

April 7, 2019

## ***The Deeper Things***

***"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."*** Hebrews 13:15-16

***"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer you bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*** Romans 12:1-2

***"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."*** Matthew 25:34-46

Over the past several weeks we have been considering the reality of the call to be a disciple. Jesus defined discipleship in Matthew 16:24-25 when he said, ***"If any one would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."***

Discipleship, following Jesus, is so much more than 'going to church'. True discipleship demands that I give my life to Jesus every day. The Hebrew author will tell me to make my life to God a continual ***"...sacrifice of praise..."*** which he defines, not as singing, but as doing good and sharing with others.

The Apostle Paul commanded the Roman believers to ***"...offer their bodies as living sacrifices..."*** Discipleship is then, becoming a living sacrifice, daily serving God through doing good and sharing with others. In his parable on judgment in Matthew 25 he makes it clear that it is the small services we render to others that defines our discipleship.

I am convinced that many of us have lost sight of this truth. It is far easier to define discipleship as 'going to church' because 'going to church' is so much easier to measure. But our Lord defines discipleship as our willingness to follow him to the cross, to lay down our own lives, to live as sacrifices to him and ultimately to live out his command, ***"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*** (John 13:34-35) And he adds, ***"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, that you love one another."***

Do not misunderstand me. Gathering together with other believers is an essential practice for disciples. But our discipleship neither begins nor ends in the church building. Jesus calls us to literally live him, and his sacrificial love, before the world. He commands us, ***"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."*** (Matthew 7:12)

That level of discipleship is lived in our day-to-day interactions with others. It is exemplified in our active compassion-driven service to others. It is very much defined by what we do for those others who populate our immediate environment.

Jesus, ***"...did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life..."*** (Matthew 20:28) He came to ***"...seek and save what was lost."*** (Luke 19:10) If we are his disciples then our

lives must reflect his. Like our Master we must be those who seek to serve, not to be served. We must be those who seek and save those who are lost in sin. Our lives must become his life.

I am afraid that we have defined discipleship too simply. We have, I fear, come to believe that truly following Jesus is the defined in the keeping of a few rules, a few observances, a few meeting times. I am convinced that our Lord calls us to so much more; to literally be *"...transformed by the renewing of our minds."* Our Lord calls us to be his functional body, to be him, every single day, in every possible way. This total surrendered life marks us as his true disciples.

Discipleship:  
Becoming More Like  
**CHRiST** EPHESIANS 2:10