

Radical Discipleship

by Bob Utley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of radical discipleship, prioritizing Jesus above all else, and making a total commitment to Him in every area of life.

Duration: 20:13

Topics: "Discipleship", "Faith Commitment"

Description

This sermon delves into the radical commitment that Jesus Christ calls for in discipleship, focusing on the expectations of peace versus division, the prioritization of God over family, the concept of taking up one's cross daily, and the significance of faith in reciprocating God's work. It emphasizes the need for a lifestyle of radical fellowship with Jesus, surpassing all other commitments and impacting every aspect of one's life.

Transcript

Hello, we're going to be in what I think is one of the most important chapters about what I consider to be the New Testament's central issue as far as discipleship, and that is the radical commitment that Jesus Christ calls for. There is no more beautiful expression of that than Matthew chapter 10, and we're going to be in verses 34 through the end of the chapter, and then moving over to Matthew 13. Notice it says, "...do not suppose that I come to bring peace to the earth." Now this, do not suppose, probably the disciples were expecting the consummation of the age as they had been taught it as children.

Now it was very nationalistic, very militaristic. They expected God to break into history one time in the Messiah, to overthrow all the Gentile armies, to set up Jerusalem as the capital, and all peoples flow under her. Now I believe that that's going to happen one day, but that we know is the second coming.

You see in the Old Testament, really there's only one coming that was seen clearly, but from further revelation we realize that Jesus came the first time as the suffering servant riding on the fold of a donkey. The second time he'll come as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords riding on the white charger. And so the Jews were expecting this second time first, and they misunderstood.

So Jesus says to them, "...do not suppose that I have come to bring peace." Oh I love where in John 14, 27 where Jesus says, "...my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, give I unto you, let not your hearts be troubled." But friends let me say to you, as beautiful as that peace is, that is an internal peace, that is not an outward peace. As the world rejected Jesus Christ and his message of love and commitment

to God, if we follow his footsteps and walk in his ways as we ought, the world will reject us. So the peace is an inner peace, not an outward peace.

Then it says, "...I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Now in John 3, 17, Jesus after that great little deal about John 3, 16, it says that God did not send him into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. But you see what happened is that light has come into the world, but men have loved darkness more than light because their deeds are evil. Now what that says to me is this, Jesus did not come primarily to judge, but the very fact that he has come and men respond or reject him, they judge themselves.

And that's what I believe we have. Have you ever noticed when you go out visiting for your church or something, you can talk about sports, you can talk about the ball game, you can talk about the weather, you can talk about world politics, but when you mention the name of Jesus, attention fills the air. Friends, you can't mention his name in any group without dividing that group, those who are for him, those who are against him.

That's what he's saying. There's going to be a division everywhere his name is mentioned. Y'all see Luke 12, 49 through 53.

Now notice what it makes in verse 35, "...for I have come to set a man." Now this in verse 35 and 36, really this is a quote from Micah chapter 7, verse 6. And what it's saying is that there's going to be no neutral ground about the Messiah. I've come to set a father and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law, really the word's bride, against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be members of his own household.

Now this, a good example, it would be Peter in Matthew 16, 18, where Jesus says, "...upon this rock I'll build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And then he says, "...and I'm going to Jerusalem and die." And Peter says, "...oh, not you, Lord, not you, far be it from you." And that's where Jesus says to Peter, "...get behind me, Satan." You see, one of his close friends tried to take Jesus another way than God's way. Now friends, I love my family, but when I told my family that God was calling me to preach, many of them said, "...oh, no, Bob, not you, not you, Bob." You see, sometimes the closest people to you can cause the most tension over decisions you have to make for God. And I want to tell you what.

God must come before wife, before husband, before children. It must come before your very own life, and that's the radical fellowship that we have here. Now, notice if you would where it says in verse 37, "...anybody who loves father and mother more than he loves me is not worthy of me." Now I want to show you a thing here, it's a Hebrew idiom.

Now in Luke chapter 14, verse 26, this Hebrew idiom is the word hate. Now here it's the word love more than, but hate is what Luke has. Now this is a Hebrew idiom of comparison.

The English translation intensifies this much too much. We're not saying you've got to hate father and mother. What we're saying is that your commitment to Jesus Christ must be of such a priority that everything else is secondary.

Let me give you a few verses, Genesis 29, 31-33, Deuteronomy 21, 15, Malachi 1, 2, and 3, which is quoted in Romans 9, 13, and John 12, 25 will show you this Hebrew idiom of comparison. And so what

we're talking about is the radical nature of the fellowship that Jesus calls for. And I want to say to you, the New Testament doesn't talk about make decision.

The New Testament talks about make disciples, and it is a radical, radical discipleship that we're talking about. Now it says not worthy of me, you ought to see Luke 9, 62. Verse 38, and nobody is worthy of me who does not take up his cross and follow me.

Now what does it mean, take up his cross? I've heard people in my day say, well, I've got arthritis, that's my cross to bear, or I've got eye problems. Friends, we're not talking about some minor physical problem. We're talking about the ultimate physical problem, death.

The word cross to the people of Jesus' day meant nothing less than a cruel, torturous, condemned, criminal dying. Now crucifixion was a Phoenician kind of thing, but the Romans took it over and developed it where it took several days for someone to die. They gave them water periodically just to make them live longer.

They put little blocks on their feet so they could raise up and breathe. Most people died by asphyxiation in crucifixion, not by anything else. The reason it was so torturous and extended was, it was a means of capital punishment to deter anyone from crossing the Romans.

Now they wouldn't do it to Roman citizens, but anybody else they would crucify. And there are several historical precedents in the book. One of them is under Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who killed 800 Pharisees by crucifixion.

The other is under a Roman general named Varus, who crucified 2,000 Jews in a rebellion along all the highways in Palestine. Oh, I want to tell you, this is a rough way to die. Jesus is saying, you've got to lay down the interest of your life and pick up the interest of my life.

Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ, yet I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Now that's the kind of commitment Jesus calls for. It's a total, complete, 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week commitment. Now notice what it says here, anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and nobody is worthy of me that does not take up his cross and follow me.

Anybody who gains his lower life will lose his higher life, and anyone who loses his lower life for my sake will gain the higher life. Now this, many translations are like this, but really we only have one Greek word here. And I've got a graphic I want to show you if I could.

This graphic deals with the word psuche. Now in verse 39, the word psuche is what we're talking about. It usually is pretty much synonymous with pneuma, which is the word for spirit.

The words translation higher life and lower life in Maya Williams' translation reflect one Greek word, psuche. Now notice that it normally means self or person. And then I've listed for you the number of other times in the Bible that this same concept appears over and over.

It's not a new concept, it is a pervasive concept. Now notice what you would in verse 40, whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me. Now isn't that something? That's the same kind of a theology as Matthew 25, 31 through 46, where it talks about that in

the great judgment day, giving a cup of water in Jesus' name or visiting someone in prison or giving someone clothing.

All of these things done for others in Jesus' name is just like doing them to Christ himself. Then it says, whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet. Now I want to stop for a minute because I think we have several terms here that need to be dealt with.

The word me, whoever welcomes me. And then the word prophet, and then the word upright man, which is really the righteous one. I believe these are three titles of Jesus Christ.

Now the term prophet is used in Deuteronomy 18, 15 through 18, and the term the righteous one is used for the Messiah in Acts 7, verse 52, and also in the Dead Sea Scrolls. So I really believe these are three terms for Jesus, whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me and the ones that I send in his name. Now notice in verse 42, and I'll solemnly say to you, no one who gives a cup of cold water to one of the least of my disciples.

Now this term least of my disciples translates a Greek idiom, which we normally would translate little ones. Now we look from Matthew 18, all the way from one through six, that little ones do not refer to children, but refer to new believers, weak believers, people like that. And so what it's saying is whenever we give somebody in the church, no matter how insignificant they may seem to you, whenever we minister to them and love them and accept them and welcome them, we are doing it to Christ himself.

Then it says, because he is a disciple, will never fail to get his reward. You know the Bible talks about rewards. I don't understand the reward system because I think everything I have, I have because of my relationship to Jesus Christ.

But I think we are going to be rewarded for two things. Number one, our availability to the Holy Spirit and number two, our use of our spiritual gift. And that's very, very important.

Now let's begin then at Matthew 13, beginning in verse 53. When Jesus had finished these stories, now the word for stories here is the word parable in your Bible. Now para is the Greek preposition alongside and bole is the Greek word for throw.

So a parable is to throw something alongside of. Now basically it's used in two different ways in the New Testament. It's used to illustrate a truth, a spiritual truth by putting beside it a common occurrence in everyday life that would clearly illustrate the spiritual truth.

Now Jesus said many times he taught in parables to communicate truth, but Jesus also said he taught in parables so that those who did not believe could not understand. So parables are meant to convey truth and to hide truth, both. Now notice if you will where it says, he left there, he went to his own hometown.

Now in Luke 4, 16 through 30, it seems like we're not sure if this is the same occurrence or a second occurrence. In Luke 4, they tried to kill him. So what we see here is maybe a second visit to Nazareth.

We're just not 100% sure. And he kept teaching in their synagogue. Now I want to tell you Jesus was committed to regular public worship.

His background, the Old Testament, he learned from synagogue school as a child. But friends, Jesus attended public worship every Sabbath. Now friends, we ought to follow his example.

I usually don't preach on church attendance in my church because I think if I say you ought to come, no one's going to come because I get on their case. But I do believe that when it says in Hebrews, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, which is the manner of some. The reason we need the whole family of God or the body of Christ together is we all have different spiritual gifts.

And the church cannot be the church that Jesus wants her to be unless all of God's children are together for worship and praise so that we can be encouraged to go out and minister. You see, the church is not a building, it's a people. Jesus knew that public worship was significant in his spiritual life and he attended synagogue every Sabbath.

Notice it says that he taught in such a way they were dumbfounded. You ought to see Matthew 7, 28 and 29. Now the reason they were so shocked, not only was Jesus' teaching so succinct, so real, so alive, so in-depth, but he spoke as one who had authority.

Now you see the scribes and Pharisees spoke, they would quote a famous rabbi. Rabbi Aqaba said, Rabbi Hillel said, and on and on. But Jesus said, I say unto you, a brand new authority, authority in himself.

And it just shocked them. But friends, it caused real problem in his own hometown. Look at this, in verse 54.

Where did he get this wisdom and this power to do such wonder works? You see, he had grown up in this town and they weren't denying the marvelous teachings they heard and they couldn't deny the miracles they saw. But what they were saying is, how did he do that? Isn't that the little snotty-nosed kid that grew up at the carpenter's house? Isn't that Jesus and his brothers and sisters running around here too? Isn't that just Jesus, the guy who lived down the street? You see, he did not have the credentials from the rabbinical seminaries of his day. He did not have the background that they were expecting in a Jewish rabbi.

And so they were challenging where he got this power, the source of his power. Now, the Pharisees said they could deny his miracles or his pervasive teachings. But they said, he does it by the power of the devil.

Now, friends, that's the unpardonable sin. I don't know how close these people of Nazareth were. But they were pretty close in saying, he can't be significant.

He grew up right here. Now, friends, I want to tell you, that says something about the normalcy of Jesus' childhood. There's some wild stories in the early apocryphal books.

Not apocryphal, excuse me, pseudepigraphal books. About Jesus changing birds and making them alive and zapping people and raising people. Friends, I think Jesus had the most normal childhood you can imagine.

I think he played in the dirt. I think he attended synagogue school. I don't think anybody thought anything unusual about this boy.

Now, notice it says in verse 55. Is he not the carpenter's son? Now, the Greek word carpenter, we need to, we have some misconceptions about that. The literal translation is builder.

Now, it's builder in the sense of expert craftsman. Now, it can be with metal. It can be with stone.

It can be with wood. We get the English term architect from this Greek word. Is not his mother's name Mary? Are not his brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all living with us? Now, friends, this seems obvious to me that Joseph is dead.

But it also seems obvious to me the people of the town thought that Jesus had normal brothers and sisters. Now, we would know from further theology they were half sisters and half brothers through the physical union of Joseph and Mary. I love Mary.

Oh, she's a wonderful girl. We talked about her last week. But I think she was a lady.

I think she had a normal family in a normal way after the virgin birth. Now, where did he get all these things? They just can't believe what they're hearing. And so they found a cause of stumbling over him.

And this is the ideal of a trap or trapstick or a rock. You know, he is the one that is the Old Testament calls him the rock of offense and the stone of stumbling. It also says of him, the stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

The Jews just could not believe. And you know what bothered them mostly? What bothered them mostly was the fact that he was going to suffer. The rabbis could just not believe the Messiah was going to suffer.

Now, notice if you would, please, where it says, But Jesus said to them, A prophet never fails to be honored except in his native neighborhood and his own home. Now, what we have here is a little proverb that says, Those things are people that you're familiar with. You never take seriously.

What am I saying? Things that we're accustomed to lose their significance. OK? And so he did not do many wonder works because of their lack of faith. Now, you know, everything God has done for us, he has done in a reciprocal way.

Every dealing that God has with man, God takes the initiative, but man must respond in faith. Everything. It's not that Jesus could not do any mighty works here.

He chose not to do any mighty works here because the people would not reciprocate with faith. Every major act of God is a reciprocal relationship because it's a personal relationship between two people, God and his creature. Now, in Luke 4, 28 and 29, they tried to kill him because of what he said.

He said some things that were so astonishing that they tried to kill him. Well, I wonder today how radical is your fellowship? Do you really have a priority walk with Jesus? Do you really have a commitment to him that supersedes every other commitment? Friends, I'm not. Christianity is not a decision, not a one time act of walking an aisle or praying a prayer.

Christianity is a lifestyle, radical fellowship of Jesus the Christ in every area of your life, every day of your life and 24 hours of every day. What about you? I think if you took a pencil and wrote down what you do every week and the hours you do it, you'll see real quickly where your priority is. You must take up your cross daily and follow him.

I hope you'll look up Galatians 2, 20 and think about how it applies to your daily life, not your church life on Sunday, but your daily life. Does the radical nature of your commitment impact everything you do, everything you say, everything you have, everything you are? I've really enjoyed being with you. I'll see you again, same time, same place, next week.

God bless you.

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