is there when the word is spoken.

[8 : 59] A disciple is someone who responds to that word, does something with it, obeys it, in other words. And here, Simon is a case study, if you like, Simon Peter.

Now, Jesus already makes his interest clear in him. He saw two boats, verse 2, verse 3, getting into one of the boats, which was Simon. He was already, he was already pursuing Simon Peter, already choosing, as I say, one of his apostles.

But before he became an apostle, he was a disciple. It's very interesting to look at Peter's obedience here. Verse 5, it's a very important verse.

Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. Imagine the frustration, but at your word, I will let down the nets. In other words, Simon shows both frustration and faith here.

Remember, it's not absolutely necessary to have complete faith. Jesus talks about faith as a grain of mustard seed.

[10:08] After all, you can understand Peter's frustration. He is the expert. I've been out on that lake. I'm an expert fisherman. My friends, my acquaintances have been there as well.

And what have we caught? We've got absolutely nothing at all. But what he's going to realize is that actually Jesus knows more about fishing than the expert fishermen do.

I think this is very important in our daily life. Very practical idea, this. Are you finding life tough? It would be very surprising if people here are not finding life tough.

Are you finding your work a problem? Are you finding people at your work difficult? Remember, Jesus knows more about your daily work and life than you do.

And that's why the gospel is so relevant. Not just in here, but out there in the streets. Simon obeys and does what Jesus says.

[11:04] Now, notice that this is Simon's first lesson, isn't it? Only Jesus can create the miraculous draft of fish.

But that didn't mean that Simon and the others didn't have to go out into the lake and catch them.

And that's such an important principle. Jesus is showing he is the creator.

The fish come swarming where they didn't appear to be. And Jesus doesn't, just as it were, cause them to jump out of the lake and land on the lake side. He says, Simon, go out and fish.

So Simon's obedience is his first step of true discipleship. I think that tells us a very important thing.

In our daily lives, we need to bring it all to Jesus and to obey him in our work, in our homes, wherever we are.

So a disciple is first and foremost someone who obeys, someone who hears the words but doesn't just let them wash over, someone who hears the words and takes them on board.

[12:07] Secondly, a disciple is someone who knows they are sinful. Verses 8 and 9. To follow Jesus is to realize we are sinners who need his grace.

We're never going to follow Jesus unless we realize we need his grace. That is why confessing our sin is so important.

The initial confession of sin when we come to Christ, confessing our sins every day. As the Apostle John says, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. The truth is not in us.

And first of all, Peter realizes that he is in the presence of holiness. Verse 8. Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

And like that great vision Isaiah saw in the temple 800 years before when he heard the pure worship of the seraphim as they sang, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

[13:07] And like Isaiah, it's not so much his smallness but his sinfulness. It's interesting, Peter isn't confessing a particular sin. After all, he had been obedient.

You mean he had done what Jesus told him. He is confessing his sinful nature. We need to be honest with ourselves, you know. There are moments when we think we're doing all right.

It's easy to get complacent and conceited. So I'm sure you all know those terrifying moments when suddenly the realization of who and what we are sweeps over us.

And we realize we're just not going to make it. That's the bad news. You're not going to make it. But the good news is that there is grace which can forgive us, grace which can sustain us, not just the removal of particular faults but the dealing with the sinful nature.

So that's the first thing. He realizes in the presence of holiness. He is not holy. He realizes that but he is in the presence of holiness and he realizes he is sinful. And this is the beginning of the realization of who Jesus is.

[14:22] Verse 8 again, the end of verse 8. Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Now I know some say that this word kurios, the word Lord, is used here simply as a kind of honorific sir as we might say, a kind of polite thing.

Now that may be true but normally if you call someone sir or madam, you don't fall to the ground before the, on your face, do you? I suggest this is the beginning of the dawning realization of who this man Jesus is.

Remember it's going to be Peter who later on in the story when Jesus says, who do you say that I am, is going to say, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. He doesn't know that fully at the moment but he has recognized Jesus' authority.

Remember after all Jesus had healed his mother-in-law and he was well aware of the stories of Jesus and he had heard of his preaching, he had heard of the miracles and of course the amazement at this catch of fish.

It's very like a much later incident when Peter goes fishing again and John, there's a wonderful story in John 21 where Peter realizes with sudden glad realization that Jesus hadn't finished with him.

[15 : 43] That this, the same Jesus who came to him at the beginning of his discipleship now comes to him again. This is part of Luke's, sorry, this is part of Peter's training as Luke unfolds who Jesus is and how his kingdom grows.

Grace is at work. And this has been happening much earlier in the gospel. In chapter 1, verse 43, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, when Mary comes to her and tells her about the Savior, she is filled with awe.

She is astonished. Same word. And it's the Savior's kingdom beginning to grow, dawning in this man's heart.

And he, as I say, becomes a disciple before he becomes an apostle, as do the others, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who are partners with Simon. So a disciple, first of all, someone who obeys and someone who keeps on obeying.

A disciple is someone who knows they are sinful and who knows they'll keep on being sinful until the end of the journey and therefore will need grace. But thirdly, a disciple is someone sent by Jesus to gather other disciples.

[16 : 58] That's verses 10 to 11. Jesus said to Simon, middle of the verse 10, Do not be afraid. From now on, you will be catching men.

And that's what's said to Peter, is said to James and John, and also by extension to all who are Jesus' disciples. Make other disciples, says Jesus.

Now, in effect, the Lord is saying, Peter, I know you are sinful. I know you get it wrong. I know you'll continue to get it wrong.

But I can make something of you. And I can use you in calling other disciples. It's interesting, this, because this is not something spectacular he's calling him to here.

This is the daily witness of the disciple who calls others to share in the treasure they have found.

Evangelism has been defined as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

[18 : 04] And that's very much the atmosphere here. Everything has changed as a result of encountering Jesus. And the verb here, from now on, you will be catching, showing the kind of present continuous.

The disciple is called to a life of discipleship. and part of that is calling other disciples. And that is summed up in verse 11.

When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Priority is no longer fishing, but following. Isn't it ironical?

They are called from fishing just at the moment of a tremendous success. Jesus, I think that's so interesting. You notice how the story has developed.

Peter doesn't come to Jesus and say, I know you've made a miserable mess of this, so let me give you something you'll actually make a success of. Jesus allows them to succeed in this, where they have failed, and they leave their old life behind.

[19 : 14] They left everything and followed him. One of the problems about speaking about discipleship is it often makes people feel guilty.

They feel, I'm absolutely hassled with life at the moment. I can't possibly do any more than I'm doing. And preachers are always saying, do a bit more.

It's often said, preachers have got four subjects, come to the church more often, read the Bible, pray and give to the church. Now, I'm afraid there's enough truth in that to make it uncomfortable.

The point is that's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying, I am the priority now. Are you harassed? Perhaps difficulties in your family, perhaps difficulties in your job, perhaps you're not feeling well, perhaps you're not as young as you used to be.

This verse isn't saying, look, you've got to do more for Jesus. This verse is saying, do what you're not about action, it's about attitude.

[20 : 20] They left everything. Now, I think this is illustrated by another story later on in the gospel. Later on in chapter 18, don't bother looking it up, you'll know the story, Jesus meets a rich young

man, a rich young ruler, as he's called, and he says to him, sell everything you have and give to the poor.

Now, that sounds as if that's an absolute command. Leave everything, sell everything. That can't really be absolute, can it? What if a young single mother in a tower block gets converted?

No point in saying to her, sell everything you have and give to the poor. She is the poor. You see what I'm getting at? There are two parts to the command. The command to follow is absolute.

There are no exceptions. If we're going to be disciple, there are no exceptions. But in each of our lives there is a basic hindrance to discipleship.

Some people it may be wealth, others it may be position, others it may be relationship, others a hobby that's taking up far too much of our time.

[21 : 32] It can be anything at all and it will differ from individual to individual. And when the call of Jesus comes, follow me, leave everything.

What he's saying is put me first in your life. Don't look around what others are doing. If you're very, very wealthy, the call may come to sell what you have and give to the poor.

The call may come to leave your job and go into some kind of ministry. That may be the case.

That's not the case for everybody. The absolute is follow.

And that's why later on the Lord is to say to the rich young ruler one thing is necessary and the one thing that's necessary is to follow me and for the rich young ruler that would have involved giving up his wealth.

So you see for us today the absolute command be a disciple follow me. Let me put it this way. If you struggle to make ends meet and don't know how you're going to pay your bills one thing is necessary that you follow Christ.

[22 : 43] If you're wealthy and comfortable and have more than you need one thing is necessary that you follow Christ. If you're unknown except to your own immediate circle one thing is necessary that you follow Christ.

If you become very famous if your name becomes a household word then one thing is necessary that you follow Christ. If you're struggling with great problems then one thing is necessary that you follow Christ.

If you're enjoying a time of peace and of prosperity then one thing is necessary that you follow Christ. Amen. Let's pray.

God our Father help us to respond to that call which was not just to the fishermen by the lake of Galilee but as to each one of us today help us to discern in our lives the hindrance to discipleship and help us to follow the Lord Jesus Christ all the days of our lives Amen.