

Disciples of Christ

(Sermon Notes) By: Warren Zehrung 8/15/2015

Because we are in the Church of God, we are very different from the people in the world around us. We have a lot in common with the people Jesus preached to some two thousand years ago who had Moses' teachings.

When Jesus first came on the scene doing His public ministry – He came mostly to those of Jewish descent. Most of the people of the tribes of Israel had been carried away into foreign captivity.

These Jews knew to keep the Sabbath Day; They made a distinction between clean and unclean foods; They knew to observe the feasts of the Lord – the annual Holy Days; They tithed on their increase – knowing it to be a law of God; They knew the importance of keeping the Ten Commandments; They knew that they were the Covenant people – Abraham being their father; And they anticipated the promise of the return of the Messiah to establish the Kingdom on the earth.

Jesus came among those people of Palestine and He began to **build** on that earlier foundation with higher Christian principles. Many followed Him and He instructed them. What He taught them was over and above what they already knew. They were called **disciples of Christ**. When Jesus came into their midst they were not yet converted Christians.

Jesus said, "You are my disciples if... A disciple is a **student** or **follower**, **learning** to be like the Master - Jesus Christ – in short, "A Christian." A disciple imitates his teacher. So a disciple of Jesus Christ follows His example:

We strive to replicate His character in ourselves. A disciple sets everything else aside – becoming **single minded** in order to learn it all.

Are We True Disciples? In order to be a loyal disciple of Christ we must love Him above all else – this is the **first requirement** of a disciple: A disciple of Christ loves God the Father and Jesus Christ with all his heart, all his mind, all his soul, and all his strength.

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Jesus said that in order for anyone to **come to Him**, it was necessary that Jesus be **first**, and of foremost significance in their lives, and everyone and everything else, subsequently be less important – even one's life itself.

Luke 14:26 If any man come to me, and [love less by comparison] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he **cannot be my disciple**.

We must deny ourselves and take up our cross – this too is a requirement to be a **disciple of Christ**.

Luke 14:27 And whosoever doth **not bear his cross**, and come after me, **cannot be my disciple**.

A man who was bearing his cross was walking to his death. Bearing your cross means dying to self. It means laying aside our personal goals, desires and ambitions so that God can reveal His desires, ambitions and goals for our lives. In essence, it is living life according to the will of God.

In Matthew 8:21 Jesus gave us an example of a man who wanted to take care of family matters – then he would work Jesus in to his busy schedule.

That putting of Jesus as **secondary** in importance **disqualified** that man from being a **disciple**. Jesus in turn teaches us how to **come to God**. He does that by being a perfect representation of God the Father. (This is where the ministry today is failing.)

John 14:7 If ye had known me, ye should have **known my Father** also: and from henceforth **ye know Him**, and have seen Him.

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.**

The Greek word for “disciple” in the New Testament is *'mathetes,'* which means **more** than just “student” or “learner.” A disciple is a “follower,” someone who adheres completely to their Master’s teachings, making them his way of life and behavior.

The Pharisees prided themselves in being **disciples** of Moses.

John 9:28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

That alone should have pointed them directly to Jesus Christ – “That Prophet” of which Moses had foretold. Moses prophesied:

Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a **Prophet** from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

That Prophet was Jesus Christ – but the Pharisees’ hearts were too hardened to receive Him. Jesus chose many of His disciples by name. Matthew wrote of his own choosing by Christ.

Matthew 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and **followed Him.**

That is what a **disciple** does – follows – **not trailing** behind – but becoming like his Master. Follow me:

Matthew 4:25 And there **followed** him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

Three times in the course of this message in Luke 14, Jesus used the phrase, "**cannot be my disciple.**" In other words, Jesus was laying out some absolute requirements for discipleship – and what would disqualify one from discipleship.

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not **all** that he hath, he **cannot** be my **disciple.**

We see here that forsaking “All That You Have” is a another **requirement** for being a true disciple of Jesus Christ. That does not mean we must be impoverished – but it does mean that we regard nothing of more importance than Christ’s perfect way.

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 16:25 For whosoever will save his life **shall lose it:** and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Christianity is a difficult trek – and often a long journey:

Matthew 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Matthew 19:25 When his **disciples** heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then **can** be saved? [It seemed impossible to them- they thought wealth and success were the keys to greatness.]

Matthew 19:26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is **impossible;** but with God all things are possible.

It is impossible – we cannot save ourselves – it takes God’s Holy Spirit.

Jesus taught the disciples **what** they must do to follow Him. And know this: God shows **His people** things that not everyone is privileged to see. That is why Jesus spoke in parables – so that not everyone would understand.

Matthew 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Matthew 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Jesus did not hold back anything from His disciples:

Mark 4:34 But without a parable spoke He not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded **all things to his disciples**.

Brethren, Jesus is doing the same thing with His disciples today. All things being equal – God is revealing His way of life to us through these words. They are written for us – upon whom the end of the world has come. Jesus worked miracles especially for His **disciples** [as witnesses] - when no one else was around.

Matthew 14:23 And when he had sent the **multitudes away**, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Matthew 14:24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Matthew 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto [His disciples], walking on the sea.

Matthew 14:26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

Matthew 14:27 But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples as the Messiah.

Matthew 16:18 ... I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Messiah.

Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Today brethren, we too, keep the Sabbath Day; we’ve been called out of this dark world. We make a distinction between clean and unclean foods; We observe the feasts of the Lord – the annual Holy Days; We tithe on our increase; We keep the Ten Commandments; We realize that we are Covenant people; And we eagerly look for the return of the Messiah to establish God’s Kingdom on the earth.

That is the exact same set of beliefs that the people before Christ came -possessed. We have a lot in common with the people Jesus preached to some two thousand years ago who had Moses’ teachings. We have been given all these things, but does that make us Christians?

Why do some people believe that these things make us New Testament Christians? For many brethren in church groups, that list represents their depth of understanding and commitment. That is the extent of their growth – except for hearing about Jesus. Hearing about Jesus does not make us Christians.

Matthew 7:21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Matthew 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Many Jews in today's world do this list of things – Sabbath, etc – and they are not Christians. There is so much more to learn, change, and inculcate into our lives. Too many people think because they keep the Sabbath, etc, that makes them Christians. It does **not** – they are not disciples of Christ – allowing Him to be their teacher.

Certain things need to take place before we are covered by the blood of Christ and He becomes our Savior. They remain as unprofitable servants, and are not yet friends of Jesus Christ. Notice how Jesus puts it:

Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

There is so much more to being a converted Christian and a friend of Christ. As our Savior, Jesus makes it possible to have a growing relationship with the Father. That is what the New Covenant is all about – a covenant relationship with God.

What then is required of us? Our Christianity is so much more than the list mentioned above. Jesus does not keep us in the dark with regard to what He expects of His New Testament disciples. **Disciples of Christ** live by every word of God.

Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Since the wages of sin is death – and all have sinned, a Disciple of Christ is a person who has come to realize that he is in need of a Savior. A Disciple of Christ understands that Jesus Christ is our Savior who paid that death penalty for us by dying on the cross and shedding His innocent blood.

2Corinthians 5:21 For [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1John 2:2 And [Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, ... washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Revelation 5:9 ...Jesus Christ hast redeemed us to God by [His] blood.

There is **a lot** of spiritual fruit required of a disciple of Christ:

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

John 15:12 This is my commandment [Jesus says], That ye love one another, as I have loved you. [He was the **ultimate** servant.]

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

James 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

James 5:20 Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Matthew 16:25 For whosoever will [advance and seek to] save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Mark 10:43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be [greatest] among you, shall be the slave or servant:

John 15:14 Ye are my **friends** [entirely new and higher category], if ye do whatsoever I command you.

John 15:15 Henceforth I call you **not servants**; for the servant knows not what his lord doeth: but I have called you **friends**; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

What was it that Jesus taught that the people of His day had not heard until He began his ministry? It was volumes and volumes of how we are to spend all of our lives striving to become like Him. The apostle John finishes his writings with the comment – “I wasn’t able to get it all written down.”

John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

John is expressing the thought that the teachings and doctrine of Jesus were comprehensive in nature – that they covered the vast realm of everything we are to become.

Everything written in the Bible is for the purpose of directing us to Christ and His Father. We strive to be like Him.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

It is necessary that we strive with all our might to put on **every attribute** of Christ ...His heart, mercy, love, compassion, gentleness, patience, an incredible list of virtues and attributes of God...

But, how do we put on the mind of Christ? How do we begin to think as He thought? How do we see things the way He perceives them? How do we render judgment as He judges? As Disciples of Christ we have so much to change and overcome in ourselves. And, that is after our initial repentance, faith and conversion. Obedience to God’s law is the evidence and substance of our faith.

Micah 6:8 He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do **justly**, and to love **mercy**, and to **walk humbly** with thy God?

Compare with:

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, **judgment, mercy, and faith**: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Baptism is our pledge of burying the old man of sin. Thankfully we have a token of God’s Holy Spirit given to us so that we do not have the same limitations and weaknesses that the men of the Old Testament did in living according to God’s will.

Hebrews 8:6 But now hath [Jesus] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better** Covenant, which was established upon **better promises**. [eternal life, divine nature, etc...]

Hebrews 8:7 For if that first covenant [Old Covenant] had been **faultless**, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Those people of the Old Testament refused to receive **such a heart** from God. They had **faulty hearts**: Notice How God said it:

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would reverence me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!

Hebrews 8:8 For finding **fault** with **them** [the ancient Israelites], he said, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a **New Covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Hebrews 8:9 Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they **continued not** in my covenant, and I regarded them not, said the Lord.

I need to expound on this phrase: 'regarded them not.' God regarded them not – they went into captivity – but God **did not forsake** His Covenant with them – He never will. God understood the weakness of Old Testament Israel – but He never broke covenant with them – and He never will. All Israel will be restored. God says:

Leviticus 26:44 And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, **I will not** cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to **break my covenant with them**: for I am the LORD their God.

God never breaks His covenant with His people. It was Israel who did **not** live according to their **part** of the Covenant.

Hebrews 8:10 For this is the [New] Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

That's us brethren, in the Church today, those brethren who are now in the Body of Christ – the saints of God. 'After those days,' means in the Millennium as well for everyone, when God's Spirit will be poured out on all men.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

We are to live according to the terms of the New Covenant.

Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Hebrews 8:13 In that he said, A **new covenant** [of promise by God – not by our merit], he hath made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.

The men of the Old Testament knew what it was that God required of them, but without His Holy Spirit they were unable to please God. We, however, have had our sins forgiven, and we have entered into the conditions and stipulations of the New Covenant. We are New Covenant Christians, and **disciples of Christ**.

As such, our lives must improve demonstrably. We forgive one another and become Christ like; kind, and tenderhearted. Do we see this way of thinking exhibited across the board – from group to group – in the **churches of God**?

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Even the disciples of Christ lacked these **attributes** when Jesus came on the scene. They were still very hard hearted and competitive. God promised the New Covenant in the Millennium to all Israel and all Gentiles.

Ezekiel 36:24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Brethren, God has reached down **now** and gathered a small flock to be His children and receive His Spirit. The brethren of the Church of God live according to the **principles** and **administration** of the New Covenant already.

Ezekiel 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a **new** Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the **stony** heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

That is why Jesus began with, and taught the beatitudes to the disciples.

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 6:21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

Luke 6:22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

Luke 6:23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

You may wish to compare Luke's account of the beatitudes with that of Matthew in Chapter 5. Paul paraphrases some of these Christian attitudes to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in **my word**, then are ye my disciples indeed;

What does that mean – “My **word**?”

Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** of God.

The entire Bible is God's word.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my **disciples**, if ye have love one to another.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will **keep my words** [not just mouth them, not just memorize them – but **keep** His words]: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

We do not truly understand the teachings of Jesus Christ until we have made them an **integral** part of our lives. It is no wonder that Jesus said...

Luke 11:28 ... Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the **word of God**, and **keep** it.

Jesus showed His disciples that it is **improper** to hold some men in higher esteem than others - but it is commonly taught and practiced in the church organizations today. It is wrong to be a **respector** of persons. We do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ if we have respect of persons. (James 2:1)

Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Matthew 22:15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in His talk.

Matthew 22:16 And they sent out unto him their disciples [Pharisees' disciples] with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teach the way of God in truth, neither care thou for any man: for thou regard not the person of men.

Our relationship is not with important men – but it is with God the Father – through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught the disciples to pray, and He taught them prophecy – and in the end every single disciple **abandoned** Him. That was because they were not yet converted – and they lacked God's Spirit. Jesus was being taken captive by the High Priest late in the night of Passover...

Matthew 26:55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

Matthew 26:56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then **all the disciples forsook him**, and fled.

Jesus suffered betrayal and abandonment – forsaken by **all**. Which of us would be able to stand with Him? It is there in the Bible that we find – Who Jesus is. What are His ethics, principles, beliefs, laws, values, and moral code? Are we His disciples? Today, Disciples and Christians are the same thing. We are told in:

Acts 11:26 ... the **disciples** were called **Christians** first in Antioch. 'Christian' means "belonging to Christ."

As His disciples and students – we are to **put on** every trait and element of our Master. May God grant us the ability to imitate His Son, Jesus Christ.

Let's **continue** to be **disciples of Christ** – until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:13)

End: Disciples of Christ