



Pastor's Update

“And walking by the sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him (Matthew 4:18-120).

In this week's update, I would like to briefly survey the theme of discipleship as it is presented in the Gospel of Matthew. The word disciple is translated from the Greek term *mathētēs* which means “pupil” or “follower.” A disciple then is a person who learns from and follows another person. From this definition we can see that true discipleship is relational. It involves investing in people, and seeing them developed through that relationship, so that they may in turn invest in others. Let us explore how Matthew portrays discipleship in his gospel.

The first thing we notice is that the disciples do not appear in Matthew's story of Jesus until Jesus commences his public ministry (Matt. 4:17-25). The disciples are, from this point on, present with Jesus until their desertion of him at his arrest and trial (Matt. 26:56).

Immediately after he called the crowds to respond to his message (Matt. 4:17), Jesus called two sets of brothers from their family business. He first called Simon Peter and his brother Andrew (Matt. 4:18) Then he called James the son of Zebedee and his brother John (Matt. 4:21). This act of Jesus calling the brother identifies the first trait of disciples. Discipleship begins with the call of Jesus that invades everyday life and separates from non-disciples. To follow Jesus means not only to accompany him, but to be loyal participants with him in his mission.

Later in Matthew 10:1-4, the Twelve disciples are given the role of apostles. The word apostle means someone who is sent by another. From this it appears as if the disciples will be a helping role. Prior to choosing the Twelve, Jesus asked them to pray “the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:38). Then they become the answer to their own prayer.

Throughout his gospel, Matthew presents the disciples as a group of twelve. At this juncture, we want to note that aside from the twelve, there were other disciples of Jesus such as Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57; Jn. 19:38), Nicodemus (Jn. 19:39), the two disciples on the Emmaus road (Lk. 24:13) and the numerous women who followed Jesus to the bitter end (Matt. 27:61; Mk. 15:40; Lk. 23:49). But throughout his gospel Matthew presents the disciple as a one group up until Peter walks on water (Matt. 14:28-31).

Also, throughout Matthew's story, at least on two occasions, Peter acts as spokesperson for the group. First, when Jesus appeared to the disciples and assumed he was a ghost. To calm their fears, Jesus spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid” (Matt. 14:27). Peter responded immediately by asking Jesus, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water” (Matt. 14:28).

The second time we see Peter speaking on behalf of the disciples is at Caesarea-Philippi where Jesus elicits a response from the disciples regarding his identity. In Matthew 16:15 Jesus asked them, “who do you (plural) say that I am?” Peter then responded with a Messianic confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Peter's response teaches us that in order for a person to be a disciple of Jesus they must admit the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis