

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: Various

*"True Discipleship" (part 3)*

**A QUICK REVIEW**

Discipleship; it is our purpose and our reason for being. Jesus called us to be disciples and to make disciples. Spiritually and temporally, we will only be as effective in accomplishing the will of God and experience His blessing to the degree that discipleship is evident in our lives. This goes for us as individuals and for as a body of believers - the Church. Hence, we will be spending the next few months looking at the principles and particulars of true discipleship.

Last week, we spoke how there are four key components to Christian discipleship - the mission, the motivation, the method and the message. All four should be integrated in the four basic elements of life - **1) our time, 2) our wealth, 3) our gifts and skills, and 4) our relationships.**

**DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS WITH OUR TIME**

We began to look last week at our time. From Genesis 1 and 2 we know that time is a creation of God, it is a gift for us to accomplish His purposes. We cannot stop time, once it is spent you can't go back and change history. Something else to add is that we were meant to be eternal but once sin and death entered into the human experience everything changed. Even God can't go back into time and change things. He deals with the effects and changes everything through the cross. Also, we learned that God is outside of time. Hence, we have a hard time wrapping our minds around the concept of eternity with no beginning as well as understanding the idea that God has always existed.

We looked at two Scriptures in particular. First, **Psalm 90:12** where the psalmist prays: *"Teach us to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom."* In other words, keep everything in perspective of the bigger picture, in relation to the purposes of God. There will be an end to earth, to our lives here. How are we living in light of that end? And then the second Scripture - **Ephesians 5:15**: where Paul says *"Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, for the days are evil."* There is a war between good and evil going on. Paul talks about the spiritual war in **Ephesians 6:10-12**. How are we living in light of this war? How are we making the most of our time so that God's good can be accomplished in our lives and in the lives of others?

The truth is how we spend our time, just like how we spend our money reveals who we really are.

Now as I mentioned last week, I said we need to look at the model of Jesus when it comes to discipleship. And in the case of time, how did Jesus live and what did He teach?

## **JESUS CAME IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME**

I want to first start with **Galatians 4:4-5**. *"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*

The Apostle Paul writes that Jesus came *"in the fullness of time."* There are two words in the Greek that we translate as time in the English - *kairos* and *chronos*. *Chronos* is the word from which we get chronology. It refers to the time on a clock. In other words, it simply means the steady repetition of time devoid of any perspective. It is the time of sequence and duration. *Kairos*, on the other hand, means time as it relates to the overall plan of something. It means the "right" or "favorable moment." It is used a number of times in the Gospels to mean a specific time like season or harvest or end of the age. There is a purpose and plan to it. As it relates to the Galatians reading it is clear that Jesus came in the fullness of the time of God's perfect plan. It is really God's timing. And we can see this in our own lives when everything comes together as a series of various events all unknowingly working together as a result of God's work. This my friends is what God says about us. He is working everything out in our lives according to His plan, His timing. You ask how do we know?

Listen to these verses for a moment. *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Philip. 1:6) Or how about this one? *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28).

Many of us heard of the recent passing of Steve Jobs co-founder CEO of Apple Computers. Not only was he a visionary but he had many notable quotes. Once he said, *"You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something -- your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."*

He was partly right. You can't know how everything is going to come together until after the fact. That is central to the life of faith. Faith is moving forward without knowing the full outcome. But it is not trusting in your gut, or karma, or life in general, it is entrusting your life with the One who made you. And His Spirit will accomplish, in conjunction with our life choices, God's will and plan for our lives.

How is God at work? Not only through the Holy Spirit and the choices we make, but through the passage of time. Have you ever heard of God's perfect timing? Things don't happen by accident and the sooner we realize that and the sooner we get our eyes on the Lord, the sooner we will see how God is working out His plan for our lives.

## **JESUS RESTED PHYSICALLY AND RECHARGED SPIRITUALLY**

Now I want us to go to another passage -. **Mt. 14:22-23:** " *He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.*"

Here we are told that Jesus got away from the crowds to rest. There are still hurting people, there are still needs to be met, but Jesus got on a boat to take some time out. Should we be surprised? God rested on the seventh day to give us an example that we need physical rest and time to get recharged. If Jesus needed rest so do we? Notice Jesus made sure He did something else, He spent time alone with His Father. We read in **Mk. 1:34:** "*In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*" Time for reflection, time for prayer, time to be in the Word, time to spiritually get recharged to regroup before facing the challenges, trials, temptations, and turmoil of the world.

I have yet to meet someone who is out of control, or full of anxiety or worry, or running to and fro, who doesn't also have a quiet time with the Lord. In fact, one of the surest ways to grow in our relationship with God is having a time daily with Him. I usually recommend that you keep a prayer journal. You can keep track of what is going on in your life, what the Lord is showing you, write down prayer concerns and so forth. Ben Franklin once said, "*A short pencil is better than a long memory.*"

How should we go about a devotional time? The best time is in the morning before we start the day. Ben Franklin also said, "*Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.*" I don't know about all of the second part but I do know that when we are beginning our day with the Lord, we are allowing our spirit to get in tune with God's Spirit to meet the challenges of the day ahead.

I find it significant that Jesus rose on a Sunday. Have you ever thought about why? There was the Sabbath on the seventh day or Saturday. But the Christians changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday. Not only was it a testament to the truth of the resurrection, but it highlights that our lives must begin and end with God. Both days in a sense are now holy to the Lord. As believers we begin our week with the Lord publicly, how much more to begin each day with the Lord privately. Many need a cup of coffee to begin their day or others do physical exercise. What about the need to spend some time with the One who made you, the One who died for you, the One who is coming back for you, and the One whom you will see face to face one day?

Yes, Jesus spent time with His Father in the early morning and the evening. As Anglicans we have what is called the Daily Office. This is a series of prayer services that can be used privately or publically. There are four: morning prayer, noonday prayer, evening prayer, and compline. There are appointed Scripture readings for each day that can be found in the lectionary of the prayer book. We have guides in the administrative office for anyone interested. There are also shorter devotions that can be used gain for

morning, noon, evening, and night. The most important thing is setting aside time for the Lord, having an order or plan to follow, and to spend time in His Word - the Bible.

### **ARE YOU SPENDING TIME ON THE GOOD PART?**

In closing, I want us to look at one other passage. **Luke 10:38-42:** *"Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*

The Lord affirms Mary in this account from Luke. Why? Mary spent time with the Lord first. Our relationship with God must be our first priority. It is the catalyst from which all the good will come in our lives. Recall that when Jesus called the first disciples to follow Him, they dropped their nets and immediately followed. God must be first in our lives in all areas and it begins in our use of time.

So I ask, "Are you spending quality time with the Lord each day?" Surveys done suggest that the vast majority of Christians do not. Let's prove the surveys wrong!

God does indeed have a perfect plan and destiny for each of our lives and He uses time and our circumstance to complete that will. But if we are to be in tune to all that God has for us, it means spending time with Him, in prayer, in the word, in reflection and in preparation for the challenges that come each and every day of our lives. Only then will true discipleship be reflected in our time. Let us pray...