

The Making Of Disciples

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: 06 May 1979

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Making of Disciples in Matthew chapter 16. And if you have your little books, it begins on page 45, and it's verses 13 to 20 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Now you will remember that as you follow, put the whole story together, it's the story of how Christ was looking for a time when he could spend teaching his disciples.

He was hindered from doing that by the people who were pressing on him all the time for miracles of healing, for miracles of feeding.

And then he was being pressed by the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes who were quite upset about him and wanted in some way to stop the popularity which he had with the people and the effect which his teaching was having among the people.

But what Jesus mostly wanted to do was not to argue with the Pharisees and not to go on in his ministry of healing, important as it was, but to do what he considered the essential work, which was teaching the disciples.

[1 : 15] And so I have to put before you again, as I did last week, the proposition, what are you doing here? Are you looking for a free meal on the one hand, which a lot of people follow Christ after miracles of feeding?

Are you looking for a miracle because of the unfortunate circumstances of your life? Are you willing to become a disciple? Because I think the miracles and the feeding and everything else comes together when you are willing to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And what we are as a community of people is to be a community of disciples, of people who are learning, learning from one another and teaching one another and being involved in coming to grips with what it means to be a Christian in our society.

So, Matthew 16 and verse 13 talks about it in this way. They had gone to a place called Caesarea Philippi, and Philip the Tetrarch had built this pure pagan city to be a kind of testimony to the Caesar who had given him his rule and his authority, and this was a kind of tribute that he had built, changing one of the Gentile cities north of the Sea of Galilee into a great Roman metropolis and calling it Caesarea, Philippi.

So, Jesus was up in that territory, again, away from the crowds of people that might have followed him, and certainly having gone into Gentile territory, away from the Pharisees and Sadducees who wouldn't contaminate themselves by going there.

[3 : 03] There he was, and he turns to his disciples and says to them, Whom do men say that I am? And they said, Well, some say you're John the Baptist, and some say you're Elijah, and some say you're Jeremiah.

And these are all sort of reference points that they have. And then Christ turns on the disciples and says, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered for them and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So you have this great confession of faith in the midst of the world's understanding of the person of Jesus Christ.

Like if you were to ask the question in our society, Who is Jesus Christ? You might get into, like, Well, he's something like the six million dollar man.

Or he may be something like that other character who drinks through his finger. Mark, who comes from another planet altogether.

[4 : 15] Or he might be like Superman in the new Superman film, because everybody says that Superman has a kind of messianic complex.

But always we would refer to something we know to identify something we don't know. The people knew who Jeremiah was. They knew who John the Baptist was.

They knew who Elijah was. But they hadn't really figured out who Jesus Christ was. And the difficulty with it is that, of course, you can't figure out who Jesus Christ is by reference to anybody else.

He's not Che Guevara, as some people like to identify him. He is a unique person. And in order to find out who he is, you have to find out from him.

He is the only one that can reveal to you who he is. And that's the essential business of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, is discovering who Jesus really is.

[5 : 20] Most of us, I'm afraid, live most of our lives sharing other people's opinions and speculations and ideas and never finding out for ourselves who he is.

And this heart of the business of discipleship was for you not to go on reflecting other people's opinions and other people's ideas, but to find out for yourself who this person Jesus Christ is.

Can I give you a comparison? Lots of people talk to me about St. John's Shaughnessy, and they say things like the fact that we're very cliquish.

All right? And then they say things like we're very unsympathetic. I heard this even less time, that St. John's has no concern for social matters that involve our Christian faith.

And that's fine. And others say that St. John's has no concept that we have just no awareness of what Christian stewardship is all about. And that's fine.

[6 : 27] And those things are partly true and partly false. But the thing that matters is when you become a part of this community yourself and know it from the inside rather than the outside, it appears very different to you.

This is a very different place than the place I heard of when I was several thousand miles away. And knowing it in terms of the persons involved is a very different experience indeed.

So it was with Jesus and his disciples. The business of coming to know who Jesus really is is very different from being on the general grapevine which picks up all sorts of contradictory opinions.

I might at this point put in a plug for the Wednesday night Bible study on the epistles of the Colossians because one of the heart of the epistles of the Colossians is working on this question of who Jesus Christ is.

And we'll be doing that on Wednesday nights. But anyway, this is the first thing that happened to the disciples was that they had to come to terms with who Jesus is.

[7 : 41] And if you're a disciple of Jesus Christ or aspire to being a disciple of Jesus Christ then you have to answer the question well, who is he to you?

And it would be a very helpful and helpful exercise if you would take time to do that. Just to sit down with a piece of paper and write down who he is to you.

How you have come to know him. to know him. And you may find that he's a very close and personal friend. He's, or he may be a very distant and remote kind of cartoon character.

Well, that's the first thing that discipleship demands. Well, when Simon said, you are the Messiah, the son of the living God, Jesus replied to him, good for you, Simon, son of Jonah.

For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven. And, that's the second thing that you have to know about being a disciple.

[8 : 53] That there's a lot of things that we can know as human beings. That is, we know we can know a lot technologically.

In the, in the Revised Standard Version, it says, flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you. Well, we in our generation are very impressed with what flesh and blood can reveal.

What man, by the exercise of his own intellectual faculties, can come to know and discover. But to discover the uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ is something which God alone can give to you.

He alone can reveal to you who Jesus Christ is. There is revelation which the Bible always talks about.

And revelation is something which one person imparts to another. If I was dead and on a marble slab and you were a pathologist, you could find a lot out about me.

[9 : 56] But you could never find out from me who I think I am and what I feel. You've got to come to me as a person and it's out of that personal encounter that you would discover something about me.

So, we can study with our minds with flesh and blood all the things about God in certain theological ways. But God himself has to reveal himself to us.

And that's why discipleship is a matter of gathering around the person of Jesus Christ and being taught by him. And as we are taught by him, he reveals to us the Father and the Father reveals to us the Son.

Remember what we were talking about back in Matthew chapter 11? That's the intimate process of revelation that we have to become involved in.

If you remain outside and just pick up the general opinions about Jesus Christ, you won't know who he is. If you simply use the intellectual faculties that you have without the element of personal encounter, you won't know who Jesus Christ is.

[11 : 11] And so, Jesus commends Peter and says to him, flesh and blood hasn't revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. Jesus goes on and says, I tell you, Peter, you are a rock and on this foundation, I will build my church and not even death will ever be able to overcome it.

Peter's name means a rock and Peter's confession is the rock on which the church is built. and that's why next Sunday when the bishop is sitting there and addressing the congregation, he's going to say, do you believe in Jesus Christ?

And the confirmation candidates are going to say, I do. And then the bishop is going to turn to the rest of you and say, do you believe in Jesus Christ?

And you're going to be asked to say, I do too. So it's a significant question and it's a significant question because on the answer to that question, the whole of the church is built.

The church is a community of people who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one in whom the purpose of God is fulfilled.

[12 : 40] And you will be asked that question because it's this confession of faith that is the rock on which the church is built. Now you'll know if you've ever heard that there are Protestants and Roman Catholics in the world, that there's some difference between how to interpret this verse.

And the difference, of course, is not one that I think you can put a knife through and say one's right and one's wrong because one, the Roman Catholics have taken the person of Peter to be the rock and the Protestants have taken the confession which Peter made to be the rock.

And of course, I'm afraid I'm way over on the Reformed Protestant side and I think that it's the confession, not the confessor, that the church is built on.

That it's this confession which we share, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But, Protestant or Catholic, both are of the opinion, and I think are very solidly of the opinion, that the basis of the church is the apostolic witness to the person of Jesus Christ.

In other words, the New Testament points to Jesus and says, this is who he is. And we, coming into the fellowship of the church, receive that witness, receive that confession, and we come into that faith that this is Christ.

[14 : 17] And so this becomes the rock and the foundation on which the church is built. Now there's one peculiar thing about that verse, and I have to stop because time is up, but this will be continued at the 1115 service, just in case you want to go.

The peculiar thing about this verse is that Jesus says, on this rock foundation I will build my church. And of course that becomes a very significant verse because that's one of the only two times in the gospels that Jesus uses the word church.

We're very familiar with the church and what the church is all about, and we try to understand it. But the church is a word that doesn't appear prominently in the New Testament and certainly in the teachings of Jesus.

So this passage has been given tremendous weight because in this passage he who is the Lord of the church refers directly to it. Archbishop Ramsey speaks about what we mean when we talk about the church.

[15 : 38] He says, when therefore we say that we believe in the church, we do so only and always in terms of our belief in the God who judges and raises up.

The mistake of ecclesiasticism through the ages has been to behave in the church as a kind of, to believe in the church as a kind of thing in itself.

The apostles never regarded the church as a thing in itself. Their faith was in God who had raised Jesus from the dead and they knew the power of his resurrection to be at work in them and their fellow believers despite the unworthiness of them all.

so that the church is not something we believe in for itself, but the church is something which points us to Jesus Christ and invites us to share in this faith.

We can't make the church an end in itself. The church is only a kind of platform from which we can be pointed to Jesus Christ and we can be invited to put our faith and trust in him.

[16:54] So I hope that you will individually and corporately prepare yourself for next Sunday morning at 10 o'clock when the bishop looks at you and says, do you believe in Jesus Christ?

And that you will be able to answer in simple words but from profound conviction. I trust that that will be true for our confirmation class and for us as a congregation because it's on this foundation that the church is built.

we're going to sing hymn number 168. They came everyone whose heart stirred him up and everyone whom his spirit made willing and they brought the Lord's offering.

Now Redeemer. Amen. Amen. Do you want to know a good reason for going to church on Sunday morning?

I just want to encourage you with this because it has to do with the thing that we are involved in.

[18:32] And I'm getting a little discouraged by Vancouver. Partly because it's such a completely beautiful place. And partly because there are so many recreational facilities.

and partly because the people who are having trouble tend to keep it very much to themselves. And so that nobody it's difficult to share it with people.

We're supposed to laugh with those that laugh and rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with those that weep. And of laughing and rejoicing there's lots of opportunity.

But the places where you can weep together because of particular afflictions that people suffer are not too easy to come by because people don't like to let on I suppose in this fairly conservative community.

But in all this one of the reasons that I think we can afford to weep with those that weep is because of the reality of the hope that is ours in Christ.

[19:39] and that we don't have to be afraid of the circumstances that may confront us in the course of our earthly lives. We don't have to be afraid of the suffering that we might encounter.

We have a kind of instinctive fear and dread of that happening and so we avoid it and even when it happens we continue to deny it.

and somehow the riches of what we have in Christ doesn't become apparent. So that's what I wanted to tell you about and I want to read you something written by Harvey Cox about why you should go to church on Sunday morning.

And this is his own conclusion. He concludes that the spiritual crisis of the West and he doesn't refer just to Vancouver when he says the West.

He includes even Halifax in that. The spiritual crisis of the West can be met only when the West sets aside myths of the Orient and returns to its own primal roots.

[20:49] You know that we've been sucked into thinking in the kind of non-objective way of Oriental meditation and that the reality of our own roots has been lost to us.

after all that he learned from his exotic adventures this is Professor Harvey Cox who wrote *The Secular City* if you remember. He still needs the struggling liberal church in my neighborhood a place where I must contend with younger and older people some of whose views I appreciate and others of whose ideas I find intolerable.

That's the struggle of the little church of what needs to be taking place here. How often I have been tempted to jettison this all-too-human level freckle on the body of Christ and to stay home on Sunday with better music on the stereo, better theology in the bookshelf.

But I do not, I do not believe any modern Christian whether a return Eve from the East or not can survive without some such grounding in a local congregation.

That's the important reality of our life together, this grounding in a local congregation, this encounter one with another.

[22:22] another. But the encounter has to take place. We have to allow it to take place. And it has to take a place between all sorts and kinds of people.

We've got to allow the isolation that we have from one another to break down and to be able to get to know each other. Vancouver is a city of high fences and high hedges.

Hedges spiritually as well as actually. And we've got to let some of these hedges break down and some of the fences get out of the way in order that we can begin to relate to one another.

Well, that's the reality I feel about congregational life and how we need to be drawn together in our life together in Christ.

And just to show you what's behind this, I want to go on with the passage that I've been discussing at 930 and want to look at again at this 1115 service.

[23 : 31] And it's Jesus training his disciples. Jesus had trouble because he was very anxious to get time to train his disciples.

And I feel a good deal of sympathy with him in that, in that people in this parish are so desperately busy. We are so highly programmed and move from one thing to another, you know.

And I think we'd have to declare a state of emergency to have any time when even half the people of the congregation could get together at any particular point of time.

So that it's, Jesus was having this trouble with his disciples, not for quite the same reasons. The reasons he was having trouble was that he was constantly followed by all sorts of people that wanted to be healed.

Even when he went up into Syrophenicia where he thought nobody would know him, this woman came to him and said, Master, have mercy on me, and told about her sick daughter.

[24 : 44] And Jesus tried to put her off by saying, I'm not sent to you, I'm sent to the lost sheep of the tribe of Israel. But she wouldn't be put off. She was the one who used the analogy of even the puppy dog beat the crumbs which fall from the children's table.

And then when he returned back down into his home territory, he was confronted by the thousand, first the five thousand, and then the four thousand that needed to be fed.

Both of which, occasions where when he was trying to get alone with his disciples. And then on another occasion when he was trying to get alone, he was confronted by the Pharisees and the Sadducees who had come a long way off their own stamping ground in order to confront him with the question, show us the sign.

And all the time, Jesus is trying to get his disciples together so that he can teach them that the need for healing and the need for miracles and the need for contentious arguments which had to be resolved and had to be worked through, took up so much of his time that there was no time for the training of the disciples.

And I take from this that the essential business that you and I are involved in is not the business of creating miracles. one here and there doesn't do any harm and perhaps quite a number could be helpful for their own purpose.

[26 : 13] And that there is lots of reason to argue about things because there is in our society a real declension from the faith. Lots of people just don't know what they believe or why they believe it.

And very many church people would not acknowledge the basic statements of the Christian faith as being central to what they believe about themselves and about God and about this world we live in. So that there is lots of room for argument. But the essential business of the Christian church is the training of disciples. Of you and I being in the place to be disciples.

And that's what Jesus is doing in Matthew chapter 16. He's teaching his disciples. And he was teaching them about himself in the first instance when he said, Whom do men say that I am?

And they replied, they said, Well, some say you're John the Baptist, some Elijah, some Jeremiah. And who do you say that I am? And they said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[27 : 20] And that central confession of faith was the confession on which the church is built. And it's the confession that you make when you become a member of the church of Christ.

That you believe in Christ. You believe Christ's witness about himself. Not what men say about him, but what he says about himself.

And it's that confession of faith in him that is the basis of the life of the church. Well, Peter makes that confession. And then Jesus goes on to tell him something about the church.

And this is significant because this is the only, one of the only two locations in the gospel where the idea of a church is expressed by Christ in his teaching.

And so it's become a very central statement about the nature and character of the church. And Jesus says to Peter, I tell you, Peter, you are a rock.

[28 : 24] And on this rock foundation, I will build my church. And not even death will ever be able to overcome it. That is, the first characteristic then of the church is that it's a community that death will have no power over.

Now, every other human community and every other human endeavor is marked by the fact of death. When you go to London, England, and some of you no doubt have been there, there's a little

doorway, I think, across the Thames River where it said that Christopher Wren stood and watched the building of St. Paul's Cathedral, a huge, huge building that dominates the skyline in London. location. And you also have left breach of campus in a field of semi alternate camp. And we're Stunden and an enthusiast of major■■■■.

So let's continue using generator and explain the memory of the spirit to deliver and the universe through the itself. It's been Somebody told you that village and especially■■■■ and find out every■■■■ where you have__ You could deal with some Japanese activity du■■■ so you can