Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Hallmarks of Discipleship, Part 3
Scripture: Matthew 10:34-42
Code: 2284

Look with me at the tenth chapter of Matthew...Matthew chapter 10. Our text continues to be verses ?4 through 42, Matthew 10:24 through 42. And we're looking at the characteristic of a true disciple...the hallmarks of genuineness.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, quote - "There has never yet been a man who led a life of ease, whose name is worth remembering." end quote.

Certainly when the Lord calls us to be His disciples, He does not call us to a life of ease.

A missionary who has influenced my life greatly because of what I read is a man named Henry Martyn. He went to India and spent a lifetime, really, there. Already in India he had done more than his share of missionary service when he announced that he was going to go to persia because God had laid it upon his heart to translate the New Testament and the Psalms into the persian language.

By then he was an old man.

They told him that if he stayed in India he would die because of the heat. And then they told him that persia was hotter than India. But he went nonetheless.

Studied the persian language. Translated the entire New Testament and the Psalms in nine months. And then he was told that he couldn't print it or circulate it until he received the Shah's permission. So he traveled 800 miles to Tehran, and he was denied permission to see the Shah. He turned around and made a 400 mile trip to find the British ambassador. The ambassador gave him the proper kinds of papers and so forth and sent him back to the Shah. And so he traveled another 400 miles...that makes l?0O miles. He rode this at night on the back of a mule, and rested during the daytime...protected only by a strip of canvas from the sweltering desert heat.

He finally arrived and was received by the Shah who gave him permission for the Scriptures to be printed and circulated in persia.

Ten days later in igl2 he died. But shortly before he had written in his diary this statement: "I sat and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God. In solitude my Companion, my Friend, and Comforter."

Certainly not a life of ease but a life worth remembering.

Bound up in the spirit of Henry Martyn is the key to genuine discipleship. It is to be so utterly consumed with the cause that you have no thought for your own life. Look with me at verse SS of Matthew 10. "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it. And he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Now that is the heart of our text. That really says it.

This is a text all about commitment and all about dedication and all about self-denial, and all about self-sacrifice, and all about cross bearing. It is a text about genuine discipleship' selfless sacrificial discipleship. It is a text about commitment to the divine will at any cost. It is a text about the Lordship of Christ.

Now there are many people who claim to follow Jesus. There are many people who claim to be His disciples, and there always have been. But our Lord points to the proof here of genuineness.

And may I remind you that this message about genuineness is a common message from the Lord. But seemingly one that has been much overlooked in the Christian church in contemporary times. The Lord repeatedly speaks about genuineness, true disciples as over against false, the real as over against the fake. For Him this matter of who is real is essential. And so He talks about real salvation as opposed to that which is facade very frequently.

In Matthew alone it is a constant issue. For example. if you go back with me to chapter 5 verse ?0, the first message our Lord gave, He said this: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And here He says there is a genuine righteousness, and there is a false righteousness and unless you have the real thing you'll not enter the kingdom. And He is focusing on the non-reality of the righteousness of the Pharisees.

If you go to the seventh chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, you will find in verse lS the same focus. "Enter in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in that way. Because narrow is the gate and hard, or compressed, is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it." In other words, He says there are these two roads which seemingly go to God but the one is real and the other is false. The one leads to life, the other to destruction. Make sure you're on the right road.

And in verse l7: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that

bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall...what?...

know them." And again He contrasts the genuine and the false. Then in verse ?l again He says: "Not everyone that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom, but he that does the will of My Father."

And then in verse 24 to 27 He says: "There are two people who build religious houses. One builds on a rock, and it stands. And one builds on sand,and it falls."

Now, go with me for a moment to chapter lS, and the Lord begins the chapter with a discussion of a sower and seed. And the sower in verse S went forth to sow. And when he sowed some of the seed, verse 4 says, fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them.

Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith sprang up because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But other seed fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit, some hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

In other words, the Lord says in response to the preaching of the Gospel, there are at least four different things that occur.

And only one of them is really genuine reception. And He goes on to describe all of that clear through verse 2S.

He speaks in verse 24 of the same issue again. This time it is a parable of a man who sows wheat in a field and an enemy who sows tares, and the inability to tell them apart and the fact in verse SO that they have to grow together until the Lord tells them apart. For He alone is the one who knows whose real.

You find it also in verse 47 of chapter l3, the kingdom is like a net cast into the sea and gathered every kind in it. When it was full they drew it to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels and threw the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the age, the angels will come forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous and cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

In a sense, the church is that net. And it pulls in all kinds of things that have to ultimately be separated...the true and the false.

So, we're not surprised now when we go back to chapter 10.

And we find a lesson on genuineness again because this fits our Lord's pattern of thinking as He approaches who is a real disciple.

The Apostle Paul put it this way, and I think its...its a good word for us to remember in this context. In Romans he said:

"All Israel is not Israel." That's a very, very provocative insightful statement. All Israel is not Israel. In other words, all who are outwardly Jews are not inwardly Jews. All who are outwardly identified as the people of God are not inwardly the people of God. And we could say then, all disciples are not disciples. All followers of Jesus are not followers of Jesus. We could even say all the church, as we see it, is not the church. And that's what our Lord is saying here. And here we find the marks in Matthew 10:24 to 42, of a genuine disciple. The marks of the real thing. And in this passage our Lord is preparing His disciples, sending them out, and He gives marvelous instruction to them, then broadens His instruction to encompass the whole of discipleship. And I really think the message here is a message, first of all, about genuineness.

Secondly, its a message about effect. Who is a real disciple and how does he affect his world, and how is he affected by his world.

Now let's go back to verse ?4 and find the initial hallmark of discipleship that we've been mentioning. The first characteristic of a true disciple is that he is like his Lord. He bears the character of Christ. That's why in Acts il:28 they were called Christians...Christiani...iani means belonging to the party of.

They were little Christs. They belonged to Christ. They manifested His character. They bore the marks of His pattern of life. A true Christian not only wears the name of Christ but he bears the character of Christ. And that's what it says in 24, "The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord, but it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his lord." And we went into that in great detail. A true disciple is going to manifest the character of Christ. Oh, they'll be lapses, to be sure, because of our humanness, but nonetheless there will be evidence of Christlikeness in the life of a true believer.

So, basically, the hallmark is that we are like Jesus Christ.

If we say we abide in Him, I John 2, we ought to walk as He walked.

That is the only verification there is. Christ's life produced in us, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ live it in me. And that must be made manifest. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away and all things have become new." That newness must be manifest.

So, the mark then is Christlike attitude, character manifestation.

But, the secondary hallmark is that if we are like Christ, we will find ourselves being treated like Christ was treated, that's in verse ?5 also. If they call the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? So, what does it mean to be genuine? It means to manifest the character of Christ and thus to be treated as He was treated. When we move into the world with Christlike character the world will react to us the way they reacted to Him. That's the message of John 15 and 1B, isn't it? Don't be surprised if the world hate..hates you because it hated Me. So then, a true disciple is Christlike and is treated like Christ was treated.

So, if you're genuine you can expect the world to reject you.

That's what it means to be identified with Christ. Therefore we can now understand how to tell a true disciple by how he reacts to what the world does. So the Lord then, having given the principle in verse 2? and 25, then moves on and gives five marks of a true disciple. And they are sort of notations about his response to the pressure and persecution of the world.

First of all, we said that a true disciple fears not the world.

verses 28 to 8l. And we've already gone into that in detail, but a true disciple is not afraid of the world. He's not intimidated by the world, first of all, because he knows he will be vindicated.

verse ??.

Secondly, because he venerates God, or worships God, verse 27, and 28. And thirdly, because he knows how valued he is by God who will care for him, verse 2? to Sl.

So, a true disciple is not intimidated by the world. He's not afraid of the world. When the world is hostile, when the world is persecuting, when the world ??ves against him, when the world ostracizes him, or alienates him, he's not afraid, because he commits himself to the Lord. He is utterly and totally given over to the Lordship of Christ at any price, even the hostility of the world.

Secondly, and we studied this last time, a true disciple favors the Lord. A true disciple favors the Lord. Verse 32 and SS indicate that he will confess Christ before men, and thus be confessed before the Father by Christ. He will not deny Him, but he will confess Him. In other words, when the heat is on,and the pressure is on,and the persecution's on, and the world is attacking the true believer will confess Christ. He won't bail out. He won't deny his faith. He won't recant. He'll stand up and proclaim Christ no matter what happens. And he is the one whom Christ will confess belongs to Him.

So, a true disciple, a true believer, a true Christian is one who fears not the world. He is so committed to the Lordship of Christ that he's not afraid of what men might do to him, and he favors the Lord. When he comes to the point of having to confess, he will confess and not deny Jesus Christ no matter what it costs him.

Let's go to a third, a true disciple forsakes the family. A true disciple forsakes the family. Verse S4, our Lord says: "Think not, or don't be under the illusion, that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword." Now this is a most dramatic statement. He says - Now some of you who are real will confess Me when you're brought to the tribunals, and the courts of men, and you have to face men even in day to day life.

Some of you will deny Me because it isn't that important to you.

and you'll save your neck and your reputation, and whatever else.

And that just proves that I have come to bring a sword, I cause divisions. I force people to decisions that separate one from another.

The very fact that some confess Christ and some deny Christ indicates the coming of Christ causes divisions. And so Jesus builds on that reality.

Now the Jews pretty well had figured out from the Old Testament that when the Messiah came He was..He was coming to bring peace. And we understand that. That's part of it. They were aware of that. They were aware that Isaiah ? said that He was to be the prince of peace. They were aware, for example.

of the psalmist and it's a marvelous word of hope in Psalm 72, as it talks of the kingdom. It says the mountains shall bring peace to the people. It says in the days...in His days, rather, the days of Messiah, shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace as long as the moon endures. In Isaiah chapter 2 verse 8 it says, "Many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the "Mountain of the Lord," this is in the millennium, "to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And then it says: "He shall judge among the nations, shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation.

neither shall they learn war anymore." In that day there won't even be any weapons because there won't be any need for them' there won't be any war. There will be peace. And so they knew that the Messiah was coming to bring peace.

And as Jesus is speaking to the disciples, you see, they had already begin...begun to experience the peace in their hearts that came with being with Jesus. And they may have been anticipating that this bliss would just extend to everybody.

That is, they were sent out to preach, the whole world would fall at their feet. That the Messiah had arrived. And that He was...a King of peace, and !hey were experiencing this euphoria of being with Him. And everybody would just respond and it would all be a wonderful, peaceful kingdom.

But they didn't want to be just...just isolated to that view.

That wouldn't be the picture. So the Lord says - Don't be under an illusions about me coming to bring peace. I've come not to send peace, but a sword. Now its expressed in that verse as if it was the intention of our Lord's coming, and consequences are often expressed as if they were intentions. For in the ultimate sovereignty of God they have to be seen that way. But here the direct result of His coming is described as if it were His deliberate intention. And this is, in a sense, a paradox. The Lord is saying on the one hand - I'm a prince of peace, on the one hand I've come to sa..to bring peace, but on the other hand you have to realize that there's going to be a sword.

And the Old Testament saw both of these things, in a way.

The Old Testament saw the...the fracturing, it saw the breaking asunder. For example, in the sixth verse of the seventh chapter of Micah it says this, talking about the time when the Lord comes:

"The son dishonors the father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies are the men of his own house." That is almost directly quoted by our Lord in the next verses.

So, the Old Testament saw the Messiah as a King of peace, but also saw a division as potentiated by His coming. Because there would be some that would accept, and there would be some that would reject. And you know, the Jews also believed this. In some of the Rabbinical writings we find this statement: "In the period when the Son of David shall come, a daughter will rise up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

The son despises his father, the daughter rebels against the mother' the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law, and a man's enemies are they of his own household." end quote. That is in the Rabbinical writings.

So, they knew on the one hand the Messiah would come for peace, but on the other hand He would come to cause a division.

It's as if Jesus is saying - It's just going to be the division that you're going to see for the moment. The intervention of God in history through the incarnation of Christ is going to split and fracture the world into segments, into parties that will be pitted against one another. So don't be under any illusion as you go out as a disciple to think the whole world's going to fall at your feet. You're going to go rushing home and tell everybody you've become a Christian. You're going to tell everybody at school, you're just...and everybody's going to wonderfully line up to sign on the dotted line. It's not going to happen.

In fact, Martin Luther said: quote: "If our gospel were received in peace, it wouldn't be the true gospel." end quote. And he, if anybody ever saw it divide, saw it divide. Stuck in the Catholic Church he preached the truth and it didn't bring peace, it created the biggest rift in the history of religion. It effectively shattered the complacency of the Catholic Church and gave birth to the protestant Reformation.

Now, in a real sense verse S4 is paradoxical because we should expect the Lord to bring peace. After all John the Baptist was His herald and he..he was to talk about peace. And when the angels proclaimed His birth they said, "peace on earth." And Jesus in John 11 said, "My peace I give unto you." And in John i8 He said:

"In the world you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I've overcome the world," and again promised them peace.

The Apostle Paul in Romans, at least three places, talks about the peace that God has given us. Well, there is peace in the heart of the one who believes. But as far as the world is concerned there is nothing but division. Yes, He brought peace to the heart of a believer, the peace of God, peace with God, peace from God. And someday there will be a kingdom of peace, but the Old Testament didn't see a difference between the first coming and the second coming, didn't see that time in the middle. The first coming brought a sword, the second coming will bring ultimate peace.

Oh yes, the first coming brought a partial peace, that being the peace that comes to the hearts of those who believe. But the Lord says - You just remember this as you go out, you're going to cause division. You're going to cause a fracturing and a rending and a splitting apart.

The Gospel does that. It is the refiner's fire that consumes.

It is the shepherd's separation of the sheep and the goats. It is the husbandman's fan when he throws the grain into the air and the chaff is blown away. There's a separation. The entrance of Christ splits, tears apart.

If Christ had never come the earth would have gone on in unity to hell...doomed. But when He came a war broke out.

In Luke chapter 12 we see something of this in verse 4g. "I am come to send fire on the earth," He said. "And what will I if its already kindled?" Verse ?l: "Suppose you that I am come to give peace on earth, I tell you, No, but rather division and from henceforth there will be five in one house divided; three against two, and two against three, and the father divided against his son, and the son against the father, and the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, and the mother-in- law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law. I came to bring fire. I came to bring a sword, not peace."

And the worst possible expression of this is in the home because it gets right down to the most meaningful relationships.

Right? And so what He's really going to say here is this - If you're a true disciple, you'll be willing to even create a division in your own home which goes against the grain of your nature, doesn't it? Cause that's the place you want the peace. That's the place you want to keep intimacy. That's...that's...those are the people you love. You don't want to be at odds with them. But you will be true when you commit yourself to Jesus Christ with such commitment to His Lordship that even if it fractures your home you're willing to pay the price.

Look at verse S5, and here's how He expresses it: "I am come to bring a sword, even to this extent that I would set a man at variance against his own father." By the way, the word at variance is a rare word, used only here in the New Testament, it means to cut asunder. I will cut a man off totally from his father. "And a daughter from her mother, and the daughter-in-law against a "mother-in-law." And He extends it from that very immediate family to the family by marriage. I'll fracture families every way possible. It's just the way it's going to be.

Now this is the worst rending that occurs. I mean, it's not so bad when you're at odds with your neighbor, or your boss, or your friend, or..or your acquaintance, but when it gets into the family and you're commitment to Jesus Christ means that you are set at variance against your family, that's where it really begins to rub. It goes against your...your affection and your love for them.

It goes against a harmony that you have to live with. But it will come right to that level. And being a Christian and following Jesus Christ may mean that you have created a division in your own home. But that's the mark of a true disciple. He's not going to hang on to those relationships to the extent that he will not commit himself to the Lordship of Christ.

Remember the ninth chapter of Luke verses 8l and 82, this guy came along and he was going to follow Jesus. And he said -I want to follow You but first let me go home and bid farewell to my family.

And Jesus said, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom." Jesus said, I'm not going to accept you. Because you're too attached to your family. You'll never make the break. You'll never pay the price.

There are wives that will not come to Christ for fear of separation from their husband. There may be husbands who will not come to Christ for fear of separation from their wives. There are children who will not come to Christ for fear of their fathers or mothers...visa versa, and etc. People who will not take a stand for Christ because they want to maintain that family thing.

But Jesus said - The true disciple will forsake his family.

Now it doesn't have to be that way. I thank God that I didn't have to forsake my family to be a Christian. But when it comes this will be the test, you see, if it comes.

I talked to a girl two weeks ago at Hume Lake who said she has become a Christian from a totally pagan family and she said my father will not speak to me. He will not have anything to do with me. He will not even talk to me if I call him on the phone, he hangs up. And then she said - I..I would think that he would be happy that I'm not an alcoholic, I'm not a drug addict, that I'm not a criminal, and not walk in the streets like a prostitute, that I'm not...haven't been in some terrible accident, crippled, or injured. I've never had such joy in my life and he won't talk to me. And I said that's because of the sword.

It fell between Cain and Abel, didn't it? Abel was a righteous man, Cain was an unrighteous man and the cleavage was so great that Cain couldn't stand it and he murdered his brother.

In I Corinthians chapter 7 it tells us how it comes right into a Christian marriage. It says if you have an unbelieving wife, and she wants to stay with you, don't divorce her. And if you women have an unbelieving husband who wants to stay with you, then let him stay. Because there's a sanctifying that occurs. "But if the unbelieving departs then let him depart, a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, for God has called us to peace."

That's the other side of it. Once the sword falls, then God's called us to peace and if he wants out, let him out. It's going to happen.

It happened with Cain and Abel and its still happening.

Somebody in a family commits himself to Christ and some of you know what I mean by this, and everything breaks loose. And then it comes down to the reality of that commitment. The real disciple will forsake his family if it has to be.

You see, beloved, what we're talking about is the Lordship of Christ and I saw this again and again, but its got to be repeated until people begin to hear it, becoming a Christian is affirming your commitment to the Lordship of Christ to the point where you forsake everything. It isn't just sticking up your hand, signing a card, walking down an aisle and saying - I love Jesus. It is by faith, not by works but the manifestation of true faith is a commitment that cannot be swayed by any influence.

Yes, you love your family and you love your children and your parents and your husband and your wife, and those people in immediacy to you, but your commitment to Christ if you're a real disciple is so deep and so profound and so far reaching that you will say no to those which are the normal extensions of your affection for the cause of Christ, if need be.

John Bunyan knew all about this, only in a kind of a special way. They told John Bunyan to quit preaching, but he said - I cannot quit preaching because God has called me to preach. And they said - If you preach we'll put you in prison. And so he said to himself - If I go to prison who cares for my family?

But how can I close my mouth when God has called me to preach?

And so he committed his family to the care of God and was obedient to the call of God and preached, and they put him in prison. And since then he's blessed millions of families because it was there that he wrote pILGRIM'S pROGRESS.

Listen to what he said: "The parting with my wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place, as the pulling of the flesh from my bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I have besides. O the thought of the hardship I thought my blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces...But yet, recalling myself, thought I, I must venture all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you; O I saw in this condition, I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet thought I, I must do it, I must do it." end quote.

I pray to God I never have to make that decision, don't you?

And for some of us it doesn't have to be but for some of us it may.

Some of you have had to make a choice. You've confessed Jesus Christ and its alienated from...your family from you, but that's the way we prove the reality, you see. The one who says I'm not willing to make that sacrifice isn't genuine.

Verse S8 says: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." That's true. Christ came to bring a sword, and the sword falls in the house.

And then verse S7: "If you love your father or your mother more than Me, you're not worthy of Me." Reversing it, if you love your son or daughter more than Me, you're not worthy of Me.

You can't be My disciples is what He's saying. You can't receive the salvation I offer if you're family means more than I do. You must make that break.

Now there is something even more apt to rob Christ of His rightful place in the heart of an individual, even more than the family. You know what it is? The love of his own life. You might want to be willing to take Christ and lose your family, but would...would you be willing to take Christ and lose your life? Now you're getting right down to where I live. Right?

I mean, I might say okay to the family deal. And so the Lord goes one step further and talks about giving up your life.

Now we're getting serious about whose a Christian, aren't we? And so we say the true disciple fears not the world, favors the Lord, forsakes the family, and fourthly, follows the call.

Verse SS: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." The whole point of this section is to stress one thing, verses SS and S?, listen, it is to stress total self denial to the point of death.

Now mark this, total self denial to the point of death. The Lord is really zeroing in who is a true Christian. One who is not afraid of the world, he is not intimidated by the world. One who favors the Lord and confesses Him, not matter how hostile the forces may be. One who says I love You more than I love the people that are closest to me in this world, and if it comes to that I'll choose You over them. And now it says, I love death for Your sake better than life for my sake.

Now you're getting down to whose real. Now verse 88 puts it so simply, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me." Now you've heard a zillion devotionals on that verse...bearing your cross, taking up your cross. And you probably have heard, like I have, so many definitions of what the cross is...your wife, my wife is my cross, your husband, my husband is my cross. I've got this one teen-ager, he's my cross. Your mother-in-law...your I??? Chevy...your leaky roof...your particularly distasteful class at school...a teacher that drives you crazy...your neighbor...your boss...the guy who works next to you. No, those are not your cross. I hate to do that to you, you've got to find a new category for all of them. What is your cross? And He...He said to them, "You have to take up your cross." Now what did they think about that? Well, I've even heard

people say - Well, they were viewing Calvary. They didn't view Calvary, they hadn't even heard about Calvary. They didn't even know Jesus was going to die on a cross. I mean, after He told them they still didn't understand it and they hadn't even told them yet. They don't see Calvary here, this isn't some weird, mystical deal about the cross they don't understand, and it isn't some devotional thing about some person or object in their life. When He said - Take up your cross.., they knew immediately what He was talking about. He was talking about dying, just plain old dying.

How they'd know that? They were of...they were from Galilee with the exception of Judas Iscariot, all eleven others were from Galilee. And very recently there had been an insurrection in Galilee lead by Judas of Galilee, and Judas had gathered a band together and decided to throw the Romans out. And the Romans won.

And the Romans crushed Judas and his insurrection, and the Roman general Varus, V-a-r-u-s, wanted to teach the Jews a lesson so he crucified over two thousand Jews. And he put their crosses up and down all the roads of Galilee so everywhere the people went they saw them hanging on these crosses along the roadside. And every Jew that was crucified carried the crossbeam for his own execution on his back as he marched to the cross. And these Galileans had seen all of that. And Jesus is talking to them in historical context and He is saying - He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me. You need to be willing to die, He says...rather than deny Me. This is a symbol of painful, torturous death. The most excruciating death man has ever invented is crucifixion. It's slow and the slumping of the body on the wounds that are created by the nails not only causes excruciating pain at the point of the wound, but eventually suffocates the internal organs.

And He's saying - You take up your cross, you must be willing to go to the most excruciating painful torturous death imaginable.

Now I'm telling you, He really has the standard up there. I mean, Jesus isn't somebody you just say - Yeah, man, I'd like to have Jesus so I'll just say a little deal, a prayer, whisst, add it to the rest of my life. Committing your life to follow Jesus Christ means you would not only forsake your family, if need be, the people closest to you that you love the most, you'd lose your life. That's a mark of genuineness. And you're never to be intimidated by the world, you'd confess Christ in the most hostile environment, its the mark of your genuineness.

They understood that He meant death. They understood that to take up the cross means abandoning myself to the Lordship of Christ if it means I pay with my life. You see, the love of Christ has to overrule the normality of family love and the love of Christ has to overrule the instinct of self-preservation.

Then He adds this rich thought in verse 3g; "He that findeth his life shall lose it." What do you mean by that? Finding his life means securing his physical safety by denying Christ under pressure. Boy, if

you're trying to hang onto your life and make sure that you don't ever get in too hot, or in too deep - Boy, I'm not willing to make that sacrifice, boy, I'm not going to give my life for the Lord. I'm not going that far. Man, I'm going to bail out. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to recant. I'll say -Hey, forget it. I just became a non- Christian. Don't throw me to that lion. I mean. I'll be anything. I'll be a...I'll worship any-body, just don't put me in there.

In finding you life. in securing your physical life you just lost your soul. But, if you're willing to lose your life for My sake, you'll really find eternal life...in the end. It doesn't mean you get saved by being a martyr. it just means that if you're a genuine Christian you..you're willing to do that. When the issue is between the Lord and me, whether I live for me or die for Him, that's the ultimate test. The confessor who suffers death.

the one who confesses Jesus Christ and dies for it is far better off than the apostate who escapes death by denying Christ and receives eternal damnation. That's the issue.

Bunyan was brought before the magistrates when they put him in prison, and he said -"Sir, the law of Christ hath provided two ways of obeying: The one to do that which I in my conscience do believe I am bound to do, actively; and where I cannot obey it actively, there I am willing to lie down and suffer what they shall do unto me."

He was right. You do it actively and aggressively. and you pay the price. You see, it is better to lose everything. It is better to lose your ease and your comfort and to be hassled and intimidated, badgered by the world, it is better to even lose your family, it is better to even lose your life than to forsake Jesus Christ. And bless God, it is not that we will necessarily have to do all these, it's that if we're real when it comes to this we will do it. What a powerful lesson on true discipleship. These are the real ones.

See, up to now its all been kind of negative. A true disciple fears not the world no matter how intimidating they are. no matter how they try to threaten or scare us. A true disciple fears not the world. Secondly, favors the Lord, when they call for a confession he gives the confession boldly. Oh, there may be lapses.

as I said, but where there are lapses there will be repentance and sorrow. And a true disciple is willing to follow if it means loss of family, or loss of life. But that's all so negative. Isn't there a positive? I mean, is being a Christian just sort of being hassled by the world and having to confess before men and forsaking your family and giving your life...don't we do anything but create problems in the world? Sure we do. And the text ends on a positive note, and it is thrilling.

Verse 40, now just relax, and I want you to get this, don't be in a hurry to go anywhere, this is the best part. Fifth, -a true disciple fosters rewards...a true disciple, as well as creating war, and strife, and

division, and separation. and friction, also fosters rewards. We do have a positive effect. You see. we are the destiny-determiners in the world. When we bring the sword that separates, on the one hand are the unbelievers, but on the other hand are the...what?...the believers. And when we preach and when we live and when we give our testimony, some believe, don't they?

And for them everything is so positive. Not everyone is going to refuse the message of the disciple, some are going to believe, some are going to receive them, some are going to receive their Lord.

And since we have limited ability to reward their faith, the Lord will do it for us.

Look at verse 40, this is great. "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."

This is incredible. Let me tell you what's in the word receive here.

When you go out and you represent Jesus Christ and you speak of Jesus Christ and you give Jesus Christ's message, the people who believe it are the ones who receive you. It is a full receiving...

that they accept you and your message. And when you go out and they don't all get hostile, but some receive you, the ones that receive you are receiving the Lord. And the ones receiving the Lord are receiving the One who sent the Lord. So you know what? You become an agency of men receiving God Himself. What a marvelous thing, isn't it?

On the one hand you create this antagonism, on the other hand you create this marvelous reality that people receive God through you. Every time somebody says to me - You know I was saved when you preached...or, I received Christ when you talked, or when you told me the Gospel...I..I am thrilled beyond the ability to express.

Aren't you? Because God has used a frail, human instrument as an agency. And when someone receives us, they receive the Lord and the Father who sent Him. What an incredible thought. We give people the trinity, as it were. That's like John 14, you know, everything is bound up, I in the Father, and the Father in Me, and we'll both make Our abode with you. Great thought.

It goes beyond that even. Look at verse 41, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." That's a tremendous divine principle. By the way, a prophet is what he says, and a righteous man is what he is...and they really speak of the same individual. For a true disciple lives what he says. Right? He speaks and he is. He speaks the word forth and he is righteous.

The prophet is his task, the righteous man is his character. But he's a representative of God. And He says - When you go out representing God by your life and your lip, by your speaking and your living, those who receive you will receive the reward that you receive.

Now wait a minute. What does that mean? That just means exactly what it says. It could be a pastor, or a teacher, or a missionary, or an evangelist, or anyone who presents Christ, the one who receives that one will share that one's reward. If the Lord gives to me a reward for proclaiming to you, He'll give you the same reward for receiving what I proclaim. And we all share.

So, I then become a means to your blessedness. Do you understand that? So on the one hand when I proclaim - some are alienated. But on the other hand when I proclaim - some will receive the very reward that God has promised to give the one who preaches. So you become the instrument by which others are blessed.

You want to be a blessing in the world? Then confess Christ before men. Then stand up boldly and don't mitigate your testimony, and don't be ashamed of Christ. And let your life become the source of their reward. Great thought.

Look at verse 42. When you think of prophets and righteous men you think of kind of high class people. But the Lord brings in to verse 42 a wonderful thought. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no way lose his reward."

What is the little one here? Young disciples, babes, a little nobody disciple. And by the way, that's what the twelve were right now, did you know that? At this point in their career they were a bunch of unproven nothings. Remember our series in the beginning of chapter 10? The company of the unqualified? They were nobodies.

And He says - When these go out to preach and to present Me, if you receive them, and you can demonstrate that by giving them just a cup of cold water because they're My disciples. In other words, you're helping them in the simplest way, responding to them in a simplest way, you in no way will lose your reward. People then will be rewarded when they believe our message because they'll receive the salvation we preach. They will be rewarded when they receive us because they will share in the very reward we have for proclamation.

And they will be rewarded when they help us along in our ministry because God will not hold back a reward to those who have shared in the minister....and his ministry.

So, you know what its saying? We then become the source of blessedness for others. We give them the privilege of hearing and receiving. We give them the pleasure of receiving and being rewarded. We give them the pleasure of giving to us and being doubly rewarded. So the good thing you do for the messenger will be rewarded. The fact that you receive his message, you'll share in his reward. The fact that you receive his Savior, you'll receive his Saver's salvation.

A disciple then is a person who is a determiner of destiny.

And even the least of us shares with the greatest of us in what God does in blessing us.

There was a lad in a country village. And after a great struggle he reached the ministry. All through his days of study there was a cobbler, shoe repairman, in the village who had helped him. He was a simple man but a well read man and a man who loved God with all his heart. In time the young lad whom he had helped became licensed to preach, and on the day of his ordination the cobbler said to him, - Young man, he said, I always had in my heart the desire to be a minister of the gospel, but the circumstances of my life never made it possible. You are doing what was always my dream, but never reality. I want you to promise me one thing, said the cobbler. I want you to let me make your shoes for nothing, and I want you to wear them in the pulpit when you preach and then I'll feel you are preaching the gospel I always wanted to preach, standing in my shoes.

You receive a prophet, and a righteous man in the name of a prophet and a righteous man. In other words, because of who they represent you receive a disciple no matter how meager he is because of whose disciple he is. And in effect, in that true receiving you're receiving the message they bring and the message is the Savior and the Father, and you will...you will embrace the whole of the blessedness of God's eternal gifts to those who are His own.

I'll tell you. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is pretty fantastic. You become the source of conflict for half the world, and for the other half the source of blessing. But you and I who are the disciples of Christ, we are the issue in the world. We draw the lines. I pray, God, we'll be willing to follow the Lordship of Christ at any price, that some may be antagonized and some may be blessed.

In the LEGEND OF THE EAGLES, George D'Espartes says, "The most heroic piece of self-sacrifice known to history occurred in the building of a bridge." It is an incredible story. It was in the dead of winter. And the French army was pressed on all sides by the Russian Cossacks. The Cossacks had destroyed all the bridges and Napoleon was at his wit's end. He had no way to go to escape. Suddenly there came an order that they might build a bridge across the river immediately behind them. And the men nearest the water were the first to carry out the almost impossible task.

Others, after a few minutes, sank through cold and exhaustion.

Some were swept away with the force of the moving icy water. But more and more men came and the work proceeded as fast as possible.

At last the bridge was complete and the army reached the opposite bank and was completely safe. And then followed the most dramatic scene, and one of the most touching recorded in the annals of history. When the men who had built the bridge were called to leave the water, not one of them moved. Clinging to the pillars, says the historian, they stood silent and motionless, frozen to death. And even Napoleon shed tears.

In a real sense God may call on you and me to give our lives to build a bridge for someone to cross into the presence of God.

If you're real, you're willing. Let's pray.

Just as we close this morning, would you just in your heart refresh your commitment to our Lord? Let the Holy Spirit give you words to pray silently. Would you renew your commitment to Him?

Be an obedient disciple who submits totally to His Lordship. And where there have been those lapses, would you confess them? And renew that commitment to stand for Christ.

Father, thank You for our time this morning, for Your Word and its power and penetration in our hearts. Bring us back tonight again with excitement and anticipation of what You have to say to us. And may we be true disciples, willing to follow You, not intimidated by the world, loving You more than our families, yes, more than our own lives. And knowing that while there is hostility created by our confession we also become the source of blessedness for those who believe. For Christ's sake we pray. Amen.

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