

# What Me

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 November 1994

Preacher: Darrell Johnson

[ 0 : 00 ] You see, the question is never, will I be a disciple? Goodness, goodness, everyone is a disciple of someone or of some way or of some idea or ideology.

The question is always, whose disciple will I be? And every turning point of every day poses the question anew. Whose way will I follow on this issue?

Whose voice will I listen to on this matter? Whose values will I adopt this day? Whose disciple will I be? Whose disciple will I be? Whose disciple will I be?

Nine weeks ago, we started this series of sermons on a vision for ministry, and I suggested that at this tumultuous, cataclysmic moment in history, it is time for the church of Jesus Christ to be more intentional about being and making disciples.

I began the series in Matthew 28, where the risen Jesus makes His great claim and His great commission. You know the text well. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[ 1 : 05 ] Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always.

Make disciples.

The kinds of activities that make for trust and obedience and joy. So over the past nine weeks, we have been grappling with a number of texts from the New Testament which teach us what it means to be a disciple.

We ourselves have to be coming to terms with these texts before we can be about the glorious work of making other disciples. Over these past nine weeks, I have intentionally chosen very tough texts, not because I'm a masochist, but because sooner or later, you and those we are seeking to mentor are going to encounter the tough issues which are addressed in the tough texts.

Now, if it were not for the coming holidays, I would today call us to and begin to lead us through the sayings of Jesus we call the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5 through 7.

[ 2 : 40 ] The Sermon on the Mount is the best discipleship manual available to us. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spells out in very clear, concrete, everyday context the radicalness, the newness of what it means to follow behind Him.

Spending time in the Sermon on the Mount is the logical next step for us to take. But because I want to be able to sustain a week-by-week series through the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, I'm going to have to hold out until after the holidays.

On January 8th, on the second Sunday of the new year, we will then begin a 27-week series in the Sermon on the Mount. I think it will take 27. It may take 33, but I haven't quite decided.

And it will be under the umbrella of kingdomized humanity, the kind of humanity that emerges when the kingdom of God breaks into our midst.

Well, today, as a kind of transition from the foundation-laying series, I would like to work with a number of synonyms for the term disciple. You know that as you make your way through the rest of the New Testament, as you read beyond the Gospels, you discover that this term disciple is not used as much.

[ 3 : 56 ] Other terms become more prominent. That's not because the rest of the New Testament leaves the issue of disciple behind. It's rather that the rest of the New Testament uses other terms, other images, to expand on this term disciple.

Thus, in the rest of the New Testament, we find terms such as members of the body of Christ, citizens of the kingdom of God, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ, children of the Heavenly Father, soldiers in the army of God, resident aliens, the bride of Christ.

Our text today is from 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 4 through 10. It's a text in which one of the first disciples, in fact, the first disciple of Jesus, uses a host of other images to expand our self-image as disciples, particularly to expand our self-image as a grouping of disciples.

Along with the Sermon on the Mount, I think that 1 Peter makes a very helpful discipleship manual, as those who are studying with Dave Rogers are discovering.

Well, if you are able, will you please stand for the reading of the Word of God? 1 Peter, chapter 2, beginning at verse 4.

[ 5 : 15 ] And coming to Him as a living stone, rejected by men and women, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For this is contained in Scripture. Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and they who believe in Him shall not be disappointed, as many of us can testify.

For this precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this very cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

For they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

For once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Spirit of the living God, we believe that you took this first disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and taught Him these truths and empowered Him to write them down.

[ 6 : 45 ] And so we pray now that in Your mercy and grace You take these words off the page, cause them to come alive in our minds and hearts and wills as never before. For we pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Please be seated. A little background first. Peter is writing to a number of small congregations.

And these small congregations are scattered throughout Asia Minor, which is now the land mass of modern Turkey. The year is about 62 or 63 A.D. What is important to know about these little congregations is that they are made up of both Jewish and Gentile disciples, with the Gentiles being the majority.

Now, why is that important? Because Peter addresses those largely Gentile groupings with images the Old Testament uses to describe ancient Israel.

The point? It's terribly exciting. Peter sees this new grouping of disciples made up of both Jews and Gentiles as the continuation of the work God began in the call of Abraham and Sarah.

[ 8 : 02 ] which means that the call to discipleship is the call to step into a particular stream of history which has been flowing for almost 4,000 years now, which explains why those stories in the Old Testament of God's dealing with Abraham and Sarah, with Jacob and Rebecca, with Joseph and Moses and Joshua and Deborah and David, explains why those stories are so helpful to us.

They are stories of disciples being made. They are our stories. Now, in this text we just read, Peter uses four powerful images from the Old Testament to describe New Testament disciples.

The four are interrelated, and the four are God's own people, God's chosen race, God's temple, and God's royal priesthood.

God's own people, God's chosen race, God's temple, and God's royal priesthood. It's the fourth one I'm especially after today. First, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are God's own people.

The word for people here is the word *laos*, from which we get the word *laity*. Whether Jew or Gentile, in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, disciples are God's own people.

[ 9 : 28 ] Now, the image suggests belonging and intimacy, but the image also suggests ownership and pride. Better yet, pride of ownership. The living God has made us His very own, and values us as much as He values His own Son.

Peter reaches back into the Old Testament book of Hosea. Hosea realizes that because of Israel's sin of idolatry, she has broken the covenant with Yahweh.

Hosea and his wife are told to give the name to one of their children, give the name *Lo-Ami*, which means, not my people. For Yahweh says of Israel, you are not my people, and I am not your God.

But then, after a long soliloquy in which Yahweh agonizes over Israel, He says through Hosea, I will say to Lo-Ami, you are my people.

Out of sheer, unmerited grace, God chooses sinful Israel to be His people anyway. It has to be out of grace, for none of us deserves to be included in the covenant family of God.

[10:39] There is nothing, absolutely nothing, any of us can do to obligate the living one to include us in the family of God. Peter's words here drip with mercy. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.

Out of measureless mercy, we have become God's own people, or as Peter actually puts it, a people for God's own possession. Next to Jesus Himself, we are the most important possession the Father has, which is why we must treat one another with great care.

What we do to and with other disciples, we do to and with God's own special possession. Second, as disciples of Jesus, we constitute a chosen race, or as someone has put it, a third race, a third race, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, who are no longer just Jews and Gentiles.

As the Apostle Paul says to the Galatians, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. The mixed race conglomeration of Jesus' disciples now constitutes a new kind of humanity, one in which racial and economic and gender barriers disappear.

As the new race, Peter says that disciples are now a holy nation. The word for nation is the word *ethnos*, from which we get the English word *ethnic*. Peter is telling us that the band of disciples following Jesus Christ into the kingdom of God is a transcultural and multicultural, trans-ethnic and multi-ethnic community.

[12:27] Our allegiance to Jesus takes us beyond our allegiance to our clan and our country. We folks of different language, different custom, different spiritual backgrounds, different political persuasions now declare allegiance to a new king and a new kingdom.

Which is why the disciples of Jesus can and must lead the way in bringing reconciliation in the midst of racial ethnic tensions. We disciples are no longer white or black or brown or yellow.

We are a chosen race, a holy *ethnos*, a people bound together in a new way that transcends the old divisions. In the Apostle John's vision of heaven, for instance, he hears the angelic choir sing to the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, Worthy are you, for you were slain and you purchased for God with your blood people from every tribe and tongue and nation.

The New Testament is clear that once I get up and get in line behind Jesus Christ, I get in line with people of every race and every ethnic background.

And in Jesus, we become blood relatives because we are now bound by the blood of the incarnate God. I believe that in the years to come, God is going to give the great privilege of modeling the chosen race.

[13:56] The great privilege of being in Jesus, all people's Presbyterian church. More on that later. Third, as disciples of Jesus, we now constitute the temple of the living God.

Peter does not use those exact words, but as you can see in the text, that's what is in his mind. He likens disciples to living stones who are being built up into a spiritual house. And he likens Jesus to a living stone who, because he is who he is, is the cornerstone of the whole structure.

The Apostle Paul does the same thing in his letter to the Ephesians. As you architects and engineers can tell us, it is the cornerstone of a building that determines its shape and its size.

We disciples are the living stones of a living temple, the shape and size determined by the living cornerstone himself. Upon him and in him, we are now the temple where the Holy One chooses to dwell.

Do you see what this means? We disciples of Jesus Christ do not have a sanctuary. We are the sanctuary. We call this beautiful building the sanctuary.

[15:10] That's not quite right. We are the sanctuary. The building is simply the place where we, the sanctuary of the living God, gather for worship. Let me put it this way.

We do not go to church. We are the church, right? We do not go to church. We are the church. We do not enter the sanctuary. We are the sanctuary and the living God enters us.

As living stones, let yourselves be built up into a spiritual house, says Peter. The dwelling place of God is not a building but a people. Let me press this a bit further.

Yes, it is true that after God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, God chose to dwell among them in a tabernacle, in a tent. And yes, centuries later, God condescended to dwell among His

people in the beautiful temple built by King Solomon.

But when God came to earth as one of us, as Jesus of Nazareth, everything changed. The apostle John says, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[16:16] That word dwelt literally means pitched His tent among us or more literally, tabernacled among us. John is saying that the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth is now the new earthly dwelling place of the living God.

He is the new and better temple of God. And Jesus promised that one day He and His Father through the person of His Holy Spirit would then dwell in His disciples.

On Pentecost, He fulfilled His promise. He sent the Spirit and now we, His people, are His dwelling place. And we are not just the temple.

We are the holy of holies at the center of the temple. You remember that the Jerusalem temple had four main areas. There was, as you first approached, the court of the Gentiles.

Then as you went further in, there was the court of the women. And then as you went still further in, there was the holy place where the priests did their ministry. And then as you went furthest in, there was the holy of holies, the inner sanctuary where only the high priest could go and only once a year at that.

[17:24] The Greek word for that most sacred place is the word naos, N-A-O-S. When the Apostle Paul asked the Corinthians, do you not know that you, plural, are the temple of God that the Spirit dwells in you?

He uses this word naos. You and I who have responded to the call, come follow me, are now the naos of God. We together are the inner sanctuary.

We are the holiest place on earth. As Jesus told the first band of disciples, wherever two or more of you are gathered together in my name, there I am in your midst, the Holy One dwelling in His new sanctuary.

This building is not the sanctuary. No building is. You and I are the sanctuary. We are the dwelling place of the Almighty. Now because we are the sanctuary, because we are the living stones that make up for that, make that up, it would be very helpful if we could begin on time.

It would be very helpful if all of us can gather at nine o'clock, if at all possible. Because you see, the worship cannot happen until the sanctuary is together.

[18:40] We need everyone to be together. Was that an okay way of putting that? That's because we are the sanctuary.

It's hard to worship with missing stones. Now, that brings us to the fourth image that Peter uses in the text here. As disciples of Jesus, we constitute a royal priesthood.

This is where I think things get very exciting. As one New Testament scholar puts it, we are not only the stones that comprise the building, we are also the priests that minister in it.

Together, we make up the priestly ministers of the Most High. Now, as you know, this is one of the great truths rediscovered by the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformers came to see that Scripture does not set aside a special priestly class, but rather, Scripture raises up a priesthood of all believers.

[19:43] This is the way I like to put it. The church of Jesus Christ does not have a priesthood. It is a priesthood. The laos of God, the people of God, does not have a priesthood.

It is a priesthood. The laity does not have a priesthood. The laity is the priesthood. To be a disciple is to be a priest. Yes, some are set aside to be pastors or evangelists or prophets or teachers or elders or deacons or administrators, but all disciples are priests.

I am a priest. You are a priest. I am a priest to you. You are a priest to me and you and I together are priests to the world. How does that feel to you today?

To be called a priest? What? Me? In the Old Testament, priests were given four privileges and responsibilities. First, they had direct access into the presence of God.

They were the ones who could go past the court of the Gentile, past the court of the women, into the holy place. Second, the priests were the ones who offered up the sacrifices, sacrifices that atoned for sin and sacrifices that expressed gratitude and praise.

[21:06] Third, priests represented the people before God. They bore in their hearts and on their lips the sins and the needs of the people. And then fourth, priests were the ones who represented God before the people.

The priests are the ones who could emerge from the presence of God with a word of blessing for the people. In Jesus Christ, I am a priest and you are a priest and together we are called to this fourfold responsibility and privilege.

Each of us has direct access to the presence. We need not get in a car, drive to some shrine, look for an authorized person who can unlock the doors of grace.

Jesus Christ has unlocked the doors and because we are His, we can go in anytime, anywhere.

Come to Him, says Peter. That word is translated elsewhere, draw near.

It is the language of priesthood. Hebrews 4.14, Let us draw near to the throne of grace. Each of us has direct access into the presence. And each of us is called upon to offer sacrifices.

[ 22 : 22 ] Not now for sin, of course. That, thank God, has been taken care of once and for all.

Jesus, the great high priest, has entered the holy of holies and offered the one sufficient sacrifice.

He's offered Himself. He Himself became the spotless, sinless sacrifice. It is finished, He cries on the altar. No priest need ever again offer any sacrifice like that for sin.

But we are called upon to offer what Peter calls spiritual sacrifices. One such sacrifice is the sacrifice of praise that you may declare the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Another is the sacrifice of resources. Hebrews 13. Do not neglect doing good and sharing what you have, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Another is the sacrifice of repentance and confession. Psalm 51. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit. A broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. And there is the sacrifice of the whole self.

[ 23 : 23 ] Romans 12.1, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. It's the highest act of the priestly ministers to offer all that I am and have to Him who has offered all that He has and is.

Each of us has direct access. Each of us is called to offer spiritual sacrifices. And each of us is called to represent the people in the presence of God. To take the sins and needs of those we love and the sins and needs of those we do not love into the presence of the triune God.

It is the privilege of being intercessors, broken people who can draw near to the presence on behalf of other broken people and bring them to the foot of the cross where the healing takes place.

And each of us as priests represents God to the people. We have the privilege of emerging from the presence with a word or a touch from the Savior of the world.

Can you imagine the difference it would make if we disciples would just embrace our new identity?

Could you imagine the difference it would make if we would just take this priesthood of all believers more seriously?

[ 24 : 40 ] Imagine, for instance, the consequence for our worship services. We would come here with a very different set of expectations. Yes, we would come to get. He, after all, invites us, come, feed of my abundance, drink of the river of my delights.

But we would also come to give. We would also come to offer up those sweet-smelling sacrifices. Imagine the consequences for the church's ministry. You see, priests continually make themselves available.

Priests are continually saying to the Savior, I will do what you want me to do. I'll go where you want me to go. And imagine the consequences for this city. Imagine what would happen in the city if just we, GPC priests, would walk through the week taking more seriously our role as intercessors, taking more seriously the privilege of bringing neighbors and co-workers and business and education and government leaders to the throne, and then making ourselves available as channels of blessing from the God who wants to bless.

To bless. It's a wonderful word that's used in Scripture, to bless. It was the thing that priests in the Old Testament did the most. When you read the Old Testament, you see that people longed to be touched by the hand of a priest and longed to hear from the mouth of a priest something like the Lord bless you and keep you.

It is what priests in the Roman Catholic Church do the most. While I was in the Philippines, I would often go down and attend a number of Catholic churches in the cathedrals, and I would watch as people lined up to be touched by the hand of a priest and to hear from the mouth of a priest something like the Lord bless you and keep you.

[ 26 : 24 ] Is that not your longing? I know it's mine, which is why after watching those people in the cathedral for some time, I would often get up in line too.

I longed for a priest to touch me and speak a word of blessing to me. You are a priest. Your hands are the hands of a priest, which means your touch can be the touch of a priest. Your mouth is the mouth of a priest, which means that your words can be the words of a priest. There are people in your circles of influence who are longing for a touch or a word of blessing. People in your office, people in your service club, people in your school, people on the soccer field or the golf course, people in our homes, our family members are longing for a touch and a blessing. You see, the question is never will I be a disciple? The question is always whose disciple will I be? To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to become God's own possession. [ 27 : 38 ] It's to become part of a chosen race. It's to become a living stone in a temple where God chooses to dwell and it's to become a priest serving one another and the world as a royal priesthood.

As disciples gathered today making up the living sanctuary of the living God, God, I'm going to ask you to exercise the priestly function right now. All I'm going to do is ask you to pray for just a moment, to be still, make yourself available and then after that moment of quiet, then I'm going to ask you to do some things.

They are non-threatening. Trust me. Let's be still for a moment. Let's don't