

St Martins C3 – November 24, 2024

Discipleship Revisited

Sermon Notes:

We are very grateful for all who have helped us see our vision of “Christ transforming our lives, Christ transforming those around us” become more of a reality in 2024.

A big part of that vision is to fulfil the mission of the global Church. Jesus tells us what it is.

Read Matthew 28:18-20

Discipleship was the mission that Jesus gave to the Church. It has been a major strategy for us this year.

All of our Sunday morning teaching this year has been focused on normalising an understanding and pursuit of discipleship.

We dared to ask the question: what if we measure the success of our church not by the number of people in a church service but by the growth in the lives of our people?

We did a self-assessment and looked at our discipleship in terms of four different relationships in our lives. Our relationship to God, ourselves, others and the world. Today, we do that assessment again. It can be found at www.stmartinsc3.org/events.

The emphasis this year has been to become more like Jesus by growing in each of these areas.

Read 1 Timothy 4:15-16

Our discipleship deserves our attention. We should throw ourselves into it and immerse ourselves in the things of God so others might see our progress.

God wants us to grow, sometimes, that growth is slow and nuanced, but often, if we reflect, we can see it.

Read Philippians 4:3-6

God's work is not finished, it is continuing. God is just getting started!

Ask God, "What are you working on right now?" and commit to continue growing. Maybe you feel like you have gone backwards in some ways this year; don't beat yourself up too much. Thank God that his arms are always open wide and He is ready to make forward steps with you.

The challenge is to know who you are and to know who you are becoming! You are chosen by God. You are His child, and that gives you security and worth. You are also becoming more like Jesus, laying down the old things and taking on the new things he has for you. All through the power of His Holy Spirit.

If you take one thing from this entire year, it is this: Commit to grow! Grow to maturity (1 Peter 2:2-3; Hebrews 6:1), working out your faith with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:11-12), bear more and more fruit (Colossians 1:9-10; Galatians 5:20-22), knowing God's grace and living in it (2 Peter 3:18), even seeing how pain and hardship can be God's chisel for your life (Hebrews 12:1-10; Romans 5:2-6).

Questions for Connect Groups:

Key Point

Evaluate where you are on your discipleship journey, how far you have come and where God wants to take you next.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

What has stood out to you from this year of teachings at St Martins C3?

How can we measure discipleship growth in a person's life?

How are you growing in faith right now?

How have you gone backwards in your growth?

Where are you stagnating?

If you haven't seen much growth in your faith, what might be the barriers to that growth you need to address?

What might you do to see growth accelerate?

Where do you believe God is taking you next?

How might others help you?

Monday Devotion: Discipleship

Read Colossians 2:6-7

This week as a recap, we revisit some of the devotions from earlier in the year that focus us on the key discipleship relationships in our lives.

When I was a young adult, I did the 2:7 Series course created by *Navigators*. They were courses designed to help people grow in their faith and they were based on these verses.

In these verses, the people of Colossae are encouraged to not let their acceptance of Christ be the end of the story, but the beginning. Once they have accepted Him, they are encouraged to grow into God with their roots going deep and their lives built up strong.

Do not be discouraged if you do not see as much growth in your faith as you would like. Even the mightiest tree comes from a small seed and may spend years struggling as a young sapling. None of us are the finished product. Each of us has areas where we could grow.

The important thing is for us to recognise the things that are preventing our growth and the areas we can most easily grow. Either down into him or up into the world around you.

Pray and ask for God's grace to help you in the areas you recognise you need to grow. Ask Him to remind you that He accepts you regardless of your failures.

Tuesday Devotion: Relationship with God

Read John 1:35-51; 15:15

When Jesus called his first followers in the book of John, he did more than call them to learn from a teacher or fulfil a mission, He invited them to a relationship.

As you read John 1, see the way Jesus invited the followers into His life and the place where He was staying. He showed He cared about their life, even when they were just sitting under a fig tree.

Being a disciple of Jesus is an invitation to be part of the life of Jesus. We get to see Him up close and personal. We get to be His friends.

There is an old saying that goes: “Show me your friends and I will show you who you will become.” We often take on the character traits of the ones closest to us.

As friends of Jesus, we have an intimate view of who He is and what He is doing in the world. We then have the privilege of reflecting His transforming life as we grow in each of the four relationship areas.

Make Jesus the one who is closest to you. Every day, take the time to get to know Him and choose to be His friend.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself to you as your friend.

Wednesday Devotion: Relationship with Myself

Read Matthew 16:24

A little while ago, I was reading two books side-by-side. One was about how God has made us as people, unique and amazing. It said, *“Remember, God sees you as strong, courageous, brilliant, creative, and special.”*

The second book I was reading was by some monastic writers from hundreds of years ago who warned of the danger of self-love. It said: *Christ did not say, “If anyone will come after me, let him enjoy himself, let him be gorgeously dressed, let him be drunk with delight.” He never even said, “Be glad that you are perfect and that you can see how well you are doing.” No, Jesus said, “If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” His path winds up the side of a steep mountain where death will be present on every hand.*

Woo. The two books are not opposed to each other, they are two sides of the same coin. For us to grow we need to know our awesome identity in Christ. For us to grow we need to die to our old identity and lay down ourselves.

The path God has for us is not always an easy one. There are days when it feels like winding up a steep mountain where death is present on every side. Yet, for God to make eternity fully bloom in our lives that is the path we must walk. Pray that God would help you to lay down your old identity and walk in the new identity he has for you.

Thursday Devotion: Relationship with Other Christians

Read John 13:34-35; Philippians 2:1-4

We are to be known for the way we love, primarily the way we love each other as Christians. Jesus gave this message to His disciples as He washed their feet and went to the cross.

Think about Whittaker's chocolate for a second. That's a good second. Other people do chocolate, but there is something about the way Whittaker's does chocolate that makes them the most trusted name in chocolate in New Zealand. There is a creaminess and richness that is distinctly Whittaker's.

So it is with Christians. There is to be a distinctiveness to the way that we love that others aspire to replicate.

God's love is at the centre of life. Therefore, we need to embody this love noticeably. We can live out love through some key actions.

Our school has a value in this term of *Kotahitanga*. This is the Māori word for unity. It is seen when we value each other, support each other and spend time with each other. It is the same concept that Paul mentions in Philippians 2. Consider how to live that out today.

Pray and ask God to show you how you can honour other Christians.

Friday Devotion: Relationship with The World

Read Matthew 6:9-13

When Jesus was asked how to pray, He gave us what is known popularly as the Lord's Prayer. This was more than a prayer; it was an outline of His mission on earth.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." This coming together of Heaven and Earth should be what we are after now as well. This will radically transform all parts of our world.

Notice that Scripture never calls to just convert people to get them into heaven, recruit people to grow the church, or even help people change our society to be godlier. All of these things are great and are an important part of it, but the long-term goal is for more people to follow Jesus by putting his upside-down loving ways into action.

Making and growing disciples is not our only job as God's people. The Bible also calls us to look after God's creation, create healthy cultures, defend the poor and oppressed, do great work, serve others, and love our enemies. But making disciples is perhaps our most important mission and will contribute to these other mandates as more people truly follow Jesus.

Let's seek His Kingdom in all we do this week.

Pray and ask God to show you what it would be like if His way of life invaded our world today.