

A Disciple of Jesus

by John McGregor

John McGregor's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of Jesus in making disciples and the importance of living out the Great Commission through love and scripture.

Duration: 39:13

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:18-20, John 8:31-32, John 13:34-35

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor begins by sharing about a recent experience in an Islamic Republic where God answered prayers and saved people. He then reads from Matthew 28:18-20, emphasizing the authority of Jesus and the command to make disciples of all nations. The pastor reflects on his own love for Jesus and how it is not his education or years in ministry that bring revival, but rather a passion for the Word of God. He emphasizes the importance of love in building the church and shares examples of how love was demonstrated in the Billy Graham team. The sermon concludes with a testimony of a man who had a personal encounter with God through the Word and led someone to Christ.

Transcript

Thank you, Pastor Brad, and good morning. And I want to say thank you for your prayers for Roberta and I as we've been away for a couple of weeks. We're a little bit congested, so forgive me if the voice comes and goes a little bit.

In Niger, I think I shared 23 messages in 14 days, so it was a busy time. And we're so grateful for your prayers because, as you know, there was a coup in a military coup in Niger while we were there. And no, I did not start it, and neither did Roberta.

But we were there, of course, while it happened. The first week we were in Niamey, which is the capital city of Niger, and it's probably one of the poorest nations in Africa. The second week we were in Maradi, as we would say it in English, or Maradi as they say it in Hausa, and each week had a translation.

And the first week in Niamey was in French, and the second week was in Hausa. So it was an interesting time, and if I pause between sentences, I'm still waiting for somebody to translate as we go along. The second week is when the coup happened, and of course everybody was quite concerned about that.

I was teaching in a Bible school at the time when the telephones started to go bleep-bleep, and everybody was getting a message to say there's gunfire in the capital. And then SIM, the mission that we were working with, sent a text to the man I was with and said, it's time to get everybody into the compound, the missions compound. And so we finished up and drove back to Maradi.

And for a few days, Roberta and I got to be maw and paw to some missionaries who were a little anxious, perhaps we could say. But we were never in any danger, and we were grateful for your prayers all the way through. And God has been very, very good to us.

Last Sunday morning, as I spoke in a church, the temperature was 42 degrees, and so there's a slight temperature change this week. It was 47 in the evening, but 42 in the morning. So you'll be glad to know it did cool off at night time, went all the way down to 29 some nights.

I know, I know, I understand. In the College of Prayer, we were privileged to speak to about 200 pastors and leaders in each city and had a wonderful sense of the presence of God in the meetings as he spoke into hearts and into lives. And in both cities, I had the privilege of speaking to the youth in one event each time, and I was able to share some of my testimony as a youth coming to Christ from a violent background.

And you know, sometimes we just need to know that regardless of whether it's Regina, Saskatchewan, or Maradi in the middle of the sub-Sahara desert, God still saves. His gospel is still powerful enough to change lives. And when you look at the difference economically and culturally and all the rest, yet the one thing that really communicates is still the gospel of Christ.

And so we had two good weeks. We were grateful for your prayers on the journey home. There's a little sense of tension going through the airport in the army.

The military presence was a little stronger than when we came in, but we didn't see a lot of military on the streets or anything. And we flew out of Paris 30 minutes before a strike came to the airport, so thank you for praying. Whoever was praying on Wednesday in the middle of the day, that's kind of, we appreciate that.

It got us back to Montreal, and so onward back to Regina. At some point, I think I can talk Mrs. McGregor into giving us a report, so I'm not going to talk a lot about what happened. But we know you prayed, and God chose to save some people, and he chose to encourage the leaders of his church in that Islamic Republic.

And it's marvelous to see God's people pray together and to watch what he's doing. Well, the pastor ought to preach a message on Sunday morning, and so let me endeavor to do that. I'm reading this morning from Matthew chapter 28, and I'll just read verse 18, 19, and 20, and we'll move around a little bit in Scripture this morning.

But Matthew 28 and verse 18 says, Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

Let's pray for a moment and just from our hearts ask the Lord to speak to us and encourage us this morning as we gather as his people. Father, we're so grateful for the gift of prayer you allow us to come to

your very throne and to speak to you. And as we come this morning, we ask Lord that you would encourage our hearts, that you would speak to us from your word and strengthen our lives through it.

Father, as we have come to worship you, we also come to receive a word from you that can help us to walk before you in all the difficulties of life and the challenges that we face in the good times and the tougher times as well. And so, Father, may your word be precious to us this morning. May your Holy Spirit indeed breathe life into every one of our hearts that we might know you and follow you.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Some people call this the Great Commission and coming out of a missions trip it might be a logical place for me to read, but I want to just start here to say, you know, Jesus said, go and make disciples. And I thought for a few moments this morning we might just think about disciples.

When he's saying here, go and make disciples, a natural question comes to our minds, doesn't it? Well, what is a disciple? How do you get to be a disciple? What is it that Jesus is saying? Go and make disciples. And let's take a look at a man who becomes a disciple and how that happens, and then we'll look at some of the marks of discipleship. And we'll go first of all then to Luke chapter 19 for a few minutes, and here is a story of a man that I dearly love, and I'll tell you why in a moment or two.

I'm just gonna read the first ten verses of Luke 19, and here is how someone became a disciple of Jesus. It says, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus.

He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man, he could not because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter. He's gone to be the guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I've cheated anybody out of anything, I'll pay back four times the amount.

Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. Now did you catch on why I love the character of Zacchaeus? Brad did, he said he's short.

So did Donna, that's right. Well I've been short all my life, and there's been sort of a widening over the years, but the shortness hasn't changed. And I want you to know after two weeks of Daniel fast, I've lost five pounds, so praise God.

May it continue. Here's a man who became a disciple. How did it happen? Well you know I really can't identify with him, because couldn't see over the crowd.

And that's something I fought with most of my life too, and once in a while you get prime position where you can see over or they put you in the nosebleed section or something and you can see across. But Zacchaeus, he wanted to see Jesus. And you know when you come to church on Sunday morning, whether you're already a disciple or somebody who wonders about what a disciple looks like, isn't that really why we're here? To see Jesus.

That was the desire of this man's heart, he wanted to see the Savior. He was a wealthy man, he was a tax chief, tax collector, not a very popular guy, but quite wealthy. And because he couldn't see, he hoist himself into a tree.

I got a great imagination and I love thinking about Zacchaeus in the tree. As he sits there in the tree thinking, nobody can see me. I'm gonna get to see Jesus and nobody will see me.

I don't have to fight with the crowd, I don't even have to pay for the seat. And when the collection plate is passed, it's gonna happen at grind level. You got it? There he is.

But isn't it interesting when Jesus walks that day and he comes under that tree, he just stops and he looks right up through the leaves into the face of a man, hidden up there, who thought, I'll catch a glimpse of Jesus and nobody will ever know. And as the Lord looked up at him, I'm quite sure that Zacchaeus must have thought, he sees me. That's kind of a uh-oh moment, he sees me.

And you know Jesus sees you this morning, he knows the burden in your heart, he knows the desire in your heart, he knows the things that you carry, the things that you wrestle with. And just as he looked up at that little man in that tree, he looks today in all of our hearts as we gather before him. Zacchaeus must have said, he sees me.

What should I do now? I'm not hidden anymore. He sees me. You see, it's a nice thing when we're anonymous.

But the Lord Jesus never leaves us anonymous. He always just gets right there in our face and he's unavoidable. I used to tell a guy when he would talk to me about Jesus, shut up, leave me alone.

And he never would do it and I couldn't understand why he couldn't get the hint. But the reason he wouldn't stop is because Jesus is unavoidable. And as he's looking there, Zacchaeus is saying, he sees me.

Hmm, well, plan A didn't work. I thought I'd be anonymous, but there's something in that man's eyes, he's looking right through me. And then Jesus says, Zacchaeus, you read anywhere in this that there was an introduction that took place? Is there anywhere in the previous chapters that it says Jesus bumped into Zacchaeus and was given his name? Not there.

So what is he thinking now in his tree? He sees me, he knows me, he knows my name. See, Jesus is so unavoidable. He knew Zacchaeus, he knows you and me, he speaks to him by name.

And then I kind of like this picture as we look at it, you know, he sees me, he knows me. But Jesus didn't just say Zacchaeus, he said, come down immediately. So I'm going to your place.

Now, ladies, what would be the first thing you'd think if Jesus came and said, can you just come with me because I'm going to your place right now? Did we make the bed? Vacuum the floor? There's all those kind of things that kind of come upon us, don't they? And he's saying, hey, you come down right now because I'm going to your place. So now Zacchaeus must have been thinking to himself, not only does he see me and he knows me, but he wants me. I don't think Zacchaeus was concerned about the condition of the house.

I think he was absolutely surprised that the Son of God stood there under that tree and said, you, yes, you. I know all about you. I know all the stuff that you do.

I know all the things, the fraud that you work. I know everything about you. Come, come here.

Come down. I want you. What a great picture this is as you start to think about it, as he is invited to be a disciple of Jesus.

And then there's something else here. It says, he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. Zacchaeus also said, Lord, I know that you can see me.

I know that you know my name. I know that you want me. But Jesus, you can have me.

I'm not going to stay in the tree. I'm coming down. You know, all the pride of that old tax collector, all the hardness that must have been in his life, all the stuff, just fall away as he gets out of that tree.

And he's coming there to the Son of God. And it says, he welcomed him. That's how you become a disciple.

You know, people think they hide things. Nobody will ever know. But the all-seeing eye of a holy God knows everything.

There's nothing hidden to him. It's pointless to try to hide things from Jesus. He knows all about it.

And he knows us by name, individually. You say, how can that be? There's billions of people in the world. Well, there's even more than billions of stars.

And it says in the Bible that he knows every one of them and he calls them by name. So if he can call the stars by name, why would it not be that he knows your name and mine also? Despite knowing all of that stuff, Jesus says, come on. And I know Zacchaeus is a disciple from this moment on because you see what happens when he says, yes, you can have me.

Immediately, he says something else. I'm going to give away half of what I have. Where did the greed go? Where's the little nasty tax collector? He is changed.

And the things that I have defrauded, I'll pay it back four times. Wow, that's better interest than you can get in the bank these days. Something severe happened when this man became a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus said, go and make disciples because disciples are different. They are people who have had an encounter with Jesus that has changed their life. It has never been about the things that they started to do, good things to please God.

It has always been about the work that God did in the heart that changed the individual completely and totally so that they walk in following Jesus. So what else does the Bible say to us about disciples? Because what does a disciple look like? Henry Blackaby always gets under my skin. You know, when I spend a few days with him in conferences and stuff, he asks them questions that get in there and itch at you and you start to think about things and you start to say, God, what is it that you're saying to me? And one day in South Africa, three years ago, Blackaby said to me, what did Jesus tell us to do? I'm smart.

I know the answer to that. I read it for you at the beginning of the service. Go and make disciples of all nations.

And he looked at me, said, anything else? I said, oh yeah, yeah. It says, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Anything else? And yes, I am with you always.

And he said, so if Jesus told us to command them or teach them the things that he commanded, John, what are the things that he commanded? I looked at him and said, Henry, do you have to ask these questions? Can we not just have coffee? I won't tell Marilyn that you're eating a donut and you're diabetic and you shouldn't be doing it. Let me off the hook here. No, he'd got in there and start to itch.

So what does a disciple look like? Let's go to John chapter eight. And let me just read verses 31 and 32. Here's what Jesus says to the Jews who had believed him.

Jesus said, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. He's saying a disciple is one that continues in his teaching, in his word.

One who is not satisfied just to sort of amble along, but who wants to go deeper and has a passion for the things that Jesus taught and the word that God has given to us. His word, you know, is such a marvelous thing. Years ago in a crusade in Calgary, Alberta, a young man from Wycliffe, he was translating the scriptures into other languages.

And I remember him saying to me one day, last Sunday, he said, you challenged us to go out and talk to somebody for Jesus this week. And I said, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm a Bible translator.

I don't need to do that stuff. But he said, would you believe four days out of the five working days, God put the same guy right in front of me in the park where I go to eat my lunch and have peace and quiet, and I couldn't get away from him. So he said, on Thursday, I actually talked to somebody about Jesus.

And then he said, you know what? This thing's not academic anymore. It's not just what I know in my head about the Bible. It's that the word of God is so living and active.

As I started to talk to this man, he was fascinated with Bible translation, and I actually got to lead him to Christ. Let me take a moment and read something about the word of God. This is from Steve Schmidt.

He's from Swift Current, but he's the director of SIM in Niger. And he wrote a nice little letter for me before I left. But this is what he says.

I was also very pleased to see the response of the Nigerian people to your simple presentation of the scriptures. It was the word of God that was touching hearts. This is the kind of response that's not based on techniques, on personal charisma, but I believe it is the response that happens when the Holy Spirit is moving.

And I won't read anything more from the letter, but you see, there is that sense of the power of the word of God. Now, people sometimes come to me and say, I got a problem. I say, okay, what is it? Well, we're struggling a little bit at home.

And I don't know any easy way to say this, so I'm just going to say it out flat. Our problems in life will diminish in accordance with the mind of the word of God that we let in, because it cleanses us, it lifts us, it

equips us, it teaches us, and the list goes on and on. And it is the same in marriage, and it is the same in every part of life.

A disciple, Jesus said, is one who holds to my teaching. So as we think about a disciple, there's a good question to ask. Am I excited about the scriptures? Am I bursting to get into the word of God? I did my little jump the other day at Maradi, and you should have seen those house of people, you know, as they think the guy's 150 years old, never seen anybody with this much white hair, you know.

So I was trying to explain it, and I said, you know, let me tell you how much I love Jesus. And they're waiting for some great exposition, and you know exactly how it goes. It just kind of springs out of an Irish heart.

Yes! I thought we were going to have real revival. What is it? Is it because I have a good education? No. Is it because I've been in the ministry 40 years? No.

Years ago, I asked the Lord, would you give me a love for this book, a love for this word, a passion for it? That's what changes lives and hearts and homes. And sometimes people will say, John, you're an evangelist. Must be great to win people to Jesus.

I've never won one soul to Jesus. All an evangelist can do is say, look, that's Jesus. You go to him.

He will save you. This thing of discipleship, boy, I'm preaching on African time this morning. I'm sorry.

That's point one, and there's seven points. Okay, we're not going to do them all. Relax.

Praise the Lord. I like this man. Let's go to John 13 verses 34 and 35.

See, something else that Jesus says is one of the marks of a disciple or the traits of discipleship. What does a disciple look like? He says in John 13, 34 and 35, a new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you. So you must love one another.

By this will all men know that you are my disciples. If you have love one for the other. That's one of the marks of discipleship.

Jesus said, you know, people will know you're a disciple because the love of God lives in you and the presence of the living Lord flows out of you. You know, I learned to say two words in Hausa, Nagodi, thank you. So my communication skills to those dear brothers and sisters in Maradi was pretty small, but I learned something that works across all the cultures.

The love of God flows from heart to heart. And I watched a great big Fulani tribesman with the headdress that comes, you know, like this, seven feet tall, I'm sure. Well, anybody looks that size to me, but he was tall.

And when he came to the college of prayer, he could hardly walk and he's all bandaged up in his right leg. And he asked me after one of the sessions with an interpreter, would you pray for my leg? They let me out of the hospital to come to this. And I asked the national leaders of the college of prayer there, let's just pray for him.

And with great difficulty, he got on his knees and took his headdress off, which is so amazing in that culture. And as those men gathered around and put their hands on him and prayed for him within two

hours, they were asking in the service for a testimony. And here's this man saying, I can stand praise God. He has touched me. You ever see a guy who's seven feet, give a fellow who's five foot five and a half a hug. What was it? It's just the love of God.

And I think so often that the thing that people are looking for is they want to know, is this real? Is this just talk about love or is this real love? And I don't think I'll ever forget that big guy because he came to see me before we left. And just a sense of love that is flowing from his heart. It melted me.

And I'm saying to, I don't think this will translate into Hausa, but I'm going to see you here, there or in the air and we'll be with Jesus forever. This thing of love you see is so vital. What is it that Jesus uses to build his church? Is it all the preaching and all the doctrine and all? No, I don't think so.

I think it's the love of God flowing through the people of God that looks in to a heart that needs a touch from God and says, listen, I want to walk with you for a while in the love of God. In 14 years in the Billy Graham team, one statement was consistently made. This is it.

People in every city that I ever worked in looked at that team and said, look at how they love each other. And it was modeled by the three key players, Billy Graham, George Beverly Shea, and Cliff Barrows. Never in 14 years did I hear those men have an angry word.

Why not? Because they loved each other as they loved Christ. And that's what he's talking about. This sacrificial love.

It puts us out of our comfort zone. How can I love somebody when they hurt me? How can I love somebody when they offend me? How can I love somebody when they betray me? How can I love somebody when all those kinds of things go on? I want to tell you this. In the fullness of the spirit of God, you can love them.

And they won't see you. They'll see him. You know, I don't think we need to do five more points because I think the presence of God is right here in this moment.

We're disciples if we know Jesus. But sometimes we want to be disciples on our terms. And he's the one who says, can't do it.

We can only be disciples on his terms. Oh, let's change position and stand for a minute as we pray together. You've been so kind, and you've been listening to me for many minutes.

Jesus said, go and make disciples. Can I just ask you, are you a disciple? Is Jesus your Savior? Zacchaeus wondered about Jesus, and that day, from the moment that Jesus looked at him, he is drawn to the Savior and becomes a disciple. And if you're here this morning, or this afternoon as it is now, and you say, I've always wanted to be a disciple.

I'm not sure there's ever been that moment, that moment of choice when I said, Jesus, you can have me. I give myself to you. So this morning, I'm going to pray just a short prayer.

And if you want to become a disciple, you can make this prayer your own, just by from your heart speaking to the Lord and saying to him, God, I recognize you're calling me to be a disciple. And Lord, like Zacchaeus, I know I'm a sinner. But Lord, like Zacchaeus, I'm saying, Jesus, you can have me, take all of me, cleanse my heart and life, give me your life, and your forgiveness, and your truth.

And if you prayed that, and you mean it in your heart, Jesus means exactly what he said. He came to seek you and save you today. I want to encourage you to speak to myself, or one of the staff, or one of the elders afterwards.

We have some help to give you. But for many of us this morning, we're on the road of discipleship, and we need to say something to the Lord. Jesus is teaching us that disciples hold his word.

His word is precious and powerful to them. And maybe you need to make a recommitment this morning to time and scripture. And Jesus said people will know his disciples because they love each other, even as they love him.

And maybe this morning you need a battery of love filled up in your heart. Things have been disappointing, hurtful, many struggles. But the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, can cause you to love again, and to walk again in his truth.

So Heavenly Father, we want to pray this morning. Give us as your people, from the staff and all through this church, give us a passion for your word. Lord, make us strong in it.

Wash us through it. Fill us with it. And Lord, fill us with the love of God and a love for one another, so that people can look and see they must really be disciples of Jesus, because look at how they love each other.

They're doing exactly what Jesus said. Father, we ask in humility and submission, make it so in our hearts this day. We love you, Lord.

And we want to be known as a people full of the love of God. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Thanks for listening, and you may be seated. And I think maybe the team has a closing song.

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