

Decisions or Disciples?

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[0 : 00] And Jesus said, whoever shall come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

Sitting in a congregation one day was a young man who heard the preacher say these words, the world has yet to see what the Lord can do with one person wholly committed to him.

And that young man sitting in a congregation was D.L. Moody. And his Sunday school teacher, Seraph Moody, I can truly say that I have seen few persons whose minds were spiritually darker than was his when he came into my Sunday school class.

And on to add these words, And we seldom met an applicant for membership more unlikely ever to become a Christian of clear views, still less to fill any extended sphere of public service.

And yet we see how God took and fashioned and motivated that man into be one of the great preachers of our land and our country and indeed the world.

[1 : 47] And later on in his ministry, as we said, he became the preacher. And in the context of a sermon, he said something similar.

However, the world has yet to see what the Lord can do with a life fully given over to him.

And during that service, the life of C.T. Studd, the famous English cricketer, was challenged.

And who, after his conversion, he said this, The Bible, which had been so dry to me before, became everything.

You see, the dryness of Scripture, before he knew Christ, was nothing. But when he came and knew Christ and put his faith in him, it became everything.

[2 : 58] It watered his life. It motivated him. It gave him the purpose to share his story. And that same man C.T. Studd in his life, Yes.

That unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to Christ's sacrifice for me at Calvary. And every one of us, day in, day out, are faced with decisions.

You've been faced with decisions this morning. Will I make my man's breakfast? Or will he make mine?

What will I wear? We're full of decisions that have to be made. And some either will or won't have a considerable impact on our lives in the long or the short term from making decisions.

the normal day-to-day what to eat or drink.

[4 : 22] What to wear will have no impact. But there are some decisions that will have an eternal impact.

questions such as the Times newspaper many years ago one sent out an inquiry to famous authors question what's wrong with the world today?

G.K. Chesterton responded to that and he wrote to the editor dear editor dear sir what's wrong with I am?

And as soon as we recognize that we are part of the problem we can be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

James Stewart one of the best preachers of the 20th century sincere Christians who are living a defeated life because they are not aware of the full provision many sincere Christians who are living defeated lives because they are not aware of the full provision which is theirs in Christ.

[5 : 58] are we like that? Are there times we live a defeated life? Or are there times we crave for the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can do things that only Christ wants us to do?

the cross of Christ. You see the Lord Jesus Christ was so aware that the cross was his destiny that he predicted it three times to his disciples as we see in Mark's gospel chapter 8 9 and 10.

Jesus was a man who was morally innocent and that's what makes Jesus on the cross an extraordinary sacrifice.

you see God did not demonstrate his love to us by sending us a letter rather he demonstrated his love with nails and thorns.

I'm sure you'll agree with me that the cross is an unusual piece of jewelry jewelry. People decide to wear it around their neck as some kind of protective symbol.

[7 : 44] Other people decide to have it tattooed on their arm or their neck or their body or somewhere else. cross. And we see it day in day out people with a cross tattooed on their skin.

They're making a statement but are they making the right statement? it. The church of Jesus Christ is standing at a crossroads.

You may be standing at a crossroads this morning and the Lord Jesus Christ you'll remember spoke of that crossroads where there's a broad way and a narrow way and a decision has to be made as of which road we're going to travel.

Following Jesus is easy when life runs smoothly. but our true commitment is revealed during the trials of life and many of this congregation have known trials and they've come through them.

They've given God thanks for his faithfulness his love his healing his presence. Are you one of those?

[9 : 40] Experienced with trials known God's blessing been a testimony to others in your community in your church. Of course the cross can be different for each person.

maybe it's a physical ailment or just simply getting older and we all do that.

We get older at the same rate. and what life brings to us.

Someone said possibly your cross is sitting next to you. And that cross with those problems those situations those difficulties may change as life goes on.

And I ask myself sometimes the question should I or should we come to church if we've had a bad day?

[11 : 05] should people come to church if they're imperfect? If they're weak? Of course they should. Otherwise no one would ever attend church because we are filled with imperfections. We are weak.

we do struggle from time to time but it's only by the grace of God that we're able to see our way forward. We come with our faults and our feelings and the purpose of coming to church is not just to worship God to give him thanks but it's also to encourage and build each other up to allow God to transform our lives and changes to wipe away to eradicate all the flaws in our lives and renews day by day.

The purpose of coming to church is to worship God and to see him move amongst us by his spirit and the purpose of leaving church and I say leaving church I mean at the end of the service is to be stimulated excited and renewed ready to bear our cross to show to the world that we serve Jesus Christ and him only.

So the question is this this morning is it decisions or disciples we're looking for?

[13 : 29] A church which doesn't disciple will dissolve. Now think about that for a minute. A church which doesn't disciple will dissolve.

This week as we've heard from Barry and others. Many will be asked to make decisions either to attend or to make a decision during the Wilbur Graham Crusade celebration.

And as a church we need to pray and follow up those whose names are passed on to us.

Some will come from this area and in the decision card they'll put their name and their address and what the local church is. And we need to expect we need to expect those who lead that crusade that celebration to pass those names to us but what will we do with them?

Are we ready? Are we ready to follow them up? will they simply make decisions without becoming a disciple?

[15 : 06] A disciple is someone who is devoted to Jesus who develops the character of Jesus and who is deployed in the ministry of Jesus devoted to Jesus developed the character of Jesus and deployed in the ministry of Jesus.

You see it's not by lowering the bar lowering the standard it's by helping people to realize that they've come to a new life that there's something different about them and they should know that anyway but we have to disciple them and help them to move on and encourage them in their journey with Christ.

Those who come into faith Paul speaks about them being spiritual babes fed with the milk and then they can go on to understand greater truths.

Jesus Christ said to his disciples go and make disciples. He didn't say go and get decisions.

The difference people can make decisions but don't necessarily follow up that decision they've made.

[16 : 52] And God gives us instruction and we need to hear his voice and know his spirit in us that when people come to know Christ as saviour we have to disciple them into the faith to help understand what it is they've come to know and who they've come to know.

A decision means nothing unless a heart or a life has been changed.

Zig Zigglar a motivational teacher trainer who travelled the world delivering a message of hope and humour and encouragement said this if you aim at nothing you'll hit it every time.

God gives us a motivational plan. He gives us a target to hit and that is to follow Jesus to take up our cross daily and follow him.

It's true to say that Jesus took twelve unqualified men and had a 91.67% success rate.

[18 : 40] Judas didn't work out all that well. But with those people he turned the world upside down. And who's not to say that Jesus can take your life and my life and those who come into faith in this community through the initiatives and turn this community upside down.

God is in the business of changing lives with the message of the gospel. And he did that not by making decisions but making disciples.

Leonard Ravenhall, a great evangelist, said this in revival, God is not concerned about filling empty churches.

He is concerned about filling empty lives. It's the lives of men and women, your life, my life, that God wants to fill to overflowing.

we sang earlier on, all over the world, God's spirit is moving and he can move by his spirit in this place if we will let him, if we will bow the knee, if we will acknowledge who he is and be prepared to take up our cross and follow him.

[20 : 26] are you willing to do that today? But how did he do that? There are certain things we see in Scripture very, very briefly by his teaching.

He taught people how to think, how to ask questions, how to find answers. Now, as far as I can understand, in those days, Jesus didn't have Google.

He might have known that Google was going to come later on, but he didn't have Google. Google. And God wants us to be so immersed in his word and understand his word that when people come and ask questions, we are able to share them by the power of his spirit.

Professor Howard Hendrickson said, a teacher's job is not to instill information, but to make the learner want to learn more.

To start him on a journey of discovery, finding new truths in God's word. And he also used accountability.

[22 : 03] Isn't it true that we do things better when we know somebody's watching us? Not in the wrong sense, but we're given a task, and someone mentors us, and someone helps us to see what's right and what's wrong.

Someone said, if we knew better, we'd do better. And that's why Jesus called men and women to follow him, and he calls you and he calls me to follow him in all his immutable excellencies.

We're told of the early Christians, that they met together, they devoted themselves, devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, the bringing of bread and prayer.

They spent time with one another, getting to know one another, that soul, getting to know you, getting to know you, getting to know all about you, and we have spent time getting to know all about Jesus from his word, that we may impart that and share it with those who come to faith.

Do they see Jesus in your life, by your example, by your witness, by your behavior, by your attitude? Do they see it in me?

[23 : 53] Sometimes no. But that means I've got to learn to understand God's word more and more, and let it flow into my heart and my life.

There's no other way. For example, if you want to learn to play a musical instrument, if I want to learn to play the organ, I don't just watch Ian, that'd be no good.

Oh, he's a good teacher, yeah, he's a good player, but I have to watch, I have to learn, I have to practice, and then I have to play on my own with him watching me to point out all my faults.

and me playing the piano, I have lots of faults. Well, when you were taking your driving instructor, would watch you, well, you signaled properly, used your mirror at the right time, obeyed the highway code, and we need someone to monitor us, and help us to move forward, to learn from our mistakes, and fine tune what we've been doing.

God speaks into men and women's lives. It's not about teaching a program, it's about being human.

[25 : 49] someone made this remark, uncommunicated expectations are just future disappointments, and it's something we should expect from everyone, not just new Christians.

Writer of the Hebrews says this to us, and let us consider how we may spur, stir up one another towards love and good deeds.

And there are many people who are good at stirring up, but are they good at stirring up love and good deeds? Every Christian needs the encouragement of every other Christian.

let me go back a minute to Barry. He talked about what happened on Friday. He talked about taking these kids to Will Graham.

Do you expect any of them to make a decision to come to faith in Christ? Christ? If you do, and they return to this church, who's going to disciple them?

[27 : 17] Barry? Is that fair? To ask him to do that over and above everything else? We have to take responsibility.

We have to encourage. We have to help. We have to envision. We have to allow the Holy Spirit to fill our lives day by day with every wonderful imitation of Christ.

What will you do with Jesus? Neutral. You cannot be. one day your soul will be asking, what will he do with me?

Those who come to faith need to know that we are here to support and encourage and train them, mentor them, and help them move on as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

That is your commission. Be prepared to accept it, to take it up. and we can teach them in many different ways.

[28 : 52] We all have gifts, we all have experiences in life that they can learn from us. May they do that by God's grace.

Bless you. Father, thank you that Jesus came and took upon himself the cross. That, as we see it, that heavy piece of wood, but the nails and thorns were placed in his head and his side, his hands, his feet.

but we thank you. It was his love for each and every one of us that kept him there. Help us to have that same love for others because we're only sinners saved by grace.

In Jesus' name. Amen.