

Jesus the Disciplemaker

John 6:1-24

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One of the elements of John that makes his gospel so marvelous (and so challenging) is how quickly he goes from lofty theological discussions to the practical, “street level” realities of daily living as a disciple of Christ. John 6 moves us from a discussion of the nature of Christ as the Son of God, the one and only Savior of the world (chapter 5) to an account of real people, with real problems, living in the real world. For this is where we learn to follow Jesus as disciples.

Discipleship and the Response of Genuine Faith

The events of John 6 begin with a “great crowd of people” who follow Christ because they have seen His miraculous signs. These people are hungry, and although Jesus feeds them miraculously with a meal of fish and bread, we come to find that what the people are really hungry for is to see something spectacular—another miraculous healing—a display of power that will convince them that this is their promised King who will defeat their enemies and solve all their problems. It is a pursuit of Jesus that is exposed for what it truly is: a shallow response which is not true faith... a following after Jesus that has no power for transformation. As we look closely at John 6 we find that the true focus of this narrative is not on the crowd at all, but on the disciples. In fact, the gospels often make a rather startling contrast between the shallow response of the masses and the response of genuine faith which marks a disciple (see John 6:66-68).

Discipleship and the Plan of the Master

John 6 reveals something of the nature of Jesus’ strategy to usher in His kingdom. It is a strategy which involves the making of disciples. It involves the raising up of true followers—men and women who acquire a deep and life-changing faith in Jesus (John 20:31)—followers who are disciplined and trained by Christ, who are growing in their understanding of what it means to participate in His plan to save the world. The disciples have no mere shallow experience with Jesus like that of the crowds... they are set apart in every way. Whereas Jesus withdraws from the crowds, He invites the disciples into personal relationship (vs 3). The crowds leave with nothing more than a full stomach and a mob mentality (vs 15), but the disciples leave with a powerful picture of Jesus as Savior and a lesson on the abundant work that He can do through them and their limited resources. While the crowds ultimately gain no true understanding of the nature and mission of Christ, the disciples encounter Him walking on the water and receive a compelling vision of Jesus as the creator and master of all creation, the great “I Am” who is with them as they carry out His mission in the world.

Discipleship and You!!!

The Gospel of John teaches us that those who put their faith in Christ become His “disciples”. It is an invitation to become a true follower of Jesus, not merely a “convert” or “churchgoer”. It is a reminder that the world can be transformed only as individuals are transformed, and that individuals are transformed only as they begin to spend time learning from the Master. I pray today that you will grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. I pray that you will long for more time with Jesus in prayer and in the Word. I pray that you will grow in wisdom and understanding as you receive and obey His teaching in your daily life. I pray that your faith will increase as you witness what He can do through your life in this broken world.

For Further Reflection

This week read through John 6:1-24. As you spend time with Christ, pray and journal about what you are learning as a disciple of Jesus.

The Gospels record numerous occasions in which Jesus retreated with His disciples to a quiet place. Where is that quiet place in your life? Are you spending enough time with Jesus there?

What are the issues and challenges in your life in which Christ might be testing you as He tested Philip?

Do you feel that your resources are inadequate? How so? What does it look like for you to offer those resources to Christ in faith and to allow Him to use them?

What have you learned about the role of "disciples" in the mission of Jesus Christ? (Consider the following passages for further study, Matthew 28:16-20, John 8:31&32, John 12:23-26, John 17:6-19.)