

Sunday School Lesson for the Month of July 2018

The Disciplines of Discipleship

(Matthew 16:21-27)

(Sunday, July 1, 2018)

The word disciple is a rather appealing word to Christians because it brings to mind those twelve men who were chosen by our Lord for a unique task – that of being the first messengers of the good news He came to give the world. Certainly the shepherd on the Judean hills and the wise men who came from afar were “heralds” of the Savior, but they did not have an opportunity to know the very essence of His gospel.

The familiar word discipleship also carries a certain appeal, for we interpret it to be the ideal lifestyle of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ – a lifetime of following and learning from the Master. Yet, inherent in the word disciple, and hence in discipleship, is the word discipline. We do not find the same appeal in the word discipline, because it has negative overtones. Everyone is born with a tendency toward rebellion against authority.

In other words, discipline, the avowed enemy of everyone’s will, saturated the way of life Jesus came to reveal. Many who were confronted with the challenge to follow Him could not accept this discipline. There is an urgency about the discipline of discipleship.

(Sunday, July 8, 2018)

I. Jesus set forth his destiny [Matt. 16:21].

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

The disciples’ minds were closed to the possibility that Jesus would die and most especially to them that He would die on a cross, which was an accursed thing to every Jew. When Jesus used the word killed, they were terrified! In fact, it was such a horrifying thought that apparently they did not even hear the rest of Jesus’ statement indicating that He would be raised again the third day.

In verses 22-23, you have Peter’s rebuke of Jesus and how quickly and positively Jesus responded to Peter’s actions. Peter spoke the spirit of his age and of ours: The demand for a cross-less Christ is still with us today. It is far more appealing to admire His perfect life and praise His beautiful teachings than it is to accept His bloody cross.

(Sunday, July 15, 2018)

II. Jesus explains discipleship.

- A. Jesus said to his disciples, *“If anyone 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”* (Matt. 16:24-25). Jesus said, *“If anyone wishes to follow me.”* There is no compulsion here. God will not force anyone to follow him. Jesus leaves people free to follow him or not to follow him at all. It depends on the degree of love one has for the Lord.
- B. Jesus also spoke of self-denial (Matt. 16:24b).

(Sunday, July 22, 2018)

- C. Jesus drives home this revolutionary truth when He speaks of “taking up the cross” (Matt. 16:24c).
- D. The point is that Jesus is explaining how to deny self. Self must be crucified, and nailed to the cross. Then He says, “and follow me.” Following Jesus is the inevitable result of “denying self.” It is impossible for one to follow Christ and at the same time brag about a selfish and rebellious self.

(Sunday, July 29, 2018)

III. Jesus Presses for a decision.

- A. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul (Matt. 16:26).
- B. What is a person’s soul? It is not something hidden away inside a person to be saved by attending church on Sunday while the rest of the person remains worldly and chained to material possessions. What profit is it if a person gains all the world has to offer in order to exalt and pamper self? When self is lost, what can a person give to recover it?

Disciple is certainly an appealing word. But within the word disciple there is the discipline of the cross - the denial of self, so that Christ may reign supreme as Savior and Lord.