

Two Pictures of Discipleship

Luke Series #52

Luke 20:45-21:4

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We're about to take part in a sermon on the Lord's Supper but I would like to invite you to open God's Word and look at Luke 20:45-21:4

The passage we're going to look at—the two little paragraphs here—contain two examples or two pictures of discipleship. The first is a negative example and the second is a positive example. So the first one is sort of the anti-disciple and the second one is the model disciple. Let's look at both of these briefly and then connect them to both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

It is just a treat—an infusion of God's grace—whenever we come together to have both sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper on the same evening. I'm not going to say it's a rare privilege because we actually do it rather often in our church but it is a great privilege and a great picture for us. I want to connect that to discipleship as Jesus talks about here in Luke.

I want to first observe that in verse 45. It says, "*And in the hearing of all the people he [Jesus] said to his disciples...*" Let's look at the broader context of what's going on in the Gospel of Luke here in chapter 20. Over the last few weeks we've watched as the religious leaders have been challenging Jesus and His authority. He has a bit of a war on His hands with these guys as it says that they're looking for a way to destroy Him. They're looking for a way to trap Him so that they can get rid of Him.

In the midst of that conflict and then looking forward as Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 21, you've got more turmoil. So in the midst of turmoil—religious leaders trying to destroy Jesus, Jesus talking and warning about the destruction of Jerusalem—Jesus is going through one of His final days of freedom before He's arrested. What is He doing? He is teaching His disciples and by extension, He's teaching us something about discipleship. So let's look first at the anti-disciple, the negative example of discipleship.

The Anti-Disciple Model

Luke 20:45-47:

*And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples,
"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and
love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the*

synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

Jesus' example here of the anti-disciple is someone who probably, all things considered, should have been a great example of a disciple because scribes were teachers of the law. They were the guys who would have known the Scriptures better than anyone else. In fact their whole job, their whole existence, revolved around understanding what the Bible said, making rulings on it and teaching people what God's Word said.

Yet as we see throughout the Gospels, these guys and the other religious leaders are the ones who feel most threatened by Jesus and are the least likely to recognize Him as their Messiah and Savior. The scribes and the Pharisees are the ones who sought to lay hands on Jesus just a few verses (Luke 20:19). They wanted to take Him and destroy Him. They wanted to get Him out of the way. So whereas scribes should have been model examples of disciples, instead they are the anti-disciple models.

They represent a whole class of religious leaders and religious elite of whom Jesus says to the disciples, "Beware! Don't be like these guys because look at what they're like. They walk around in long robes." Does Jesus have an issue with fashion here? Well, in a sense He does. In the sense that if you wore a long robe that showed you were living large, that you didn't have to work for a living. They liked to do that. It's sort of like driving a really nice car just to show people how successful you are in life and that you're the boss; that you don't have to get up early and go to work because a lot of people are doing all that stuff for you. That's what their long robes meant.

They loved the greetings in the market place it says. They loved it when people said to them, "Oh, professor so-and-so! Oh, doctor so-and-so! Oh, reverend so-and-so! We're so glad to see you." They loved when people recognized them and recognized their position. They wanted the best seats in the synagogue—the honored places at any religious gathering. They wanted the places of honor at the feasts where there was sort of a pecking order. The honored spot was to be in the middle of a U-shaped table near the host. These guys always wanted to be there. They always wanted other people to see them and recognize them as the religious leaders; as those who are perceived to be close to God.

Jesus says, "But that's what they want you to see on the outside, but on the inside something very different is going on. If you could pull back the curtain you'd see the darkness and the perversion that's behind it. These guys like to think they're taking care of people like widows but actually what they're doing is taking advantage of them." We don't know exactly how

they were doing this but clearly it was in such a way that it looked like they were helping out widows who would have been the most vulnerable people in society. At the same time making it look like they were being gracious and caring for them, they were in fact stealing from them, devouring them and taking advantage of their vulnerability for financial gain.

What's worse, Jesus says when they do religious things they make a pretense of it. When they pray publicly they make long and flowery prayers. They want people to be impressed and listen to what they say, thinking about how wonderful they are, how close to God they are and how much more spiritual they are than the rest of us. I liked what one commentator said about this little verse. He said, "You know what? A prayer should take as long as it takes. It should take as long to pray a prayer as it takes to state the prayer request. Whatever you need to pray for, it should take about that long to pray for it. You don't need lots of extra words." But these guys did just that to impress people with their spirituality.

Jesus says, "Beware of them." Why is He telling His disciples to beware of these guys? Is it because Jesus knows these guys are trying to destroy Him? Is it because they're His enemies so He is mad at them? "They're the bad guys. Stay away of them. Beware of them." I don't think it's that. Is it that Jesus is saying, "They're sinful. I'm telling you the way they're sinful so stay away from them because you shouldn't hang around people who are sinful"? Well, I don't think it's that either.

I think Jesus is saying to His disciples, "Stay away from these scribes, these hypocrites, these folks who want to look spiritual and religious on the outside but on the inside there is only darkness and rebellion because their approach to God is toxic. Their approach to God is the exact opposite of what a disciple's approach to God should be. Their approach to God is that of fearing man, of worrying what other people think."

We read that this is the problem with these guys all along. Luke tells us the reason they don't take Jesus in broad daylight is because they feared the people. They feared them in the sense that they honored what human beings thought of them more than what God thought about them. The highest thing they could attain to was if other human beings thought they were wonderful, very spiritual and very close to God. That's what the fear of man is—honoring other people's opinion of you more than you honor God's opinion of you. That is in fact what led to their hypocrisy. They looked one way on the outside but on the inside they were something very different. That's all because they feared man and not God. So the first half of the main point I want to make tonight is simply this: **the fear of man detours discipleship**. Jesus is teaching us something about discipleship here and He's saying, "If you honor human beings, if you are all about image maintenance, you are going to detour discipleship." If you are a disciple of Jesus

you're going to get detoured and off the track. If you aren't a disciple of Jesus yet and you take the approach of honoring people, of fearing man, you're going to be on a detour that doesn't lead toward discipleship.

Jesus tells us how God feels about this approach to discipleship that fears man more than it fears God. Luke 20:47 says, "*They will receive the greater condemnation.*" If you think about fearing man leading to hypocrisy, one of the reasons I think Jesus warns His disciples about it is because this is a sin that religious people are especially susceptible to—and I mean that in the best sense of the term: people who want to be devoted to God. We are tempted to make others think that we really honor God. We're tempted to do things that will make us look better in the eyes of others.

We're all tempted to this as followers of Jesus Christ. It's a constant temptation. Maybe your care group is coming to your house and you do more than just clean and straighten things up. You put a few magazines away that you'd rather the church people not know that you subscribe to. We fall into this fear of man, this temptation to hypocrisy, every time we quickly change what's on the screen when certain people walk by. This is Jesus' anti-disciple example: the person who fears man. Discipleship gets detoured when we fear human beings.

The Positive Disciple Model

Well, the second person in the model of discipleship is probably almost as unlikely to be the model of discipleship as the first guy should have been the model of discipleship. She is a widow. It's interesting that Jesus condemns the scribes for their sins against widows and then His example happens to be a widow. Look at Luke 21:1-4. Jesus is in the temple here and it says:

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

This widow ends up being Jesus' example or model for discipleship. You can see the scene here: Jesus is in the temple court area. He's probably in the court of women because as a widow that's as far as she would have gotten in the temple area. There were several boxes into which people would put in their offerings and gifts. You can imagine that this could become a bit of a spectator sport, wouldn't it? It's sort of like watching the dunk contest on TV. Who's going to do the more spectacular dunk? Who's going to give the bigger gift? "Oh, look at that one! Oh wow, how about that one over there? Pretty cool. Did you see how much the guy gave last week?"

Jesus says this poor widow comes into the midst of that scene. It's interesting the word for poor that Jesus chose here is not the typical word for poor that we see in the New Testament. It expresses that she wasn't just poor but she was destitute. In fact there's a translation that states, "She was a destitute widow." In fact she was so destitute she only had two copper coins. They say each one would have been worth about an eighth of a penny. Two copper coins and she put all of it in the temple offering.

Jesus says some pretty outlandish things about that. First of all, He says she gave more than all of them. By that Jesus wasn't saying that she gave more than any one of them gave; He was saying she gave more than all of them put together. Two copper coins. You wouldn't bend down to pick them up if you saw them in the Aldi parking lot. Jesus says that was more than all the rest gave.

Now I don't think that this passage is primarily about giving; I think it's primarily about discipleship and following Jesus Christ. But I think there are some important things that we should understand and glean about giving from this passage. One is that giving matters. Jesus takes an example from the realm of giving, of making an offering toward God's work.

The second thing I'd like us to note is that giving matters to Jesus and Jesus knows what you give. I don't know how that makes you feel. I don't know if that's an encouraging thought or if that's a scary thought, but Jesus knows what you give. It's interesting as one of the pastors and elders, I don't know what anybody gives here and I'm glad I don't. I really don't want that information. That's sort of not culturally acceptable in our church world, though in other places in the world you might actually watch what people literally give.

It's interesting as I was thinking about this and our typical responses. I like to say, "Hey, I don't know what you give." And we say things like, "It's between you and God." I'm not sure we would say that about anything else. Can you imagine a pastor saying, "You know what, your sexual behavior is between you and God, to the extent that you're being faithful to that." We don't say that about other areas of obedience. We only say it about giving.

Other people don't know what you and I give but Jesus knows and I hope that's an encouraging thing for sacrificial givers. Your name will never appear on the screen up here as the top ten givers at New Covenant or in any other way that you give, but if you're giving sacrificially the Lord knows that. Jesus was watching. He was taking note.

Notice well that it's not about the amount given—again, the amount wasn't worth the lint in your pocket right now—but more importantly it's about what was kept. She gave everything. I think it's interesting that she gave two copper coins. She had two. I mean if she had given one she would have given fifty percent of everything she had and she still would have been

commended for it I'm sure. But out of her love for her Lord she gave everything she had. That's really the point here: that God wants all of it. He wants 100% of you and me. He wants to know that He owns all of us, everything that we are. The text says that she gave all that she had to live on. The word for live there is the word for life: "*bios*." It would be a little bit of a play on words but you could almost read, "She gave her life, everything that she had to live on."

Her actions were consistent with her heart unlike the scribes who tried to make their actions look better than their hearts really were. Her actions were consistent with her heart. She did not think about what other people thought. She didn't reference other people. She didn't fear other people; she feared God.

That's really the second half of the point tonight. **The fear of God drives discipleship.** The fear of man—caring what other people think—is going to detour discipleship but the fear of God is going to drive our discipleship. It's going to fuel our following of Jesus Christ.

I want to connect that to both baptism and communion tonight. As was already said, baptism is the sacrament that the Lord Jesus Christ gave us to identify with Him as one of His followers and as one of His disciples. When we're baptized, we're essentially saying, "Jesus is my life. I turn away from all other identities." This is real for many people in our world if they grew up in a Muslim context, if they grew up in a Jewish home; they leave that behind and identify with Jesus Christ. Any of us who are baptized—and those who were baptized tonight—are leaving behind anything else as their primary identity and identifying with Jesus Christ. They are saying, "Jesus, I am all in with You 100%. You have all of me." Just like the widow dropping everything she had—her life—into that offering box. "Jesus, You have all that I am."

Baptism is humbling. We don't baptize ourselves; we submit to baptism through a representative of the church of Jesus Christ. We are baptized. It's a humbling thing. There's no room for the fear of people. We're standing in our shorts and a t-shirt in front of a bunch of people and we're saying, "I want to identify with Jesus. Push me under the water. I want to say that I'm dead." There's no impressing God here. There's no bringing anything to the table here. There's simply submitting to what baptism symbolizes: the reality of dying to oneself and being raised to new life in Jesus Christ.

If you are a baptized follower of Jesus Christ, I hope that is what you thought about tonight as these five were baptized. You were reminded again that by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, you have died to everything that you were and have said, "Jesus, I'm all in." That's the second commitment that those who are baptized make. "God, as You help and give me strength through Your Holy Spirit, I've decided to follow Jesus all the days of my life."

If you haven't been baptized and you are a follower of Jesus, I would urge you to make that step and say to the world, "Jesus, I'm all in." If you've already made that commitment, keep in mind that baptism doesn't save you. In and of itself, baptism doesn't save you. It's symbolic of what saves you. But if God has redeemed you, then proclaim it; declare it publicly. Jesus was baptized on our behalf. He was baptized into us, into being a sinful human being. Ought we not be baptized into Him? He was baptized into our unrighteousness so that He could bare that on the cross. Ought we not be baptized into Him Who is the One Who gives us His righteousness so that we can be forgiven and united with Him?

I think there's a connection to communion here, too. As David read our church doctrinal statement about communion—the Lord's Supper—we recognize it is a covenant renewal ceremony. When we come into covenant relationship with Jesus Christ through His work of grace in our lives, united with Him by faith, and we renew that relationship, we are reminded of it each time we come to the table. We are reminded that Jesus gave Himself 100% on our behalf. He was all in for us. He came with no pretense. Everything He was on the outside, He was on the inside. When He humbly came, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. We are reminded of Jesus' death. That is the key truth that we are reminded of at the table: that Jesus died; that His body was really nailed to a cross and that His blood really flowed out. It was real. That death was the sacrifice and it was the payment in full for our sins and for all who come to Him.

At the Lord's Supper when we come together as His people and take the bread and the cup; we are reminded that we depend completely on Jesus. In baptism, we're reminded that we've died to self but that doesn't change after our baptism. As we enter into the life of discipleship, we continue to depend 100% on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are reminded of that as we take these elements into ourselves and they become part of who we are. It's not the physical body and blood of Jesus that we take but Jesus is here. He is here in His Holy Spirit. He is here to remind us of our need for Him.

I don't know if you're like me in the sense that whenever I'm part of a communion service, I'm sometimes overwhelmed by it because I don't know what I should be saying to God in my spirit. I know I can't say everything I want to say and I can't say it as deeply and elegantly as I want to say it. But one thing I always say is, "Jesus, I need You." I'm here taking this in today—we're here taking this in today—to make a declaration: "Jesus, I need You. I continue to need You."

Here's the absolute wonderful thing about communion: Jesus is here and He meets us. We need Him and He meets us here as we're gathered as His people. We are refreshed by His

grace, reminded both that we are dependent upon Him and that He freely gives us everything we need for life and for godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We are reminded of His role and of our role in discipleship. His role was to give of Himself for us and to never leave us nor forsake us but to be our Good Shepherd every day of our lives as His disciples. Our role is simply to trust in Him. We come to this table to be reminded that it's about Him. In Him we have everything that we need.

We're going to come to the table in just a moment and I'm going to ask you to just take a moment to confess in your own heart, and in your own spirit, your need for Jesus. You're not asking yourself right now if you're perfect; you're not asking yourself if you're sinless. You're asking yourself what Pastor Sunday asked those who were just baptized, "Are you trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation? Is He the One you're relying on?" If you are, after you've taken a moment to remember that and to thank Jesus for it, then come and with great joy get the elements and we'll partake together.

If you are not there, then come to Jesus and approach Him; ask Him to help you believe that He is the full and sufficient sacrifice for your sin.

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