

How to be an Excellent Disciple

Luke 6:39-49

October 15, 2017

We're going to be looking at the final section of that sermon that starts in Luke 6:39 and runs all the way to the end of the chapter. This is the third major section of the Sermon on the Mount. In the first section, which ran from verses 20-26, Jesus identified his true disciples as the poor, the weeping, the hungry, the reviled.

After identifying his audience, the targets of his sermon, he turned his attention in the second section, which runs from verses 27 to 38, instructed his true disciples about the extent and endurance of true love. He commanded them to practice that kind of love. And not just with one another and not just with friends and family, but to, as it says there in verse 27, "love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, bless those who persecute you and pray for those who abuse you." That's a love

that the world certainly does not know, does not see, does not practice. This is something that comes only from God, only from heaven.

So that's what we've covered so far. Obviously in greater detail than that short summary. But as we turn our attention to the third section, verses 39 to, yeah, 39-49, Jesus really turns a corner here. He, he's going to press the implications of what he has taught to his disciples. He's going to exhort them so if you're not ready for some exhortation from Christ this morning, you might want to go ahead and go to breakfast. Because it's going to get a little bit, little bit uncomfortable.

For this morning, we are going to not get into a, a lot of great detail, but rather cover this by way of overview. Just looking at this final section as a, as a whole, and understanding its connection to the previous sections. And in the coming weeks, we're going to walk through each part.

Look at verse 39. It says there, "He also told them a parable. Can a blind man lead a blind man?" It's a rhetorical question,

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expects the answer of, No. It's obvious. He asks another question, "Will they not both fall into a pit?" Expects the answer, Yeah, that's what's going to happen. But that's the parable. "He also told them a parable," and there it is. And the rest of this sermon, the conclusion of Jesus' sermon really unpacks the truth of that parable. "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

So with that in mind, let's read starting in verse 39. "He also told them a parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

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“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

“Why do you call me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he’s like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood rose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Having read it, let’s go back to verse 39. Every so often in Luke’s Gospel, the author, Luke, steps in as the narrator. He usually remains outside of the story just letting you hear the

words of Christ or painting the picture without revealing that he's there as the author. But here he steps in, in a most inconspicuous way, just a very brief comment, he adds a word of narration. That's what we see in verse 39, "He also told them a parable."

Luke would not have stepped in to provide that narrative if this had not had been important. Even necessary to help us, his readers, understand the significance of what Jesus was saying here. So his small bit of narrative, when we pay attention to it, when we give it its due, it really does provide us with a very important interpretive clue. We need to pay attention to it.

I wish more commentators had concentrated more on that narrative insertion that Luke added here in verse 39 because, well a few of them did and, and I found that they were helped, and I found them to be in general agreement and helpful to me. Others, though, didn't seem to pay attention to Luke's interpretive tip in this narration. They offered some interesting and often contradictory opinions.

One commentator, he graciously explained his other fellow commentators, he says, "These apparently disparate sayings," that is of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ here. "These apparently disparate sayings have puzzled commentators. How do they function within Jesus' address?" As we read, you could hear that, these different sayings. I think you can sympathize a little bit with the challenge that is inherent in bringing all these different sayings and metaphors and word pictures together into a coherent whole.

How do we bring all this together? That is, how, how do blind men falling into the pits, and disciples becoming like their teachers, and people with impaired vision making judgments, and then trees and fruits and home builders, how do all these sayings and pictures fit together in a cohesive whole? And, secondly, in what way do they connect with what Jesus has just been teaching?

Are we meant to see them as going together, or did Luke just grab a few sayings out of a hat and throw them in here because

he thought they were good? No. That's, rhetorical. One commentator seemed to skip past verses 39-40. He connected the log verses the splinter illustration that comes in verses 41-42. He connected that with what Jesus said in verse 37 about judging and condemning. And his view, Jesus is telling us not to make condemning judgments, verse 37. And not to make hypocritical judgments, verses 41-42. Instead, we're to get the log out of our eye and make good judgments.

In a similar way, another commentator says the connection is that, quote, "before judging others, we must judge ourselves, otherwise we shall be blind leaders of the blind." End quote. While those comments are no doubt true, Jesus is saying here much more than that. Concern I have with that view is that it deals with just a single theme on making judgments. Doesn't deal with all the sayings that Jesus gives in this section from verses 39-49.

Nor does it deal with really what I think is the unifying theme of this entire section. There's another commentator who wanders way out in left field all by himself. And he asserts that in

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verses 39-40 it's to admonish believers not to dominate others in the Christian fellowship. And above all, not to replace or exceed Jesus. I don't know how he gets it either. Doesn't make any sense to me. But I'm just telling you it's important that we pay attention to what Luke has said here right at the beginning. "He also told them a parable."

So that we can avoid being blind learners following blind interpreters and so we can avoid falling with them headlong into a pit of confusing interpretations like that last one. Let's give Luke's interpretive hint its proper due. Let's listen carefully, what did Luke step into the sermon for? Why did he step in and then quickly step out again with that little comment, "He also told them a parable."?

As we get an overview of this section, we're going to ask and answer several questions this morning. Starting with a first question. What does Luke mean by a parable? What does he mean by a parable? Usually, we think of a parable as one of the short stories that Jesus told to illustrate a point or a principle of truth. Famously, we think of the parable of the sower, the



parable of the Good Samaritan, the parable of the prodigal son. Those are certainly the most memorable and favored of Jesus' parables and there are many others as well.

They're stories told to illustrate a single point of truth. But Jesus also told shorter parables. We might call them short form parables like this one. And they come across more like proverbial sayings. The word, *parable*, *parabole*, comes from the verb *parabolo*, *parabolo*. And *bolo* is the word, to cast or to throw. The prefix, *para*, refers to something that is alongside. So the verb *parabolo* literally means, to throw something alongside something else, and in teaching, it's for the purpose of making a comparison.

So it's a, a method that a teacher uses to make a comparison, telling a story that compares with some spiritual reality. We call it an illustration. We give illustrations and this is what Jesus is doing by telling parables. So whatever Jesus means by this parable, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" He's throwing out those two rhetorical questions, but he's really teaching something else.

The parable's illustrating a deeper, spiritual principle. There is clearly, on a physical level, there is a danger of somebody who is physically blind, following along behind someone else who is physically blind. The one leading the other. If you were there to watch something like that happen, you would cringe. You'd be dismayed. You'd want to jump in and help that person.

The danger of falling into a pit sustaining serious injury and with a blind person leading a blind person, that's not just a likely event, that's inevitable. Especially if you, if we could transport ourselves back into Palestine, back into the land of Israel and Jesus' day. Because there were pits like this all over the place.

As one commentator put it, "Palestine is full of such things. Open wells without walls. Unfenced quarries and the like." Another explained that, "The perennial search for water left the land pock marked with pits and cisterns. Overland travel was perilous for a seeing person, particularly at night, how much more so for a blind person?"

So when Jesus told this little parable, this little saying, oh, everybody immediately got the picture. So what is Jesus warning us about? What is that picture about the blind leading the blind meant to illustrate. Simply this, be careful who you follow as a teacher. Be careful who you follow as a teacher. Make sure, first of all, you're following someone who is not blind, but someone who can see.

In spiritual terms, you want to follow a regenerate teacher at the very least. And folks, I'm sad to say, that in our day, pulpits are filled with unregenerate men and women teaching things they ought not to teach. Make sure you are following someone who's not only not blind, but someone who can see and see clearly. In fact, this meaning that this is what Jesus is pointing to is absolutely inescapable when you look at verse 40. Jesus lays down a principle. It's not a parable; it's a principle. It's a principle of discipleship.

Look at it there in verse 40. "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his

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teacher." It's just a, a maxim, a general truth. You become like your teachers. And the longer you're with them, the more you become like them. Now depending on the teacher you're following, that's either good news, or it's really bad news. Evaluating the worth and the value of the teacher you're following, that becomes a major issue in discipleship, doesn't it? That's what we're going to look more carefully at next time.

So that's what a parable is. That's what this parable is. Let's ask a second question for this morning just, again, getting a, an overview of this section. What is the unifying theme of Jesus' conclusion? What is the unifying theme of this section from verses 39 to 49? What is the unifying theme of Jesus' conclusion?

As we read through it, it may have sounded to you like a series of, as we already said, a series of disconnected sayings. You've got the blind leading the blind, the disciple's relationship to his teacher, specks and logs in the eyes, you've got trees and fruit, consequences of building on solid foundations or just on level ground with no foundation. Something brings this set of

parabolic sayings together. Something brings all these word-pictures, these metaphors, together, but what is it?

What brings together the warning about the blind leading the blind? And then joining it to the principle of discipleship, likeness of discipleship, disciple to his teacher. What unites those points with this humorous, really, picture as we'll see, of a judging the speck in someone else's eye, failing to notice a log, the main beam of a house, sticking in your eye? What unites all of that with the need to discern the nature of a tree by looking at the fruit it bears? Or finally, how does all that connect with the consequences of building a home on the right foundation?

We get a strong clue about the unifying theme, what brings all of this together, the principle of this section by looking at just one statement in this whole thing, which is not an illustration or a metaphor. It's the rather confrontational question that Jesus asks in verse 46. Look at it there, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord, and do not do what I tell you?'" That's what brings all of this together.

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That's what brings it all together and unifies. This is the theme. The theme. The concern here is for those who profess faith, but they really don't possess it. It's for those who talk the talk, but they really don't walk the walk. It's for those who, who hear, they may even come to church every single Sunday and listen, but they really don't go out and do anything about it. That's the unifying theme that brings this whole section together.

It's the issue of vital importance, the issue of obedience. How do you actually live your life? What does your week-by-week look like? What is your daily habit? What are your daily actions? He began this section, Jesus did, with a parable, verse 39 and then the principle in verse 40. And after that, his illustrations start to expand a bit, don't they? They get a little longer. The first in verses 41 to 42 and then another, which stretches for three verses 43 to 45.

And then he finishes with the longest word picture of all, verses 47 to 49 and all of these are parabolic sayings. They're

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all unified, though, with this one single truth. They're all illustrating the same thing. We must be obedient to what we hear Jesus tell us to do. We have to be obedient. In the main body of the sermon, Jesus laid down the foundational element of a Christian. The essence of who a Christian is, what a disciple looks like.

He's talking in the main body of the sermon, verses 27 to 38, he's talking about the character of his disciples. What do they look like? Discipleship to Jesus Christ is defined by love. It's not a self-defined love. It's not a love that's better than that love or in comparison with the culture. It is a love that is defined and given by God. It's a love that's characteristic of God and how he loves even the unjust, the ungrateful, the evil.

It's a love that characterizes Jesus Christ in his atoning sacrifice on the cross; his whole life lived in perpetual sacrifice for us. And it's a love that will be, must be, inevitably is the characteristic, distinguishing, defining feature of all true Christian disciples. If you are a disciple,

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you do love like this. If you're not a disciple, you don't. You can't because God has not changed you from the inside out.

So having transitioned from the main body of the sermon to this section of the sermon as he brings this to a close, he's getting in our kitchen, isn't he? He's exhorting. He's pressing the issue. He's making us feel uncomfortable. He's emphasizing here the necessary connection that must exist between our character and our conduct. Christian character is known by Christian conduct. Just as a tree is known by its fruit.

Folks, this is so important for us to hear. In our modern world, we have, most of us, grown up being so accustomed to the spirit of the modern age, which privatizes our religion and it tells us that we must keep our religious convictions private. Practice your religion in your place of worship. That's totally fine, they tell us, but don't bring it here. Don't bring it into the workplace. Don't bring it into the classroom. Don't be too religious, okay.



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Many today believe that religion is a very good way to remember and preserve our cultural heritage. But it really has a fracturing effect on society at large. The only way to unify society in our modern world is to set aside all our religious differences and to secularize, to accommodate in places of learning, places of commerce, places of business for the sake of harmony. So that we can all get along. So that we can all bring everything together and be productive together as a whole unit.

Practice your religion on your own time in designated places of worship, but don't take it too seriously. Because those who take their religion too seriously are actually a threat to society. They're those fundamentalists who are cutting off heads in the Middle East. And you'll be like one of them. They're those people who want to see all homosexuals stoned, like you, right? You Christian! Old Testament God, do you believe in him?

Listen, what Jesus teaches us here leaves no room for that point of view. In fact, Jesus says exactly the opposite. If your professed Christian character does not match your actual conduct, your profession is a sham. By God's design we human

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beings are wired in such a way that our conduct reveals our true character. We cannot help it. Our actions reveal our true convictions. Our behaviors reveal our beliefs. In the imagery Jesus uses here, our fruit reveals what kind of tree we are.

I like how one commentator put it when he said this, "Jesus, Jesus is concerned about the true nature of a person, the heart, but such a concern does not lead to what today we might call psychological evaluation. In Luke's pre-Freudian world, a person, "person's inside is accessible not through his or her psychology, but through his or her social interactions. People, like trees, are known through what they produce." End quote.

It's very true, folks. You're known by your social interactions. No matter what you think modern psychology has taught you, it's not true. You're not one thing and another thing out here. We are a composite whole and our immaterial self is revealed by what our material self actually does, by the commitments we keep, by the people we relate with or chose not to relate with, by the meetings we keep on our calendar and the meetings we don't.

Anyone who makes a practice of professing one thing and living another thing, well, we have a word for that, don't we? Jesus calls them, verse 42, "You hypocrite. You hypocrite." And he asks that rhetorical, penetrating, very uncomfortable incisive question in verse 46 to expose that hypocrisy. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and you do not do what I tell you to do?" Love your enemies. Love those you don't get along with. Bring near to you those you don't agree with, those you don't clique with.

That's a saying we use today. Well, I don't clique with that person, so I really don't hang out with them. Is that allowed as a Christian? No. Christian character is known by Christian conduct. Just as non-Christian character is known by non-Christian conduct. Notice I didn't say that Christian character is known by moral conduct. Religion is about producing morality and morality, alone, by itself damns people to hell.

You don't get to heaven by morality. You can see the antithesis of true piety, true Christianity in the illustrations Jesus uses. First, in verses 39-40, religionists, morality preachers,

like, we could say, the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day, like the moral teachers in the Gentile world, religionist, morality preachers, they are blind; they're the blind leading the blind. Those who follow them are like them. They follow them because they're blind. They become like them. They share in their fate. It's the blind leading the blind and all of them together are falling into the pit of destruction and hell.

Notice the blind people here, they're not non-religious people. They're not the atheists. They're not the secularists. They're not, let's put it in modern day sin terms, they're not the homosexuals and those who are parading sexual immorality. It's not them he's talking about. The blind here are the religious people. The blind here are those who occupy pews, occupy pulpits. Folks, this should be very uncomfortable for us here.

Second illustration Jesus uses to show this antithesis between true piety, true Christianity, and any false form. Look at verses 41-42. Religionists, morality preachers are ultimately hypocritical because they think they really can fulfill the demands of the law externally. But God's law makes demands of

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the external conduct and of the internal thoughts and the attitudes and the motivations of the heart. What is inside you, what is your thinking, that's what Jesus is driving after.

The same God who gave the Ten Commandments, you know all the "thou shalt" and the "thou shalt not," in Exodus 20. He is the same God who commanded, Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." He is the same God who commanded, Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." That very command that Jesus has expanded upon and expounded upon here in Luke 6.

Get this: Love God, love your neighbor, here's the Ten Commandments to show you how you love God and love your neighbor, the thou shalt and thou shalt not. Hypocrites actually believe they can do all of that. They believe they actually are doing all that. They have no question. You ask them, evaluate your life, evaluate yourself. What do they say? I'm good. I'm fine. What do you? What? What? They see no fault in themselves. They see no fault in their thoughts or their

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actions, which is incredible. If you just have an ounce of humility, you'll realize you do not love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You do not love your neighbor as yourself.

If you can get to Romans quickly, I'll just show you a couple of things in the book of Romans. Very short point of illustration. As you can see Paul's confrontation of the hypocrite as he condemns the entire world, Jew and Gentile alike, Romans 1 through 3. You can see his confrontation and condemnation of the hypocrite in two places. Start in Romans 2, verse 1 and following. He condemns these judgmental, morally superior pagans. You know, pagans, the philosophers, you know the Socrates, the Plato, the Aristotle, and all those who trusted that that moral philosophy, that ethical philosophy was the highest point that man could reach and they looked down on all those, all those pagan sinners, you know, all those people who were base and pursued base things.

And Paul says this in Romans 2:1 and following. "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges," those other

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pagans. "For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things." But "do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?" Oooh. That stung a bit.

Just skip ahead to verse 17. Paul moves his attention from the morally superior pagans, and he turns his attention to the Jews, and he condemns them, as well. Because they were privileged as God's people. Listen, we, evangelicals, we professing Christians, this is our text right here. This is what we fall into. We need to take a warning from this because we hold the same Scriptures in our hands as they did. We've experienced many of these same privileges.

Look at Romans 2:17 and following. "But if you call yourself a Jew," or we could say, if you call yourself an evangelical, if you call yourself a Christian. "And rely on the law, boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that your

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yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those are in darkness, an instructor the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You know who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.”

That’s penetrating. If we apply, “You who preach against stealing, do you steal?” Do you download stuff off the internet that was robbed by somebody else? Don’t pay it? Do you commit adultery, pornography is today’s adultery? Adultery of the heart. Listen, all this stuff goes to the heart. It goes to the thinking. It goes to the, the mind. Having right judgments, even God-revealed judgments, this does you no good unless you judge yourself first. Judge yourself accurately, precisely before you turn around and look at other people. Anything else is intolerable, shameful, and damning hypocrisy.



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So turn back to Luke 6. Religious, religionist, morality preachers, they're blind, number one, they're hypocritical, number two. That's the first couple of illustrations Jesus uses. And then third, verses 43-45, religionists, morality preachers, they produce evil fruit. I mean how could we expect anything else? How can we expect spiritual life from spiritually dead blind hypocrites?

They may call Jesus, "Lord, Lord," but they're never actually able to do what he actually says. How can anything good come out of that kind of a life? Apparent acts of obedience on the outside, they're always going to be superficial, skin deep and short lived. And that's the surest way, number four, verses 47-49, of falling into a swift certain sudden destruction. That's, that's basic, if you're going to live that way and never question yourself, never think about what you need to work on, what you need to grow in.

If, if the word is never going to penetrate your heart, you know what? Living that way, you may as well build your house near the river, like the Poudre or the Big Thompson, and it's prone to

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swell and flood, right? It's happened every now and again. Torrential rains come, you build right near the river because it's pretty. You like to fish. But no foundation. No foundation.

Man, that foundation's just too much digging. It's hard. The more I dig, there's water coming through. I just want it to be easy. So you build your house. It's looks beautiful on the outside, nice roof, good paint job, porch in front. You can cast your rod from the porch into the river. You're good!

Everything's great. Everything's great until the river swells, floods, washes away your house.

It's utterly foolish, isn't it? You'd never do that. Just on a practical human level, you'd never do that. In fact, we have insurances to prevent stupid people from doing stupid stuff just like that, right? You can't do that. It's not allowed for you to be stupid, right? But this is exactly the way religionists and morality preachers live their lives and teach others to do, as well.

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So the blind, the hypocrites, evil doers, those who build without foundations, that describes many people that Jesus is talking to in this sermon. He's concerned about them. It describes many churchgoers today. And yes, many evangelical churchgoers, as well. Friends of yours. Friends of mine. Family members of ours. Maybe even some of you who are here today sitting among us professing a loyalty to Jesus Christ that you do not practice. Professing a relationship with him that you do not truly possess. And you've become hypocritical judges of everybody else around you.

Listen, only Christ can produce within us a distinctively Christian character, that's motivated and governed by the kind of love that he commanded in the main body of this sermon. Only Christ can enable us to obey what he commands us to do. So that the character that he has commanded, a character that is dominated by God-like love, grows within us, becomes manifest externally on the outside for others to see clearly; distinctively Christian conduct. Only God can produce that, because of Christ, by the Holy Spirit in us. Anything else is a fraud.

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So that's the unifying theme of Jesus' conclusion. The importance of obedience to what Jesus has commanded, a distinctively Christian character that's manifested in distinctively Christian conduct. That's what brings everything together. That's Jesus' theme here at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

But let's ask a third question. This one about Jesus' conclusion. What's the main concern in Jesus' conclusion? You say, Well, you just answered that, obedience, right? No, that's the unifying theme. Okay. The main concern in Jesus' conclusion is a little bit, it's related, it's a little bit different than that. What's the main concern in Jesus' conclusion?

As we learn from Luke's hint about the parable, Jesus' main concern in this conclusion of his sermon is to tell these disciples to be very careful who they follow. Jesus is concerned for his disciples to teach them that their obedience is tied to their future discipleship. How you obey is tied directly to who is discipling you.

Here's where we see the unifying theme of the conclusion and the main concern of the conclusion coming together. In fact, if you remember, just look back in Luke 6 to verses 17 and 18. There's this massive crowd of people there from all over Palestine.

Jesus had come down off the mountain. He had named his twelve apostles. And in verse 17 it says, "He came down with them, he stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured."

Then we get into it, right? They came to hear him. Jesus was there physically, bodily in the flesh to teach them, to heal their diseases, to cast out their demons. In fact, verse 19 affirms that, "All the crowd sought to touch him, because power came out from him and healed them all." They could only touch him if he were there physically, there bodily and you say, Yeah. That's obvious. What are you getting at?

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Here's what we need to understand. We need to kind of get into the mind of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He's thinking as a good shepherd thinks about his sheep. And as a good shepherd who is about to be relieved by another shepherd and is going to go off and do other things, he's concerned. If he loves the sheep, he's concerned about what's going to happen to this flock after I'm leaving. He knew his, this time on the mountain would come to an end. Wouldn't be long before all of these people would be going home.

Multitude from Judea and Jerusalem would go back to Judea and Jerusalem. The multitude from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon would go back to the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. Back to life. Back to routines. Back to the grind. So what then? What is going to equip them when Jesus isn't there to touch, to listen to, to heal infirmities and diseases? What happens when they come down off that mountain top and get back into regular life?

I'll throw this in, as well. Jesus foresaw, even at this early juncture, Jesus knew that he would be crucified, would be raised from the dead, and would ascend into heaven. And so here, even

now in our text, he's preparing his disciples for life without his physical, bodily presence on earth. There'd come a time when they wouldn't hear his audible voice to teach them. They wouldn't be able to grab his physical hand, his steady hand to guide them. They would not be able to watch his perfect life, to disciple them.

So Jesus is preparing his disciples even here at this early point. He's preparing them for the church age. He's preparing them for another Comforter who, whom he will send to teach them. The Comforter would start with these twelve apostles, and we could say minus Judas Iscariot. He's going to be replaced by Matthias, Acts 1:26, because of his apostacy.

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come to remind the apostles of everything that Jesus had taught them. He would guide the apostles into all truth. And through them, Jesus would shepherd all of his future disciples, the members of his church, through the witness of the apostles and through Christians. That's God's plan. That's God's wisdom. To use Christians to disciple other Christians. Okay?

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Just to remind you of some familiar texts you've read before. Turn over to John 14, verse 15. John 14:15. Before Jesus went to the cross, he spent time with the twelve in the Upper Room and that's where he instituted the Lord's Supper, the Communion Table we'll observe just a little later in the service.

But here in John 14-16, Jesus laid down some foundational truths, really reminding his disciples. And it really helps us to understand the role of the apostles, also the role of the Holy Spirit, the nature of his ongoing ministry. Take a look at John 14:15-17. Jesus says the twelve, "If you love me." Well, actually the twelve, Judas had left, right. So you've got the eleven. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

"And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Helper." The word for, another, is another of the same kind. There's a word, *allos*, another of the same kind. There's a word *heteros*, another of a different kind. This is another of the same kind. I'll give you another Helper, same kind as me "to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot



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receive, because it neither sees him or knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

Again, see the theme of obedience coming out. His promise to the apostles to send them one just like, I mean maybe not physically with them, but spiritually inside of them, within them. He’s going to send another Helper, the Holy Spirit, to be with them. Look at verse 21. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

Listen, love and obedience results in further light and knowledge and understanding from God. If you don’t love him by obeying him, don’t expect to have any clear insight into Scripture. Don’t expect to judge anybody else. Back to the log in the eye illustration. Look at verses 23-24. “Jesus said, ‘If anyone loves me, he’ll keep my word, my Father will love him, will come to him, make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. The word you hear is not mine, but my Father’s who sent me.’”

What's he saying? The Father is saying the same thing as I am. Love and obedience go together. Skip down to verses 25-26.

"These things I've spoken to you while I'm still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

So notice there the role of the Holy Spirit in future ministry of the apostles would be this. Number one, to teach them all things. There's more that Jesus had to teach and to say, but he, as he told them, You can't handle them now. You gotta wait until death, burial, resurrection, ascension. You gotta understand how this all fits together. And the Holy Spirit, he's going to come. He's going to explain everything.

But number two, second ministry would be to remind them what Jesus had said to them. What's that about? These apostles would need to remember everything Jesus said. Why? Because they are going to be the ones who lay the foundation of the church. They're going to establish the church. Christ is going to establish his church, I should say, through the apostles,

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through, by the Holy Spirit, his power working through the apostles in laying down the foundation of the church. They are going to be the ones discipling the first generation of Christians. They're going to be the ones laying down the doctrine of Jesus Christ recorded here for us in the New Testament. We have it all.

Turn to the next chapter, John 15:26, "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning." Any of those ministries today who get you to concentrate on the Holy Spirit for the Holy Spirit's sake. That is a lie because the Holy Spirit's work is to bear witness about Christ.

He doesn't point attention to himself. He points his attention, all your attention, our attention to Christ. And any of those who are his true followers, the Holy Spirit's truly working in them, also bear witness about Christ. So turn off TBN, folks. Turn it off. It's not true. The apostles, they are the ones he

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said, "You also will bear witness to me, along, by the Holy Spirit. You will bear witness to me because you have been with me from the beginning."

The apostles are the lynchpin generation. They connect the first generation of the church with their Messiah. And they connect that first generation of the church from the Messiah into the subsequent generations of the church. They had known him from the very beginning of his ministry. From the waters of baptism, the triune witness of the Godhead, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, "This is my beloved Son, whom I'm well pleased." They're going to connect everybody to him. Anchor them in him, the cornerstone of the foundation.

Apostles were there all through his life and ministry. They were there at his death and burial, as well as his bodily resurrection, as well as his physical bodily ascension into heaven. They would receive the Holy Spirit who would enable them to complete the work. Look at John 16:7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I

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do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

“When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin, righteous, and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, they’ll see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you can’t bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He’ll glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Listen, the role of the Holy Spirit is vital to convict the world, to remind the apostles, to reveal and to declare to them all the things that are to come. The Spirit’s ministry is to glorify, exalt Jesus Christ, taking what is Christ’s and then

declaring it to the apostles. And then the apostles teach subsequent generations of Jesus' disciples, you and me.

With that in mind, turn back to Luke 6. Immediately before Jesus preached this sermon, he had appointed these very twelve apostles. We covered Luke 6:12-16 quite a while ago. But we noted back then that Jesus then was anticipating his death and burial, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven. He anticipated the coming of the church age kicked off by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and all that would take place through these apostles.

Jesus knew he'd no longer be physically present with these disciples. And the obedience of his disciples, which is so critical, so vital, so crucial, it's the thematic element running through the entire Sermon on the Mount, that would be severely compromised, not possible, if he didn't teach these apostles and his disciples some foundational principles of discipleship.

That is the main concern in this conclusion is that we learn some principles of discipleship. That's what we're seeing here. Jesus is preparing his disciples for discipleship. He's laying down foundational principles of discipleship. Telling them how to be good disciples. Turning them away from false teachers. Pointing them to reliable trustworthy teachers. He's telling his disciples what to look for as the right effect of true, faithful discipleship; bearing fruit, hearing and doing, building on foundations of rock.

So while there's a lot to learn about discipleship in this section, I'm going to cover the ground in the coming weeks, organizing this in four principles, that we can see four principles of discipleship here running from verse 39 to the end of the chapter. Four principles. Christian discipleship is effective in producing this vital issue of obedience to what Jesus has said when we're mindful of four things.

We must make sure, number one, we're following the right authority, verses 39-40. The right authority. Number two, we must make sure we follow with an attitude of humility, humility.

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We can maybe even say teachability, but humility, verses 41-42. We must look for, number three, for the principle of life manifest in fecundity. Fecundity is an old word that means fruitfulness that's verses 43-45. Finally, we must pay heed to our fidelity, our fidelity to obedience, verses 46 and 49.

So four principles, authority, humility, fecundity, and fidelity. That's how we're going to organize the content and cover the ground in the weeks to come. As commentator Joel Green said, "The following that Jesus seeks is a full orbed one. His is a message that calls for total transformation with a consistency of goodness between the inside and the outside of a person."

That is very true. It's full orbed. It's total transformation. Nothing is left untouched. Discipleship is, in other words, about teaching them to observe everything that Jesus has commanded. Heard that before, right? Matthew 28. According to God's eternal purpose and will, based upon Christ's perfect sufficient work, by the Holy Spirit's infinite power, Jesus



intends to bring about the steady obedience of his people through the practice and principles of Christian discipleship.

So the unifying theme, as Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount, is that his disciples obey what Jesus has commanded them. And because of his soon departure, discipleship is here become his main concern. Jesus intends to connect the people in the crowd to good, faithful, righteous teachers and leaders, starting with his twelve newly appointed apostles.

Remember, they're going to go back to where they came from. They're going to be hearing all their regular teachers in the synagogue. And Jesus is saying, No, I want you, want you to listen to someone else instead. Don't listen to blind guides. Listen to these guys. But notice that Jesus here, he doesn't, he doesn't just tell the gathered crowds, hey, you see these twelve guys that are right around me here? I'm going to name them for you. They're my guys. They're my apostles. Follow them; you'll be safe.

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Why doesn't he do that? I mean, wouldn't that be pretty easy? It may be easy, but it would not be safe. Because Jesus knew that in a very short time Judas Iscariot would fall away. Putting faith in men for the sake of men is never safe. Not only that, but from the perspective of about 2000 years of church history, we can see that the apostles, the first generation of Christians, they're all in heaven, now, aren't they? They're all gone.

What happens when not only Jesus ascends to heaven, but they leave us, too? So instead of pointing out people, Jesus instead teaches his disciples principles that keep them safe. He gives them discernment so they can judge anyone. By sticking close to these principles: authority, humility, fecundity, and fidelity, it's how we can evaluate all things. It's how we can rightly judge all people. It's how we can determine which authorities are true, reliable guides following Christ's authority and which ones are not.

So ask a fourth question this morning. How do we apply these principles of discipleship? How do we apply them? Give you just

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two things very quickly. First, by looking forward, and second, by looking backward. Look forward and look backward. We're to look forward, look ahead to the kind of person we're following. Is this person pursuing Christ or not? Is his life bearing fruit that's good or bad?

But we're also to be looking backward, behind us, considering those who are following us. Some people have said, I think rightly, that we need to have in our lives, people who are to us in the role of Paul and in the role of Timothy. In relation to our Paul, we are the Timothy, right? We are following the pattern and direction of a more mature Christian.

And in relation to our Timothys, we're like Paul to that person. We're always conscience of those who are watching us, following us, learning from us. I read earlier in the service from 2 Timothy 1:13, where Paul says, "Follow the pattern of sound words you've heard in me, the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

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Later, 2 Timothy 3:10, "You have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra—which persecutions I endured." You followed all that, Timothy. The issue of following Paul's example, it wasn't just a relationship of older apostle to younger pastor, this isn't just a ministry issue of professional or, or career ministry.

This is also just a more mature Christian to younger, less mature Christians. Because Paul said the same thing to entire churches. Setting the pattern of discipleship in the principle of imitation. For regular Christians as well. Paul told the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4:16, "I urge you then, be imitators of me."

Can you say that to other people? Can you tell them, imitate me and my life, not just what you see here on Sunday mornings? Not what you see in a ministry context, but in my home, in my private space, so to speak. Can you say what Paul said? Imitate me. Later, later in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me as I

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am of Christ.” Look, you want to know how to follow Christ, come on, step right here, let’s go together. You walk with me in life and see how I follow Christ and you follow Christ in the same way. I think there would be a lot more holiness in our churches if we did this.

He said the same thing to the Philippian church. Philippians 3:17, “Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes,” it’s not just about Paul, right. “Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.” There’s a pattern of living for Christians. It’s found in Paul, illustrated by Paul. But it’s also in those who follow the same pattern.

So again, in applying these principles of discipleship in the coming weeks, as we walk from, from one illustration to another that Jesus uses, we always want to be looking forward, but also looking backward. First, what do we mean by saying we apply the principle of discipleship by looking forward. The principle of discipleship here has to do with following righteous authority, righteous authority. Turn away and stay away from unrighteous,

ungodly leadership. But draw near and pursue those who manifest a trajectory of practicing righteous authority.

Giving us the principles of discipleship, we need to start by applying them to the leaders we follow. Authority, humility, fecundity, fidelity, what are they like? Hebrews 13:17 tells us "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God consider the outcome of their way of life." What's he talking about there? Fruit, which takes time to see the results of, right? "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."

As Jesus' disciples, we're responsible to put ourselves, and our families under the right teachers. Christ holds us responsible for that. For examining the Bible and then looking at our leadership through the lens of Scripture. Notice I didn't say the lens of tradition, the lens of your heritage, religious heritage, the lens of your preference. Not the lens of your hearsay. The lens of Scripture. God's Word is the only safe and infallible guide to judge all things.

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We cannot allow ourselves, by God's command, we cannot allow ourselves, to be led around by blind men, spiritually blind, unregenerate men. We can't follow spiritual hypocrites. Those who say one thing and do another. We can't follow those who produce bad fruit in their lives or those who hear or even teach God's Word, but don't put it into practice in their own life.

Why is that? Because Luke 6:40, the principle of discipleship, you're going to be just like them. "Everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." So all disciples of Jesus Christ need to ask whether or not the leaders that they follow are regenerate, consistent, fruitful, obedient. First as Christians, then as teachers who teach others and leaders who lead others. What's the result? What is the fruit of their leadership? We are responsible to Christ for the leaders we follow.

Secondly, we also need to apply these principles of discipleship by looking backward, by looking behind us. And this is the discipleship principle of righteous influence. Righteous influence. As you learn from the leaders that you follow, as you

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learn from the voices of authority in your life, of necessity, by God's design, you will exert influence on other people, other Christians, other disciples.

You need to be very conscience of what your life and your example is illustrating for other people. You also need to be conscience that you are leading and then how you're leading. All those disciples of Jesus Christ who are in the role of a teacher, obviously, whether by formal ordination to ecclesiastical office, or by God's design, whether assigned by his good providence to a less formal role in the church, or as a husband, automatically in the role of a leader. As a father, automatically in the role of a leader and a teacher. You need to be wary of the influence of your own authority and your influence on other people.

You say, all of that's well and good, but I'm no leader, not a leader. I'm just a regular anonymous Christian. I don't exert influence on anyone. Oh, yes you do. Yes, you do. Jesus said of all his true disciples in Matthew 5:13-16, You are, not must be. "You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its



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taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out, trampled under people's feet."

Second illustration of what you are. "You are the light of the world." Not, try to be the light of the world. Not, you've really got to work hard to be the light of the world, but you are. The question is are you dim? 40-watt? Are you a 40-watt Christian or are you a 100-watt Christian? "You're the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, it gives light to all in the house."

In the same way, God has done that to you. You're a city set on a hill. You're a light that's put on a lampstand. Why? So you can give light to everybody in the house. Don't be a 40-watt. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works, give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Look, you may not think you're a leader, but if you're a Christian, you are one. I remember Charles Barkley used to say, "Yeah, I'm no role model." Oh, sorry, Charles Barkley, by

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being a really good basketball player, you are one. Doesn't matter what you say you're not, people are following you.

God has chosen you, Christian, for that purpose. That your salinity and luminosity will provide leadership to other people, to unbelievers who need Christ and to believers, as well, who need to know how to follow Christ. They're looking to you.

We are a kingdom of priests, right? Revelation 1:6. Priests exist to bring people to God, that's what we do. So listen, all you fellow disciples of mine, you need to realize people are watching you. You are not anonymous. You are known. People are observing your life. They're taking note of how you live, how you speak, how you act, how you think, where you spend your time. They see the relationships that matter to you and which ones don't. They see what commitments you deem valuable to keep and which ones you don't ever put yourself on the hook to keep at all.

So it's imperative knowing that those who follow are being influenced by us and ought to be influenced by us. It's

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imperative we realize how we're influencing them. Since other Christians are watching our lives, we need to be examining ourselves, don't we? Regularly, daily to make sure we're not leading others astray, to make sure we're not a stumbling block to other people in their Christian life.

Remember what Jesus said about those who cause one of these little ones to stumble? Millstone around the neck? You ever seen a picture of a millstone grinding grain? It took animals, you know, donkeys and oxen, to turn that huge grinding stone, that millstone. You want one of those around your neck, chucked into the ocean? You won't die of drowning, I can guarantee that. You'll go down so quickly the weight of the water above you will crush you to death. It's a picture Jesus uses.

I think we need to be very careful about that. That's why Paul told Timothy, 1 Timothy 4:16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing, you'll save both yourself and your hearers." It's principles of discipleship: authority, humility fecundity, fidelity. They

don't just apply to your teachers, who you follow. They apply to you. We must apply them to ourselves first.

Because in the wisdom of Christ, they're sufficient to expose, confront. They're sufficient to encourage and exhort. All of his disciples in all the various ages and stages of Christian maturity. If we're going to do this discipleship, which Jesus is not only commending, but commanding, insisting upon, then all of us need to look ahead to a Paul or two in our life. We need to look behind us and identify some Timothys. Be intentional about that. We need to know one another, beloved. We need to be in each other's lives, intimately involved in one another's lives and homes and families. We're going to have more to say about all that in the coming weeks, but for now, let's close in prayer as we consider the Lord's Table in front of us.

Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for the teaching of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank you so much that he has drawn us into fellowship with you because of his perfect saving work on the cross. We would not be disciples were it not what he accomplished for us. Satisfying your holy wrath for our sins and

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living a perfect life that you used to cover us with. You've united us to Jesus Christ so his death counts for our death and his life covers our life. We are because of what you've done, Ephesians 1:6, we're accepted in the beloved. So it's our great opportunity to bring gratitude and joy to you by observing the Lord's Table