

Grow More Disciples

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[0 : 0 0] and welcome to Christchurch. As you've probably guessed, this is about discipling. And as we open this series, Jay and Michelle opened last week with this great way of talking about this Christ-centeredness when we come to unity of being one with one another, which is at the heart of the Christchurch vision that we would be one and becoming one that we are then able to go and be disciples. Because here in week two, we're talking about this sense of discipleship, or if some may prefer the word apprenticeship, because it's very much the same. We are learning and we are growing.

We are focusing on the vision and the vision imperative that Jesus gave us to be able to become all that he wants us to be in him. Now, I don't know whether, like me, you've been following the Commonwealth Games. Hasn't it been great? I've been catching bits and pieces of it as I go in.

And I don't know what your favorite sport has been, but I've certainly really enjoyed the swimming. I've enjoyed the basketball particularly. I thought that was great. And like many people watching, I wish I was 40 years younger. I wish I was a lot fitter. I certainly wish I was a lot lighter.

And for the basketball, I wish I was a lot taller. It's been great. But watching isn't my bag. I want to get involved. I can't sit back. There's something in me that itches and says, actually, I want to be a part of that. And that is our discipleship. In 1924, the Olympic Games were being held in Paris.

And a young American rower called Bill Havens, and his picture should come up on the screen, had been chosen to represent the USA. Yet he had a big decision to be made. Because at the time that the Olympics were being held, his wife was about to give birth to their first child. A young American rower who knew that he would have come home with the gold medal made a decision. And he made a decision to stay for the birth of his child. Let's fast forward. And it is then 1952. It's 28 years later.

[2 : 3 7] And again, there's a young American rower that's gone to the Olympic Games. And this time, he wins the gold medal. And the winner of that event sent the following telegram to Bill Havens. And it read like this. Dear Dad, thanks for waiting around for me to be born in 1924. I'm coming home with the gold medal you should have won. Your loving son, Frank. Here's a picture of them. That's a picture of his son.

And we've got a picture of them together. You see, what's the story got to do with discipling? It's got everything to do with discipling and apprenticeship. Because I think that many churches are filled with people that they have sacrificed opportunities and think that we've missed the prize. We haven't.

often the decisions we have made in discipleship have been good decisions. We thought that somehow our day was lost. We thought that somewhere where we had grieved that maybe that we should have given up hope that our life and ministry somehow didn't bring all that it should have been. That's not true.

We wondered if the sacrifice was worth it. Bill Havens and his son, I look at that picture, and I see that the right decision was made. And so many of us at times in our discipleship, we have given up. We think that it was a once and only chance that we were given. God doesn't stop again and again and again, wants us to engage with that discipleship. There is an apprenticeship.

There was an apprenticeship in that story. It was a love of canoeing, father and son, father showing the son, the son encouraging his father. It goes on like that. That is what we are called to do. That is the life of discipleship. Nothing is wasted. And whether we admit it or acknowledge it, Jesus has invested a lot in us. You see, in this Easter season, as David said earlier, you know, we may think Easter is over and done. It is not. The cross is empty. The tomb is empty.

[5 : 0 0] Jesus has moved on. And in our story today, he's talking to his disciples. And he's saying to his disciples, there is more. There is a lot, lot more. And somehow we may think that we've missed the boat in bringing people to know Jesus. And I've heard all the stories. We're too old. We've done our bit.

We're leaving it. We're leaving it to the younger people. Maybe there is something in us that we say we can't do that because we've denied him. Maybe we're a new Christian and we think maybe that's not our place to do that. You've got to attain a certain level before you can actually engage with discipleship. The thing is, is that Jesus focuses us ahead and says, whatever is gone is gone. Use it, but I'm looking forward. And that's what we're about this morning. We're looking forward. The disciples had screwed up big times. They had regrets.

It says in our reading this morning that even when they met with him, they'd seen all of this. And even then there were still doubts. But they went with it and great things happened. Bill Havens made the right decision. He made the right decision for him, for his wife, and for his son. And the gold came home.

What a great thing for us maybe that many of us may have had regrets that maybe we see in our lives that there are things that have happened. And Jesus says, that's okay. Let's use that as experience and move forward to sacrifice what we want on the altar of his purposes.

You see, in Christchurch, when we came together, there's all sorts that have happened. There was two churches that came together and we all got together and we decided, we prayed, we fasted, and we asked God what this new chapter was going to look like. And discipleship was very high up there, that we would be a people that, like the clip, wouldn't just sit around and consume and say, that was a nice Sunday service. Thank you very much. And we're not even going to think about you, Jesus, until we come next Sunday. It was about that we were going to go out and we were going to do great things. That's what he promised and that's what he's doing. Because if you look at Christchurch, we have seen people baptized, people dedicated, thanksgivings. We have seen parents bringing their families along. We have seen families bringing their children along. We have seen wives impacting their husbands. We have seen husbands' ministry impacting their wives. We're seeing new women's groups spreading up. We're seeing amazing men's groups, growth groups, all sorts that are happening. Our schools work. You could just go on. I work amongst older people. I work in residential homes. You could list and list. It is about going out. But it starts with our discipleship.

[8 : 22] Because unless we are rooted in Christ and we have that confidence to go out, not much is going to be born out of that. So it's a great testament to us all of what is happening at the moment. We aren't called to be spectators. I was wondering if you talked to somebody who did their apprenticeship 20 years ago, what they would say to you. Because certainly any apprenticeship 20 years ago is not what is probably alive today. But anybody who did their apprenticeship 20 years ago will tell you that they have worked hard to keep up with what their career is in order to train others that are coming through. That is the life of an apprentice. And so I want to encourage you and encourage everyone this morning that whatever it has been that has gone before, that we should be on it.

That we should be in there. We should be encouraging our younger people coming through, other adults that God's bringing to us, even older people who may have walked away from the church disillusioned many years ago and are coming back because they want to find something new. And they are looking for something new. Not the old, but something new and relative. Mike Henderson puts in his book, Making Disciples, called One Conversion at a Time. A disciple is a follower. And that great rabbinic reference to, may I be covered in the dust of my rabbi, that you walk so closely to your leader that you know what they're doing, what they want to teach you. You don't miss anything. And we want to do that more and more as our discipleship. A disciple is one who is in a process, and we are in a process, a process of growing and learning through our mistakes, through what we've done. But the joys of seeing people coming more and more. And we may sit there, and we may look at our feet and say, oh well, it's somebody else's job. But it's not. Because if we want to get involved, we are called to be participants. And that's what this story was about. As Jesus was sending his disciples out, he said,

I'm going back to be with the Father, but the work doesn't stop. And I'm empowering you in the power of the Holy Spirit to go and do that. And this requires commitment. Commitment. And anybody who's done an apprenticeship will know what that looks like. You know what it looks like. Trinity students, I'm amazed with our Trinity students, how much commitment there is placed in by every member of the faculty and member of that college as to what they do. I am an all. Being a Christian, in addition, is to be ready to give testimony. And I'm not going to ask you what the last time was that you shared your faith. But I wouldn't be surprised that we show it in lots of ways if we're truly in our discipleship by the ways in which we live our lives and other people are drawn to us. You see, after Jesus left to go back to the Father, the disciples, it said that people were drawn to them by the way in which they lived their lives, in the way they were, not just what they said.

Being a disciple involves personal growth, and also it's the character. And we talked about that last week, the character of Jesus in us. You know, if you're just brewing at the moment to complain about something, then it might not be the character of Jesus in you. It might well be it's the character of Jesus that wants to go and bless and encourage somebody from what you've heard today.

It's also evangelism. On the day of Pentecost, people were transformed. And I've seen new Christians again and again and again, and it's so encouraging. I hope if you're a new Christian here, be encouraged.

[12 : 34] Because I love being around new Christians. It's really exciting. There's a new energy. There's a new dynamism about that. I met with Tim Daniel, my colleague, and many of you will have known Tim.

And Tim was right in at the beginning of shaping this vision of what we were going to do in Christchurch here. And he told me this great story about a guy that they've just invested in in Wales, who was a new Christian, who was a publican. And he set up this pub, and people who walk in there are just hearing about Jesus. And it's great. And people are bringing their friends along, because they want them to have this great experience in a great pub, where there's a great atmosphere, and they want to hear more. Isn't that great? I'm sure you want to do that on a Sunday morning, don't you?

Yes, people said. You see, Jesus called disciples into apprenticeship, into something that was exciting.

Jesus called Peter. Peter had done things the same way day in and day out. He was a professional. He was a fisherman. He knew when the time was to fish and when not to fish. He knew his job inside out. And in fact, on this particular day, he said, do you know what? There's no point in fishing anymore, because there's nothing there. And then he met Jesus. And Jesus said, let's go fishing.

I think there are many Christians who have given up fishing, because they said, we've done that. We think we know our community. We think we know our family. We think we know the people that you're calling us to raise. We think we know all of this. And Jesus said, no, actually, come and look again, and fish afresh. Let's have a look at that clip of Peter's conversion.

[14 : 41] The question is, whatever stage we're at, as Peter was, will we invite Jesus in to help us to go and do what he's calling us to do afresh?

Thank you. If God bless you in temptation, God bless you in a session with you in a feel of them here.