

The True Discipleship Broadcast-1983-06 True Discipleship

by William MacDonald

The Lord Jesus teaches his disciples to live a life of dependence on God, living sacrificially for the spread of the gospel, and to be willing to suffer persecution for his sake.

Duration: 22:19

Scripture: Amos 6:4-6, Matthew 5:3-10, Luke 6:20-21, Luke 6:24, Luke 6:27-28

Topics: "True Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the Sermon on the Plain, where Jesus shares revolutionary teachings with both the multitude and his disciples. Jesus reveals that he will go to the cross, die for the sins of the world, be buried, rise again, and send his disciples to spread the message of salvation. The preacher emphasizes the importance of world evangelization and challenges listeners to consider how they would organize such a task. He then references Amos chapter 6, highlighting the dangers of being unconcerned and uninvolved in the work of God. The sermon also focuses on the training of the twelve disciples, where Jesus prepares them for persecution and exclusion as they carry the message of the kingdom.

Transcript

Now, we call this section, and the section following in Luke chapter 6, the training of the twelve. Here you have the Lord Jesus taking the twelve disciples and training them to go forth with the message of the kingdom. We mentioned that the teachings of the Lord Jesus were positively revolutionary, and I think we'll see when we come to this passage how true that was.

I would like to suggest to you that this is similar to the Sermon on the Mount, but it's quite different, too. First of all, this is a sermon on the plain. It says, verse 17, "...he came down with them and stood on a level place." Not the Sermon on the Mount.

He stood on a level place with a crowd of his disciples. So, I think it's important to see that. You're not going over the Sermon on the Mount, it's not just a repetition.

In fact, the Holy Spirit seldom repeats himself in the Gospels. Let me show you some of the differences between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

"...blessed are the poor in spirit." Here he says, "...blessed be ye poor." He doesn't say poor in spirit here.

He says in the Sermon on the Mount, "...blessed are ye who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Matthew 5, verse 6. He doesn't say that here. He said, "...blessed are you that hunger." This is quite a difference. And we'll see more about that as we go on.

So, let's get that fixed clearly in our minds. Here we're dealing with the Sermon on the Plain. Notice that the multitude was there, although Jesus directed his teaching especially to the disciples.

I think it's very interesting that the Lord Jesus wasn't afraid to share his most revolutionary teaching with the multitude. He was quite willing that they should know what lay ahead if they were ever going to trust him as Lord and Savior. The Lord Jesus is going to go on to the cross.

He's going to die for the sins of the world. He's going to be buried. He's going to rise again and go back to heaven.

And he's going to send these disciples out to carry the message. The task is world evangelization. Put yourself in his position today.

Supposing you had the task of world evangelization before you, how would you organize it? Actually, in a sense, you do. Now, when you think of the evangelization of the world, what do you think of? Well, judging by evangelical Christianity in the United States today, I think the first thing we would do would be to appoint a finance committee because you can't do anything without dollars. I think the second thing to do would be to appoint a food committee because you do have to serve tea, coffee, refreshments to the people, otherwise they wouldn't come.

The third thing you would do would be to appoint an entertainment committee because you have to have ding-dong cowboys to entertain the people. There has to be that attractiveness to the message. And then I think the fourth thing you would do would be appoint a public relations committee because you do want the community to think well of you, don't you? Well, this is the way that modern Christians think.

A finance committee, a food committee, an entertainment committee, and a public relations committee. Now, just take that and tip it completely upside down, and that's what Jesus did. Just take it and reverse the whole thing.

Forget those committees, and do the very opposite. That's what Jesus did. When will we ever learn? He lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

There goes my finance committee. The Lord Jesus sent out his disciples as poor men. Notice it doesn't say poor in spirit.

It doesn't. And it doesn't mean poor in spirit either. How do we know? Well, because the contrast is down in verse 24.

It says, Woe to you who are rich. What? Rich in spirit? Doesn't make sense. When he said poor, he meant poor.

When he said rich, he meant rich. The disciples were to represent him, and what a terrible representation it would be if they went forth as rich men. It would give an entirely false view of the Christian faith.

They were going out to represent him. He wanted them to go out as poor men. Not only that, he wanted them to go out living lives of dependence upon him.

If they went out as rich men, their prayer lives would suffer, and they could do things. In fact, they could carry on religious work without it necessarily being the work of the Lord. So, let's think of those words a while.

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Is it a blessing to be poor? The key is found down at the end of verse 22. Blessed be ye poor for the son of man's sake.

That's what it means. There's no blessing just to be poor in itself. There are people grumbling in poverty today, and their lives are miserable from sunrise to sunset.

But there is great blessing in being poor for the son of man's sake. What does it mean? Well, it means disciples who could be rich if they wanted to, who could be raking in the money, and they say, In a world such as the world I live in, I choose not to be rich. I choose to use my money, my material things, for the spread of the gospel and for the eternal enrichment of others.

And it's a deliberate choice. So, there goes our finance committee. What about our food committee? He says, Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.

Once again, to be hungry in general is not a blessing, it's a curse. But, you've got to put the key in the door, go down again to the end of verse 22, for the son of man's sake. For the son of man's sake.

He's speaking about disciples who could be eating the finest gourmet food, who could be living high off the hog, who could be fat and gluttonous, but it would give an entirely wrong view of the Christian faith. And what the Lord Jesus is saying here is that he wants disciples who are willing to live sacrificially for the spread of the gospel. In other words, hungry for the son of man's sake.

Any other hunger is not a blessing, it's a curse. As millions in the world today will tell you. So, there goes our food committee.

Well, we said we also want an entertainment committee. Jesus said, Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Nobody lives very long in this world without weeping.

It's a world of sorrow, of sobbing, of sighing, and of crying. And it's not usually a blessing. Once again, I ask you to put the key in the door.

Blessed are you who weep now for the son of man's sake. What were the disciples to be weeping about? They were to be weeping about perishing souls. It's a solemn thing to meet God with sins unconfessed and sins unforgiven.

But all over the world today, there are people slipping out into eternity. And when you think of it, you have to say with Paul, Who is sufficient for these things? We should be weeping over perishing souls. We should be weeping over the results of sin in the world.

The ambulance races by you. The hearse passes you with the cortege behind. And the marks of sin are everywhere.

The sorrow, the blight that has been brought on this world. We should weep over the low spiritual condition of the church. The general temperature in the church today, as far as spirituality is concerned, is very, very low.

We should weep over our own sins and our own failures as well. Crying out to God that we are unprofitable servants. And we should weep over the suffering church in the world today.

Over people who are being martyred for the name of Christ. And cry out, how long, how long? This is what it means to weep for the Son of Man's sake. When I think of this weeping, I always think of Psalm 126, verse 5, where it says, Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, so doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Can't you see the poor man? He's sowing the seed, and he's thinking about the kids back home.

And the tears are dropping right down into the seed. When he thinks of the fact that they're going to be living sacrificially. I think that's what the Savior is speaking about here.

He said, I want disciples who are willing to do without for the sake of the gospel. Who are willing to live sacrificially for the sake of the gospel. I want disciples who can look at all of these ads of the latest fashions, and the latest gimmicks, and the latest appliances, and say, Thank God, I can do without that.

And I'd rather take that money and convert it into never-dying souls. That's what he's thinking about here. And let the tears fall where they will.

Well, there goes your entertainment committee. Imagine, imagine a group of disciples going out poor, hungry, weeping. You say, what could they ever accomplish? Answer, the evangelization of the then-known world.

The Mediterranean world of that day. But the Lord Jesus isn't finished with his revolutionary teaching. Now he tells them that they're to go out, and they're to be persecuted, and they're to be excommunicated.

He says, Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you. Exclude you here means throw you out of the synagogue, really. Excommunicate you from the synagogue, verse 22.

And revile you, and cast out your name as evil. Well, you know, none of us like that. None of us like to be treated like that.

That's hard. Hard to be hated, isn't it? It's hard to be excommunicated. Hard to be reviled and slandered.

But notice, it's for the Son of Man's sake. That makes all the difference. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

He wanted them to go out followers of one who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He had already told the disciples, The servant is not above his master. You can't expect better treatment in this world than I receive.

The servant is not above his master. And a faithful proclamation of the message arouses opposition. Don't ever forget that.

The more faithful it is, the more opposition it arouses. It says, concerning the Lord Jesus, there was a division among the people because of him. And I think the faithful proclamation of the message does cause division.

This is what happened to the prophets in the Old Testament. Those men were embodied consciences. They were mostly spines, backbones.

They'd rather declare the message and die than live on the earth and be lukewarm. And so, the Lord Jesus says, Now, when you go forth and men treat you like this, don't worry, you're in good company. You're in company with all the faithful prophets of the Old Testament.

That's exactly the way they treated the Old Testament prophets. I've said before, the only kind of a prophet the people liked is a dead prophet. Then they'll come and garnish his sepulcher and build a monument to him and put wreaths on it.

It's a great privilege to be persecuted for the Son of Man's sake. Most of us have never had that privilege. I've read of men who were stoned, and they'd feel something warm in their face, and they'd put up their hand and look at it.

It was their own blood, and a surge of joy would go through their being to think that they had been able to shed their blood for the Son of Man's sake. A great privilege to be persecuted for him. So, there you are, poor, hungry, weeping, despised.

This is quite different now, isn't it, from the Sermon on the Mount? It's not what the Sermon on the Mount says at all. And then the Lord Jesus pronounces four woes on what you might call half-and-half disciples. Half-and-half disciples.

He says, Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. I would like to suggest to you today, in spite of what you hear in the assembly today, in spite of what you hear in evangelical churches today, that there's a moral problem for a Christian to be rich in a world where thousands die daily of starvation, and where millions have never heard of their only hope. How can you justify it? I remember preaching in London at Hyde Park Corner once, and when I got through preaching, some Pakistanis came up to me.

And they said, We have no quarrel with the teachings and ethics of Jesus, but how can you justify spending millions of dollars on elaborate church buildings in your country when we have millions of people who are dying of starvation? And I said to them, When somebody comes to me with an argument that's valid, I don't try to answer it. And I don't. They were right.

They were absolutely right. I want to tell you today. We hear, Oh, it's so nice to see Christians who are rich.

You have to be rich to reach the rich. And you hear all of these foolish arguments. The New Testament knows nothing about them.

Why do we strain so hard to defend rich Christians when Jesus never said a good word about riches? He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. For it's easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. That's what Jesus said.

And yet we insist on contradicting him and saying something else. Well, he not only said, Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. He said, Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger.

Full here means surfeited with food. No thought of living simply in order to share with others. The attitude is that there's nothing too good for the people of God.

He said, You shall hunger. When? In heaven, when you see what might have been. Paul says, Meats for the belly, and the belly for meat.

And God shall destroy both it and them. And Paul said, He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. If you live for food, your body goes into the grave and is soon eaten by worms.

That's what you have to show for it. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

What does this mean? It means men who are not serious about the tremendous issues of life. I've known men like that. I've known professing Christians like that.

They could hardly ever be serious about anything. Actually, the issues we deal with are tremendously serious, and nothing to make a joke about. But, so many are unconcerned and uninvolved, and just go on as if life were a bowl of cherries.

Turn back to Amos, chapter 6, verses 4 through 6. Amos, chapter 6, verses 4 through 6. I'll begin reading in verse 3. It says, Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seed of violence to come near, who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall, who chant to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David, who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointment, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. That's a picture of people living luxuriously and careless and heedless over the terrible conditions around them. And then the Lord Jesus said finally, Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the prophets.

Woe to you when you're popular in the community. I think one of the most scathing things the Lord Jesus ever said, he said to the unconverted men of his day, he said, The world cannot hate you. I don't want him ever to have to say that about me.

The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify that what it does is evil. Well, we live in a day when we try to appease, when we try to conciliate, when we try not to step on anybody's toes and try to preach a popular message tickling men's ears. It shouldn't be that way.

The gospel is really an unpopular message. It tells men they're sinners. They don't want to be told they're sinners.

It tells them they're depraved. That's very hard on their ego. It tells them they can't save themselves.

They've always thought they could save themselves. It tells them there's only one way of salvation. That's very narrow and bigoted to them.

It tells them that Christ is the way, and that's the name that's forbidden and banned by them. It's an unpopular message. And, of course, if you go on to the teachings of discipleship that the Lord Jesus is laying forth here, it's all the more unpopular.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. Do you think this is the way the Lord Jesus indoctrinated his disciples? Well, here's the record in Luke chapter 6. He sent them out poor men. He sent them out hungry men.

He sent them out weeping men. He sent them out unpopular men. And he told them that woes rested upon them if they were rich, full, laughing, and popular with the world.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23721.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/the-true-discipleship-broadcast-1983-06-true-discipleship/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net