

May 18, 1997

Sermon: *BECOMING A DISCIPLE*

Scripture: *Matthew 11:28-29*

You will notice this morning that we want to talk about growing as disciples, and I wanted to read for you one of the great mountaintop passages of scripture in the New Testament. It is in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 11, verse 28 down through verse 30.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The Bible says that Satan is the master deceiver. Because he is the deceiver, he does not then come to us with obvious temptations and outright lies. But rather what he does is he will emphasize a part of a truth, neglect the rest of it, and thereby make all of it a lie. There are two areas in all of our lives that he works on very hard. The first is how we come to Christ. Three hundred and thirty times in the New Testament we are encouraged to believe in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. You have heard it all of your life, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." That simply means that belief seems to capture the very essence of a beginning relationship with God.

But the concept of belief has two parts. The first part is to accept something is true. The second part is that I bring that truth into my life, and it begins to alter the way in which I live. Now what the devil does is that he emphasizes the first part and forgets the second part. The devil does not mind in your believing in God. In fact, the Bible says the devil believes in God, and he actually trembles in His presence. Satan is not

trying to get you to be an atheist. Rather what he does is that he simply forgets the second part. That is, to bring that truth of God's existence into our life, and then that changes our course of action. If you are here this morning and think that just because you believe there is a God, therefore, that makes you right with God. Then what you need to do is take that philosophy and turn it upside down. What you will see on the bottom of it is "made in Hell" because hell is going to be full of people who believe there is a God, who are frightened by the concept of God, but who never give their life to God.

The second area in our Christian life that he comes to deceive us is after we commit our life to Christ. The Christian life is also two parts. The first part is that we received from God all of the blessings that He wants to give us in Jesus Christ. But the second part of our Christian life is that we then enter a life of discipline, study, and service; therefore, we become more like Jesus Christ. The passage of scripture I have read for you today helps us to understand those two parts. Listen to them again. The first part of coming to Christ, "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Phillips Brooks, the great Boston preacher of a century ago, said that if I had to summarize Christianity, it would be on giant figure standing with arms outstretched. "Come unto me all ye who are weary...", that is life has beaten you down. You are burdened. You recognize that you are broken in your relationship to God. "If you will come to me, I will give you rest." Think about it. In a world that is constantly changing, I can give you peace on the inside. In the circumstances that come rushing on you, I can give you a sense of comfort within. In a world where I miss the call of God and I have an angry conscience that howls in the night, I can give you rest. How wonderful! Come to me, and I will give you rest. All of us who are believers have found that inner peace and joy within our hearts.

But you will notice Jesus did not stop there. That is where the devil wants you to stop. But that is not where Jesus stopped, and that is not where the New Testament stops. Listen to what Jesus said. The He said, "Take my yoke upon you." A yoke is a piece of wood that was put on an oxen to keep an oxen in line. Take my yoke upon you, and enter a life of disciplined study of Me. Learn of Me. The He said you will find rest. Before I give you rest, but in study and discipline you will find rest. I'm meek and lowly in heart, my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Let me clearly help you to understand where the devil wants to deceive you. He wants you to receive the blessings from God, and not accept the burden from God. He wants you to be a taker and not a person who surrenders. In the New Testament the word is never for Christians of being a believer. If somebody comes to you and says are you a believer, that is American talk. That is not Biblical talk. The Bible always uses the word disciple. Christ did not call us trust to believe and to take from Him. He called us to be disciples of Him. It is a life of discipline. It is a life of study. It is a life of searching. It is a live of creative tension, and in that we begin to find the deeper truths that God wants to give to us.

Now, what does it mean then in the second part to be a disciples? Let me give you four words. The first one is commitment. Let's suppose in your life you have always had an interest in learning how to paint. You found out that the world's greatest painter has come to Richmond. You contact this great teacher and say I have always had a desire to want to know how to paint. Can I become your student? She says yes. So you make an appointment. She says I don't take many students, but you have such an interest. So let me give you your first lesson. You sit there, and you seize the scope of this woman's knowledge. Then she says now the next time we will meet is next Tuesday. Then you say, oops! I'm sorry about that. I can't come next Tuesday. I have another appointment.

She says how about Wednesday. Can't come Wednesday...taking my kids to soccer on Wednesday. Thursday? Thursday is my hair day. Can't miss Thursday. The teacher will then look at you and say when you become serious about learning how to paint, give me another call. All of us understand you will never learn how to paint or to do anything unless there is a commitment on your life to say this is something I want to do. You have come as a believer to Jesus Christ. You have said you are the master teacher about living. I want to know how to live. He says, good. How about Tuesday? Well, Lord, I can't come Tuesday. It helps us to understand that disciple and discipline are synonymous words. It helps us to understand that if you are ever going to learn how to be a disciple it commands commitment on your life. In so many of our lives that is where we get into problems. We come to the point where we recognize we are not willing to pay the price to learn the truths and to get the greatest truths we can learn.

You remember the story Jesus told about a man who had a great banquet. He fixed it all and invited everybody to come. One man said I can't come. I just bought some real estate. I have to go see it. One man said I can't come. I just bought some oxen. I can't come. One man I understand a little bit. He said I got married. I can't come. The Bible says the man who had the great feast became angry because he understood they were all frivolous excuses, and nobody was willing to pay the price. Now let me just share with you that the deep things of God are not meant by superficial people who want to come in, pay lip service, and then try to say dear God, give me all of the blessings that you have. The New Testament never promises that.

I saw a little ad in the paper this morning I may take advantage of. It is on the sports page. It says that if I came to a hotel lobby, paid \$10, a famed golf teacher is going to be there, and it says it will revolutionize your golf game. I figure \$10

bucks. Who can go wrong? Now you are aware as I am, \$10 bucks in a hotel lobby is not going to change your golf game. The \$10 bucks is not going to make a Tiger Woods of Jim Pardue. Let me tell what Tiger Woods does. When he goes and practices his chipping, he chips 1,000 balls at a time. Why is he good? Sitting in a hotel and paying \$10 bucks, or paying the price of hitting 1,000 balls to master one shot?

How do you learn of God? Commitment. And you know, the greatest problem with most of us is that we are so absolutely shallow. The curse of Christianity is its shallowness. Somebody said we are a mile wide and an inch thick. Jim Wallace, the Christian writer, says that we have called everybody to believe and nobody to obey. Here are people who are challenging the very foundations upon which Christianity rests, and you and I come and give Sunday School answers from the third grade. No wonder nobody listens. So He calls us. He called you to be a disciple, but to be a disciple demands commitment. Jesus says unless you are willing to put Me first and learn of Me, you can't be my disciple. Jesus will not be treated as an unwelcome guest in your life, and then turn around and give you the truths about God.

Second word is the work continuous. Jesus said come to me and learn of me. The concept is constantly learning. One thing about being a disciple is you never graduate. You never learn all there is to know. If you learn all there was to know, you would be God, and he would be your disciple. You are constantly learning of Him. There is no stop. I am reminded of the little girl who kept going to bed at night, falling out of her bed. Mama and Daddy would have to come in. She was crying. Finally her Mama laid down with her, and said dear, tell me, why do you keep falling out of the bed? She said I guess, Mama, it is because I went to sleep too close to where I got in. The problem with a lot of Christians is they go to sleep too close to where they get in. Here is this

awesome, majestic life that is before us. Many of us get to the point where we stop.

There are crucial times in your life. Let me remind you of four of them. A crucial time is when you get out of high school and you go to college. Those of you who have been in college, was that a crucial time in your life? You bet. Did you grow as much in college as you did in high school? If you did, you are unusual. The second time is when you get married, and until your children come, many young couples feel that they don't need God any more. When they get children, they need God and Dr. Spock and everybody else. The third time is when you move. You see, you were at that church. They all knew you. Your mother and daddy were there. Now you are over here, and nobody knows you. Fourth time is when you have something happen in your life that is difficult, and you don't understand it. When God is crushing you to give you a bigger world, you are content to live in the Brooke's of your experience, and you don't keep going. What I want to ask you, and I wish I could do it to each of you, looking you in the face individually, when I ask you: Are you a deeper, more vital Christian today than you have ever been in your life, or do you have to look back and say I used to be, I used to be? The Christian life is a life of constant learning, disciplining in your experience.

The third word is comprehensive. Jesus said I want you to learn all of me. I want all of your life to be given unto me. I want you to come where you can learn and learn where all of your life is given. So many times when I have invited people to Bible study and invited them to church, they will make a little comment. I guess it is a subtle comment. They say I know all that. You know I learned it in Sunday School when I was a kid. I know all that. I want to look him in the face, and say I didn't know Christianity was a that. Christianity is a personal pronoun. It is a who. What it means is to take every area of your life and put it under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Recently I

was reading again the Book of Mark. I was fascinated by how many times Jesus would take his disciples aside and tell them specific truths. I went back and I counted. In the Book of Mark he took them aside 18 times, eighteen specific truths He wanted to teach them. I went through them again. I said, Lord, have you taught me that one? Have you taught me that one? You see, my problem is like yours, so many times I get a part of the truth and part of my life is given to Him, and then I don't apply all of it to all of my experience. God wants all of our lives. I am not finished with discipleship until all that I am is under the lordship of Christ.

The last word I wanted to give you is the work usable. Let me read for you a passage of scripture. It is the Book of Luke. It is in Chapter Six, verse 40. Listen to what it says: "*A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*" The words fully trained means developed for the purpose for which it is designed. It was used of a ship. After a ship was made, then it would be taken out and given a trial run, and then it would be brought back and said all of it works well. In Newport News when you see the christening of a ship, then you will hear it said, "'and they took it on its maiden voyage.'" They make sure everything works, and then they come back and give it to the Navy. The word making sure everything works is this word when you are fully trained, you are like your Lord. What God is trying to do in all of our lives is God is trying to fully train us, discipline us, disciple us so that God can use us for His glory. Now I want to ask you. Are you usable? Have you become so like Christ that you are usable for him: God made some people who are usable who are demonstrations of what God can do in a human life. We have enough talk. People want to see walk. Do they see that in your life? God needs people to stand against evil. There is so much of it in the world, and people need to stand. God needs people who are usable. God needs people to help. there are so many broken people. There is so many

hurting people. So many people need to be taught. How are these kids ever going to learn? How are the youth going to learn if you are not usable, if God can't use you: What God is trying to do in your life, He is trying to fully train you so He can completely use you for His glory.

All this week a phrase has been going in mind. It is a famous phrase in Christian history. This is the phrase. The world has yet to see what God can do with one person who is totally dedicated to Him. That statement was made over 150 years ago in a sermon. A teenager was sitting in the back row. All of that week it began to go in his mind like it went in my mind this week. The next Sunday that young teenager walked down the aisle and told his preacher, "I want to be that person." That person became the Billy Graham of the 1860's. He was a shoe salesman by the name of Dwight L Moody. Percentage-wise he reached more people for Christ than any evangelist who has ever lived. He said all of his life I want God to use me as I give myself to Him. I want to ask you. Have you been playing the believer disciple facade? Has the devil manipulated you to think that all that Christianity is just to get and not to give? To receive the blessings and not the burdens? To take everything that He offers and give Him anything in return? Have you received the rest, but haven't paid the price to find the rest? Glad to take everything at the foot of the Christmas tree, but have you taken the yoke? Have you become His disciple? And are you really growing? Some of you here have stopped. Some of you have had things to come in your life, and you would come to recognize I am not a disciplined disciple of Christ today. Some of you need to make life changing decisions that you start that process of going again.