

DISCIPLESHIP

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Preacher: Rev Prof Andrew McGowan

- [0 : 0 0] I want to direct your attention this morning to the two passages of scripture which we read earlier. These verses contain words of Jesus spoken to his disciples after the resurrection.
- First of all that famous passage in which Jesus gives to his disciples what is called the Great Commission.
- It appears in Matthew 28, 16 to 20. Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.
- When they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.
- Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- [1 : 1 8] And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age.
- And then just one verse from the second passage. From the Acts of the Apostles chapter 1 and verse 8.
- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.
- In these passages of scripture we find Jesus explaining to his disciples what they were to do for the rest of their lives.
- And there are several points I want you to notice. First of all they were to go and make disciples. Second they were to do this in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- [2 : 3 3] And third they were to begin in Jerusalem. So these are the three points I want to share with you.
- Make disciples in the power of the Spirit begin in Jerusalem. First of all they were to go and make disciples.
- Now the Bible makes it very clear that we cannot make people into Christians. Only God can do that.
- As we read in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2 and verse 47. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
- It was God who added to the number of Christians. Because only God can change hearts and minds and bring someone into the kingdom of God.
- [3 : 4 2] It is God who makes people Christians. But if we cannot make people into Christians. Why did Jesus tell his followers to go and make disciples?
- For this reason. God has chosen to bring men and women and children to Christ through the gospel message.
- In other words. That is God's designated way of bringing people to new birth and new life to faith.

Through the gospel message. The Holy Spirit takes that message and enables people savingly to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this is a great mystery. But as Paul said. God saves people through the foolishness of what was preached.

[4 : 50] In the world's eyes. It's foolishness to suggest that salvation comes through a man crucified 2,000 years ago outside Jerusalem.

It doesn't make sense. It's a very bizarre idea. But yet it is God's truth. And God's designated way to bring people to salvation.

But although God is the one who brings people to salvation. Our job is to tell people the message. So that God can use that message by the Holy Spirit.

To bring them to the place of faith. This is vital. There are countless thousands of people who are facing a lost eternity in hell.

Unless they hear and respond to the life transforming message of the gospel. And turn to Christ and receive salvation.

[6 : 03] And so this great commission. Which was given first to the eleven disciples and then to the whole church. That great commission is vital.

And we must never neglect it. But we have to go a step further. Jesus did not say to the disciples. Go and make converts.

No. He said go and make disciples. Discipleship is not something that stops the day you become a Christian.

In a real sense. Discipleship only starts when you become a Christian. Our English word disciple comes from Latin.

But in both Latin and Greek. The words we translate as disciple have the same meaning. It means the pupil of a teacher.

[7 : 09] The Greek philosophers had their students or disciples. The Jewish rabbis had their pupils, their students. And in the same way.

Jesus gathered a group of disciples around him. And taught them for three years. And it's clear from the Acts of the Apostles chapter 6.

And verse 1. And elsewhere. That although Jesus had a special group of twelve disciples. Whom we might call apostles.

There was a wider group. And every Christian was regarded as a disciple. So when we speak about a disciple.

We're talking about someone who's learning from a teacher. And in Christian terms. We're speaking about someone who is learning from Jesus.

[8 : 13] The greatest teacher of all. But what does that discipleship involve? Well first of all.

It involves love. John's Gospel 13 and 35. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.

If you love one another. One of the marks of any Christian fellowship. Ought to be the love that we have for one another.

I remember as a student in Aberdeen. William Still, minister. Spoke of how his church seemed to attract.

More than the normal share of people who had made shipwreck of their lives. Broken relationships. Broken health.

[9 : 13] Alcoholism. Drugs. All kinds of things. But he said. They come here. Because as soon as they walk through that door. They're surrounded by love.

They're not judged. They're welcomed. They're cared for. They're integrated. That's why they come. And you see that's a mark of the church.

That we love one another. And the second thing we can say. Is that discipleship involves bearing fruit.

As we read in John 15 and verse 8. This is to my father's glory. That you bear much fruit.

Showing yourselves to be my disciples. We should bear the fruit of the spirit. The love, joy, peace, patience.

[10 : 12] And so on. And then third. It involves setting correct priorities. Luke 14.

26 and 27. If anyone comes to me. And does not hate his father and mother. His wife and children. His brothers and sisters.

Yes, even his own life. He cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross. And follow me. Cannot be my disciple.

What does that mean? Well, it means that if there is anything. That's more important to us. Than the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot be his disciples. Even things which in and of themselves are good. Family and so on.

[11 : 11] Cannot take the place. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Discipleship. Discipleship. Discipleship. Discipleship. Discipleship. Is a single minded business.

Everything else. Comes second or third. Or after that. But Jesus. Must have the first place.

Discipleship. When I was at Uddingston Grammar School. A new chaplain came to the school. Philip Malloch. And he helped a number of us.

Who were young Christians. And he disciplined us. He taught us. The Christian faith. He involved us.

In summer mission teams. He even had us going round doors. In his congregation. To speak about our Christian faith. I'm sure they were very well briefed.

[12 : 07] Before we arrived. But he disciplined us. He taught us. He encouraged us. And that's vital. Are we the real disciples.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. And secondly. And the other two. Are not as long as the first one. I should say. Secondly.

In the power. Of the spirit. They were to make disciples. In the power. Of the Holy Spirit. We do not share the gospel.

In our own strength. We do not try to win people. For Christ. By the cleverness. Of our own arguments. Or by. The eloquence.

Of our preaching. Or anything human. We seek to win people. For Christ. In and through. The power. Of the Holy Spirit.

[13 : 06] Of God. Paul made it very clear. That in his own ministry. He was utterly. Dependent. Upon God.

The Holy Spirit. You remember what he says. In 1 Corinthians. Chapter 2. Verses 1 to 5. When I came to you.

Brothers. I did not come with eloquence. Or superior wisdom. As I proclaim to you. The testimony about God.

For I resolved. To know nothing. Among you. Except Jesus Christ. And him crucified. I came to you.

In weakness. In weakness. And fear. And with much trembling. My message. And my preaching. Were not with wise. And persuasive words. But with a demonstration.

[14 : 02] Of the Spirit's power. So that your faith. Might not rest. On men's wisdom. But on God's power. If we persuade someone.

Of the truth. Of Christianity. By our own human logic. And arguments. Then we will always be. At the mercy. Of someone. Who comes along.

With better arguments. Or more eloquence. Or greater wisdom. Or whatever. You see the point. If it's just. Human logic.

And wisdom. That wins a person. Over. They can be won over again. By someone else. With a different gospel. A different message.

But if it's by the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can overturn. That. Paul says. In 1 Thessalonians.

[14 : 59] 1. 4 and 5. We know. Brothers. Loved by God. That he has chosen you. How did Paul know. That God had chosen.

Those Thessalonians. Well he tells us. We know. God has chosen you. Because our gospel. Came to you. Not simply.

With words. But also. With power. With the Holy Spirit. And with deep. Conviction. When we're trying. To make disciples.

We do it. In the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Of God. The seed. Of the gospel. The message. Of Christ.

Must be sown. With confidence. In the power. Of the spirit. And watered. If you like. By the prayers. Of God's people.

[15 : 54] People. I don't know. If you've ever read. The stories. Of. Any of the great. Revivals. That have taken place. Even in the last.

Couple of hundred years. There is a common. Message. And thread. Through all of them. It's when the Holy Spirit. Comes in power.

That revival. Takes place. And many lives. Are changed. And churches. Are built up. In the faith.

Without the power. Of the Holy Spirit. We can do nothing. That's why. Prayer. Is such a key element.

In evangelism. And mission. We cry out to God. To send. His spirit. Upon us. And the third point.

[16 : 49] I want to make. Is that they were to begin. In Jerusalem. If you know. The geography. Of the Holy Land. You will see.

That the disciples. Were to move out. From Jerusalem. First of all. To Judea. Then north. To Samaria. And then on.

To the ends. Of the earth. The key point. Is. They were to begin. Where they were. Again in Jerusalem. Then spread out.

To the whole. Surrounding. Area. Of Judea. Then up north. To Samaria. And then. The ends. Of the earth. Begin.

In Jerusalem. Let me tell you. A story. From my native. City. Of Glasgow. David. Naismith.

[17 : 44] In the early. Nineteenth. Century. Wanted. To be. A missionary. Missionary. And then. In the early. Nineteenth. Century. Being a missionary.

Meant. Being a foreign. Missionary. To Africa. Or India. Or China. Or wherever. But he was. Turned down.

By the missionary. Societies. And wasn't. Able. To become. A foreign. Missionary. Now that was.

No doubt. Disappointing. For him. But in the. Providence. Of God. It led. To a great. Usefulness. Because. David.

Naismith. Said to himself. If I can't. Be a missionary. Overseas. I will be. A missionary. In Glasgow. And that's.

[18 : 39] Precisely. What he did. And that led. To the formation. Of the Glasgow. City Mission. And that.

Movement. Led to the London. City Mission. The Edinburgh. City Mission. And city missions. All over the world. He began.

If you like. In Jerusalem. He began. Where he was. In Glasgow. And there is still.

A great need. For people. To begin. In Jerusalem. In the sense. To begin. Exactly. Where we are. The need.

At home. Has never. Been greater. And we are now. Seeing. Missionaries. Coming. To Britain. From Africa. And Asia. And elsewhere.

[19 : 33] Places. That we used. To take. The gospel. They are now. Coming. To us. And I have. Had friends. Come. From those places.

To share. In the gospel. Mission. It is no longer. Us. Taking the gospel. To the ends. Of the earth. The ends. Of the earth.

Coming. To us. Because we. Are. In greater need. The churches. Overseas. By and large. Are much stronger. Than here. Last year.

I. Went to. South Korea. For a. Meeting. Of the world. Reform. Fellowship. And one of my. Former students. Is a minister. In Seoul. The capital. Of Korea. And he said. Would you preach. In our church. While you're over.

[20 : 29] For the meeting. Certainly. I said. That would be a pleasure. Then the email. Come back. You'll be preaching. At nine o'clock. Eleven o'clock.

One o'clock. And three o'clock. I think I've got that right. But anyway. It was four services. With about five or six hundred people.

At each service. The only way. They could. Accommodate. Everyone. Who wanted. To come to worship. Was through multiple services. That's not happened.

To me. In Inverness. Or Alness. In a very long time. But it's happening there. And they're sending. Missionaries. Here. But it doesn't matter.

Which way. They're going. The important thing. Is that we must begin. Where we are. To be missionaries. In Invergordon. Easter Ross.

[21 : 26] Whatever. And every place. Is different. But the gospel. Is the same. It's been my privilege. To serve as a minister.

In different places. My first parish. Was Malag. In the small isles. I had six churches. And five of them. I needed a boat.

To get to. Rum. Meg. Muck. Canna. Noida. Remarkable parish. But I also served. For six years. In the postle area.

Of Glasgow. Council housing. Estate. With multiple. Deprivation. Church. But you know. The people. In those parishes.

Were the same. In that they needed. To know. The gospel. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. People are the same.

[22 : 19] Everywhere. The same problems. And needs. And concerns. The same struggle. With sin. The same need. For a savior.

And so we must reach out. Wherever we are. With the message. Of Christ. Are you beginning. Where you are.

Here. In Invergordon. Or wherever you live. So then. The message. This morning. From these. Passages.

Of scripture. Is that we are to go. And make disciples. We are to do this. In the power. Of the Holy Spirit. And we are to begin.

Where we are. And this is not. An optional extra. For particularly. Keen Christians. Nor is it. A job. For only ministers.

[23 : 13] And elders. And evangelists. This challenge. That the Lord. Gives us. Is to every. Christian. And we must all.

Respond. To that. Challenge. Amen. Let's pray. And what's gracious. God and father. We thank you.

For the gospel message. And we thank you. For the call. That you have placed. In our lives. To share. That gospel message.

With others. That they might. Come to know. Jesus. Help us. Father. By the power. Of your Holy Spirit. To share.

Our faith. And to pass on. The gospel. In Jesus name. We pray. Amen.