

Title: "Jesus the Disciple-Maker"
Text: Mark 3:13-19; Matthew 11:28-29

We are "re-introducing Jesus" this year,
-and currently we are exploring various aspects of Jesus' ministry that the Gospel writers don't want us to miss.

We have looked at Jesus as healer, and as a teacher, and as a story-teller.
-Today I'd like us to take a fresh look at Jesus the disciple-maker.

Making disciples was another aspect of Jesus' teaching ministry,
-but it's a unique aspect of his ministry that we could learn a great deal from.

Listen to this brief passage from the Gospel of Mark 3:13-19.

So here we have Jesus' "calling of the 12 disciples."

And at first glance there doesn't seem to be a lot going on in this passage,
-other than the Gospel writer Mark naming each of the men who were chosen to be among the 12.

But what I'd like us to pay attention to today, is the method of Jesus' ministry,
-which this passage gives us a little glimpse of.

All of the gospels tell us that these 12 disciples formed a little band who went everywhere and did everything with Jesus.
-But the more you read the gospels, the more you discover that there was a smaller group of 3 disciples within the 12,
-who were known as "the three": Peter, James, and John.
-They were like Jesus' "right hand men."
-And then we also discover in the gospels that there was another larger group of disciples outside of the 12
-who were known as "the 72."

In Luke chapter 10, Jesus appoints these 72 disciples to also go out and preach the good news and heal people.

And this wider group of 72 disciples probably included such men as Lazarus of Bethany, or Cleopas of Emmaus.

- Or Bartimaeus who had been blind,
- or others who had been healed of various diseases and kept following Jesus.

- We know from Luke 8 and John 11 that there were also some women, who were part of Jesus' wider following of disciples -like Mary and Martha of Bethany, or like Joanna and Susanna and Mary of Magdala (Luke 8:2).

So you see, Jesus had these groupings of people,

- who were all disciples at various stages of discipleship.
- The 3, the 9, the 72.

And beyond that, there was what was referred to often as the crowds or the multitudes.

- These were all those people who flocked to Jesus for healing, or for answers to questions, or for teaching.
- Among the crowd were also Pharisees and Sadducees who came with a critical eye to check Jesus out.

And all through the gospels we see the crowds following Jesus,

- But these were not necessarily disciples.
- They were potential disciples, but had not committed themselves to Jesus in any specific way.
- They were following Jesus around, usually because they wanted something from Jesus.

Now there are some things I'd like us to notice about these concentric circles of people around Jesus,
-and about Jesus' method of ministry that you may never have been aware of before.

1. First, what I want us to pay attention to, is that Jesus prioritized "the few" over "the many."
 - He ministered to the crowds regularly, but he never went anywhere or did anything without the 3, or the 12, along with various disciples among the 72.

It was the 3 and the 9 that he lived life with...every day.

- He would teach the crowds, but he would explain everything later to the 3 and the 9.

This is because Jesus was a disciple-maker.

-He was not just a preacher or a teacher.

-His goal wasn't to attract bigger and bigger crowds so that they could listen to his eloquence.

His goal was to make disciples who would learn to live the life that He lived, and do the things that he did, and multiply the ministry of the Kingdom.

So here in Mark we see Jesus calling the 12 to himself,

-and Mark says he did this so *“that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”*

You see, Jesus wanted to have these men close to him everyday, so that he might be with them, and teach them, model for them the life and ministry he was living, -and so that they might go and live that life themselves.

Making disciples was the heart of Jesus' ministry.

-He wasn't just teaching a course on the Kingdom of God.

-What he was doing was developing people who would follow him and begin living the Kingdom life with him.

That is what his primary ministry was about.

-And so his priority was giving time to the 3 and the 9, and then the 72.

-His top priority was not “the crowd.”

-He did not consider the large crowds gathering around him as a sign of success.

-In fact, all through the gospels we see that the large crowds actually made Jesus' true ministry more difficult.

He had compassion on the crowds, and he did spend a good amount of time ministering to their needs,

-but his real priority was always to spend time with the 3, and the 9, and the 72.

-And he never ministered to the crowd without them.

-Because that was part of their training in discipleship.

2. Now the second thing I want us to notice all through the gospels, is that the method of Jesus ministry was to

constantly be inviting people to move from the
outside...in,
-and then from the inside back out.

In his teaching and preaching to the crowd on the outside,
-He was regularly inviting people to take the next step of
commitment, and to become a follower and join the 72.

And then as we see in this passage in Mark, Jesus would
invite some of those who were part of the 72 disciples
-to take the next step of commitment to spend even more
time with him, and become part of the 12.

These 12 were invited to be with him all day everyday,
-and to take on leadership roles so that they would begin to
preach and teach and make disciples, too.

You see, he invites them to come in to be with him,
and then to go out and make disciples of others.

And then there are various times in the gospels,
-when we see Jesus inviting Peter, James and John to come
along with him on special assignments for even more time
and training.
-This was because he was inviting them to be leaders even
among the disciples.

This was the method of Jesus' ministry.
His goal was to make disciples who would make disciples who
would make disciples.
-And it was a process of inviting people to come further in to
spend more time with Him being discipled,
-and then to go out and make disciples of others as He had
done for them.

And at the end of Jesus ministry on earth, what was his
commission to the disciples he had made?
"Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in
the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded
you." (Matthew 28)

You see, making disciples of others was the primary calling that Jesus gave to his disciples.

And I emphasize this for us as we are re-introducing Jesus, -because the funny thing is, that in our day we have somehow gotten our priorities reversed.

- We tend to prioritize the many over the few.

- We prioritize putting on a good worship service on Sunday mornings which we hope will attract a crowd to come.

And we think that successful churches are the ones that attract the most people.

And more people means more money coming in and bigger budgets and bigger buildings.

- That is the American image of successfulness.

Big churches are seen as successful churches.

- But even in smaller churches like ours, attracting people for Sunday worship is often seen as the goal.

- I want to remind us today that that was never Jesus' goal.

- He was primarily seeking to make disciples,

- and making disciples is what he calls us to do, too.

And Jesus' method of ministry is still quite effective.

- Amazingly enough, Jesus might just have known what he was doing!

So I want to ask all of us to consider our own lives of discipleship today in light of Jesus' method of ministry.

First, where are you at this point in your life in terms of these concentric circles around Jesus.

Do you feel like you are part of the crowd on the outskirts?

- Or part of the disciples somewhere among the 72?

That is, if you are in the crowd, you are interested in Jesus for various reasons of your own.

- You are coming to Jesus to get your own needs met.

- You are checking him out, or you are looking for healing, or you need forgiveness, or you need peace amidst all your worries and fears.

You want Jesus to fix your problems, but if he did fix your problems, that would be enough for you.

-You'd say, "Thanks Jesus," and walk away satisfied that your needs got met.

That's the crowd.

-And I am not picking on that today.

-We all begin there, every one of us.

-And Jesus had compassion on the crowds and spent a good deal of time ministering to their needs.

But today I want us all to know that Jesus is constantly inviting us to move further up and further in.

-Having met our needs, he calls us to come in deeper and spend more time with him.

-He invites us to come into His Kingdom and learn of him, And grow in our love for God and for others.

-He invites us to become a disciple.

Now many of you here today I believe have heard that invitation and have responded to it and you are no longer part of the crowd, but part of the 72 here at Forestdale.

-You're learning to be a disciple, and you're growing in a deeper devotion to God and to His word and to His people and to his mission.

That is what a life of discipleship is all about.

-But even then, have you heard Jesus inviting you to take your next steps of commitment.

-Perhaps He's calling you to become part of a small group of 6-12 who gather to spend more time together with Jesus.

-Small groups like Jesus gathering together the 12 are still one of the best settings for growth in discipleship.

-Are you part of a small group? Would you like to be?

And then the next invitation from Jesus is usually to begin to put your discipleship into practice with others.

-He invites us to come in to be with him more and more, and then to go out and live the life with others that he has taught us to live with him.

And so the question becomes,

-who are my 3, and who are my 9, and who are my 72?

I am a disciple, and Jesus calls me to make disciples of others.

-So who are the 2, 3, or 4 people in my life currently that I am pouring my life into?

-People that I am spending time with.

-People I am sharing my life with, and my faith with.

-People I am loving in any way I can.

-People I am helping to grow and helping to develop.

Are there people like that in your life?

-A few people you are seeking to love in the way that Jesus has loved you?

-Maybe Jesus is inviting you today to think about the people in your life,

-and whether you might consider becoming a discipler to 2 or 3 people.

Or maybe you have some gifts for teaching or leading small Groups,

-and you sense that maybe Jesus might be calling you to invite 6 or 8 people to join you in a small group together.

-We could resource you to do that in this coming year.

Or maybe you sense Jesus calling you to service to the wider body of 72 here at Forestdale in some way?

Or maybe you have giftings to serve the wider community around us in some way?

But do you see how Jesus works in our lives?

-He invites us to come in further and further to be with him and to learn of Him and to grow in Him.

-And then he invites us to become like Him and go out to share with others the life that He has shared with us.

And it's a constant invitation to loving God more and more,

-and loving others more and more

-and wherever we go, making disciples who will do the same.

That's a life of discipleship.

Jesus was a disciple maker.

Are you one of those disciples?

What is the next step, either inward or outward, that He is inviting you to take?

Let us pray.