

Marks of a True Disciple
Matthew 10:34-11:1; Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:6

Introduction

How do you respond when someone who is well known for their sinful practices makes a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? That is always wonderful news to hear and so the immediate response should be *Praise the Lord!* You then pray that they will grow in their new faith so that their life will glorify the Lord.

How do you respond when some time has gone by and it becomes apparent that the seed of the gospel has fallen on either the roadside, rocky soil or weed infested soil as Jesus described in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13? If you have been a Christian for more than a few years, you have probably already seen such examples. There are those that make a few superficial changes such as wearing Christian jewelry, but it is obvious they do not understand for they continue in the same vices they have always had without conviction. They are the soil by the side of the road. There are also those that make many radical changes in their life very quickly, but then quickly return to their old ways when their new faith begins to cause conflict with their friends or prevents them from advancing in the world. They are the shallow soil. Then there is the weed infested soil. They are those that appear to grow but then become stunted and do not bear fruit because they are still in the world. They do not trust God so they are overwhelmed by the worries of the world, and since the focus of their desire is still to gain what the world has to offer, their service for the Lord is minimal or non-existent.

Over the years I have personally known or have heard about so many such cases that when I hear of someone making a profession of faith, I still respond with *Praise the Lord!* But it is quickly followed with, *I pray it will prove to be genuine.* We live in a time in which the gospel is often presented as if it was a candy bar offered by a God that is like a warm, kind, permissive and doting grandpa, and all you have to do to get it is a one time event religious exercise such as responding to an evangelist's message by walking the aisle, raising your hand or touching your TV and praying the magic words of a prayer. Salvation is presented as a fire insurance policy to keep you from Hell which you gain through an intellectual assent concerning Jesus instead of something that radically changes you by freeing you from the bondage of sin and making you a slave to righteousness because you believe in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-10 makes it clear that while salvation is by God's grace through faith we are expressly "*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*" When a person does not walk in those good works, there is clear evidence that something is wrong. It could be ignorance, immaturity or discouragement, but it also could be false faith because it is in something other than Jesus Christ and they are not saved.

In our study of the life of Christ we have seen over and over that the message that Jesus proclaims is a call to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He does not offer any bait and switch to trick people into getting what they don't really want. As He expressed in Matthew 7, He is calling people to the reality that they are choosing between two paths of life. One leads to eternal life and the other to eternal damnation. One path is for those made righteous by faith in God and so they walk in righteousness. The other path is for those who walk by sight living according to the desires of their flesh and whims of their emotion which result in walking in sin. One path is for those that come to God according to God's plan and directions through the narrow gate to walk the narrow path. The other path is for those go through the broad gate and walk the wide road of trying to win God's favor by their own means and methods.

Part of the reason I preach in the manner I do is because I fear for those who make what turn out to be false professions of faith. I cannot think of anything worse than for someone to think that they are a Christian and then have the Lord say to them what He says to the self deceived in Matthew 7:23, *I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*” The text we will be studying this morning exposes the underlying issue between a true profession of faith and a false one. It is a matter of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 10 Jesus gives instructions and warnings to the disciples that He has chosen as His apostles before they go out on their own for the first time to preach His message that *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* We have already examined many of the instructions that were particular to them at that time and considered principles from them can be applied in our own lives such as: Ministry should be focused; The message should be clear; Your life should be one of ministry with a heart that trusts the Lord; There should be a concentration on those who respond; And there should be a departure from those who are firm in their unbelief. We have also examined Jesus’ warning that they were being sent out as *“sheep in the midst of wolves,”* and so they needed to be as *“wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove”* if they were to accomplish their mission. We still face the same danger today of wolves in religion, ungodly governments, the society at large and even from family members. They needed to then and we need to now have full trust and confidence in the shepherd who sends us out. Then last week we looked at the more general instructions Jesus gave that apply to us now. We can be confident that God will enable us to carry out the work that He has given us. We can be confident even when persecuted because neither men nor the devil can affect our souls. We are confident of God’s intimate care because He even numbers the hairs on our heads. We can be confident when we stand before God because Jesus will confess before the Father those that confess Him before men.

In Matthew 10:34-42 Jesus explains further consequences of His coming and what will happen to His disciples. This gives us further description of what it means to be His follower to add to what He has already taught. These descriptions are important because they help us distinguish between true faith and false professions. It also helps counter an incorrect doctrine that has been promoted within evangelicalism for some years. In the late twentieth century, Zane Hodges, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, began to promote the idea that people were saved before they became disciples of Jesus. According to this theology, some, but not all, who are saved will hunger for righteousness and become disciples of Jesus and therefore reap greater rewards - as described in his book, *The Hungry Inherit*. The rest are still saved even if there is no visible evidence of conversion. This idea was picked up by others and promoted widely. However, the thesis is a false one.

As I have pointed out before, a disciple is simply a student, a learner, someone that attaches themselves to a teacher in order to learn from them and become like them. There are those that are disciples of Jesus in the sense that they read the Bible and think highly of Jesus and may even try to imitate some of His character qualities. However, until they repent from their sins and place their faith in Jesus alone, they are not regenerate and therefore are not saved. John 6 describes some of these kinds of disciples who are not saved. A person that is saved will have had to have learned basic truths about Jesus’ identity and work of atonement and then place their faith in Him. In other words, discipleship begins prior to salvation as the person learns of Christ and desires Him. It then continues on after salvation as God fulfills His purpose in saving them by conforming them to the image of His son (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 8:29; Philippians 1:6). Therefore the correct Biblical teaching is that you can be a disciple without being saved, but you cannot be saved without being a disciple. Every true believer in Jesus Christ is also His follower.

What then are some of the characteristics of those who are true disciples that believe in Jesus, or to state it another way, what character qualities and manner of life would you expect to see develop in those that actually believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?

True Disciples Are Humble - Matthew 10:24-25

The first characteristic comes from the passage we studied last week. A follower of Christ is humble because a disciple is not above his teacher and a slave is not above his master. Our striving is simply to be like Him and submit our will to His. As a consequence of becoming like Jesus, we will be treated in similar fashion. The ungodly hated Jesus and so they will hate us too as we become like Him. Yet, we need not fear them even when severely persecuted because they cannot touch the soul for that belongs to God alone (vs 28). In addition, we are intimately known and cared for by God who even numbers the very hairs of our head (vs 30). A true disciple will walk in humility trusting God.

True Disciples Confess Christ - Matthew 10:32-33

The second characteristic also comes from the passage we studied last week. A true disciple publicly confesses the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, *“Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.”* Again, the idea of confession is to *“say the same thing as another,”* to *“voice agreement with him.”* Confession of Jesus means to agree with Him about who He is which is more than an intellectual acknowledgment of facts. It is a declaration of your true belief which carries with it the dedication to live according to your belief. You can say anything you want, but what you actually believe will be demonstrated by your actions. Jesus uses the future indicative case for *“shall confess”* to show this is an ongoing affirmation of your true belief and not a one time acknowledgment made a long time ago.

Confession is public in nature because it is *“before men,”* and since the context here contains persecution, it also means the confession is made even when that may result in you suffering or even losing your life. Jesus states that for those who will confess Him that He will in turn confess them before the Heavenly Father.

A hallmark of a false disciples is the flip side stated in verse 33, *“But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will deny him before My Father who is in Heaven.”* Again, the *“shall deny”* demonstrates not someone who failed once like Peter did when the Lord was standing trial, but rather someone who is characterized by such behavior. A true disciple who fails as Peter did will also follow his example of repentance and continue to confess Christ publicly afterward. Jesus is making a distinction here between those who fear God and those who fear men as pointed out in verse 28. Those who deny Jesus before men demonstrate that they are more concerned with either gaining the favor of men or avoiding possible persecution from them instead of having a proper fear of God. Such a person does not understand who Jesus is and what He has done. Jesus will not confess such a person before the heavenly father.

True Disciples Will Be Opposed - Matthew 10: 34-39

The next characteristic is found in verses 34-36, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.”* Jesus had already brought up this theme of opposition back in verse 21 stating that *“brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death.”*

The apostles, like other Jews of that time, were looking for the Messiah to be the conquering king who would put down Rome, establish Israel as the ruling nation, and who would bring peace to the world through His reign. Jesus corrects this in verse 34 stating, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth.”* We need to keep in mind that when Jesus came the first time He came to pay the penalty of our sins. When He comes the second time He will fulfill what the apostles had in mind of putting down all His enemies, and it will be then, and only then that true peace will come to the earth. Until that time there will be division among mankind between those that will follow Jesus and those that will not.

The sword Jesus mentions has been seen throughout history to the present. Followers of Jesus have been martyred from the first century to the present. It has been estimated that there were more Christian martyrs in the twentieth century than in the first nineteen centuries combined. While the slaughter of Christians by communists would be hard to match, it appears that radical Islam would like to make the attempt. This makes the confession or denial of Jesus mentioned in verses 32-33 much more sobering.

Since the division that Jesus brings is spiritual rather than ethnic, the division will occur even within the family unit. The picture presented in verse 35 is a family consisting of a husband and wife, an unmarried daughter, and a married son with his wife. The husband and wife are believers and the rest of the family is against them. This is right out of Micah 7:6 in which evil people rise against the godly and a man finds his enemies are in his own household.

True Disciples Love Jesus More than Family - Matthew 10:37

Family relationships are important and Jesus uses that in verse 37 to stress that if you are to follow Him, then you must value Him more than family, *“he who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”*

What relationships exist that can be closer than those between parents and children? You can have close friends, and some of you may have close friends that you feel are closer than your family, but when a family functions according to its design, nothing else can approach the depth of its relationship. Proverbs 17:17 alludes to this stating, *“A friend loves at all times, but a brother is born for adversity.”* A brother sticks with you even when the going is tough and friends depart. There is some truth to the saying that *“blood is thicker than water.”* Yet, Jesus states here that you are to love Him more than the dearest member of your family.

It is not uncommon to find people that are attracted to the Lord for they like what they hear. They might acknowledge that the story is true and indicate a desire to follow Him, but they stop short because they fear the effect it may have on their family. A husband or wife may avoid coming to Christ for fear that it would lead to a separation from their spouse whether that be mental, emotional or physical. It may not be fear of a separation, but just a diminishing of what had existed as something more important takes priority. Even though Jesus' plan for the marriage relationship is better than anything the world can imagine, there are those who refuse Christ because they do not want Him to interfere in their marriage.

The same is true with parents and children. Children fear that their parents would be offended or the other way around. It has not been uncommon for me to find people who are unwilling to be baptized because of what their mom or dad would say if they made that sort of identification with Christ. There may be someone here that is in this category. You have made a profession of faith, but you are disobeying Jesus' command to be baptized because you fear the reaction of your family. That fear is well founded because it is not uncommon to find people in a church who have been rejected by their family because they follow Jesus. I knew a Jewish girl whose parents even held a funeral for her and would not speak to her afterward. If she called, they would say, *“we do not have a daughter by that name anymore, she has died.”* In the Muslim world being baptized as a Christian could result in martyrdom at the hands of a family member.

If you are hesitant to come to Christ or to identify with Him by public profession or baptism, then look closely at this verse. Jesus states that those who love a family member more than Him are not worthy of Him. The idea here is that they are not deserving of belonging to him and being honored by him. To belong to Christ is a privilege so precious that no other relationship can compare. It is a responsibility so imperative that nothing else is more important.

For those that follow Jesus, there can be no other relationship, including that of a cherished family member, that can be more important. If a choice must be made between the Jesus and anyone or anything else, then it must be Jesus regardless of the reaction of the other person or consequences you may suffer because of it.

John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, was told to quit preaching or he would be thrown in prison. The personal hardship did not concern him, but the fact that it would put his wife and family into utter poverty weighed greatly upon him. He wrote from prison, "*The parting with my wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling of the flesh from my bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I would have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I have besides. Oh, the thought of the hardship my blind one might go under would break my heart to pieces . . . But yet, recalling myself, thought I, I must venture all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. Oh, I saw in this condition, I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet thought I, I must do it. I must do it.*"

Do you love Christ more than anyone else? Are you willing to trust Him for the future even when it appears it will go hard for you and for those you love? John Bunyan did.

True Disciples Love Jesus More than Life - Matthew 10:38-39

The call to follow Christ does not end with the demand that you must love Him above anyone else. You must also love Christ more than yourself. Verse 38, "*and He who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.*"

You are not worthy of Jesus if you love someone else more than Him. You are also not worthy of Jesus if you love your own life more than Jesus. The disciples would have quickly recognized and understood the full meaning of the imagery of taking up a cross. It was only a few years before this that a zealot named Judas who had been fighting against the Romans had been caught. In order to teach the Jews a lesson about fighting Rome, general Varus ordered the crucifixion of over 2,000 Jews. Their crosses lined the roads of Galilee from one end to the other. When a Jew of that time heard the word "cross," they only thought of one thing only - death. A cross was the instrument by which the Romans executed people who opposed them or the system of law they had established.

Too often Christians talk about "bearing a cross" in reference to some inconvenience they have suffered. But even if that "cross bearing" was referring to genuine physical suffering because of religious persecution, it would not have the same meaning as what Jesus states here. Jesus calls those that follow Him to be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in His service - death.

That may seem very radical, and in a sense, it is, but it is also perfectly logical. Notice verse 39, "*He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.*" The sense of "his life" here is "himself." In other words, the person who spends their time in a self-centered pursuit to "*find themselves,*" will find that the end product will be what Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes - a life of vanity. Their life will have been worthless in the final analysis. They may have enjoyed some good times, gained wealth and perhaps even benefitted their fellow man to some degree, but their life will have been futile from the eternal perspective.

At the same time, the person who loses his life for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, they humbly submit their life to be expended in serving the Lord, will find in the final analysis that they have gained life and eternal rewards. Jim Elliot, the martyred missionary to the Auca Indians in South America, said it so well in his diary, "*He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*"

You cannot keep your life, and the harder you try to keep it for yourself, the greater the sense of loss when it ends. But you can exchange your life for something you cannot lose. Jesus gives meaning and purpose to it in the present and provides eternal life with the Him in the future.

What is your greatest love? Is it Jesus, or something else?

True Disciples Will Receive a Reward - Matthew 10:40-42

No sacrifice made on our part compares with what Jesus gives us. That includes not only eternal life as implied in verse 39, but Christ also gives rewards to those who will follow Him. Matthew 10:40-42, *“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.”*

These verses can be summarized by saying that Jesus rewards the service that is done on His behalf. When you present the gospel of Christ to someone and they receive you and the message, then they receive Jesus, and the person who receives Jesus receives God the Father as well. When you help those that are serving the Lord, then you share in their reward whether prophet or righteous man. This extends down to even what may seem insignificant such as providing a cup of water. When you are a blessing to others serving the Lord, then you are also blessed, and when other believers are a blessing to you as you serve the Lord, then they too are blessed. In God’s work, the lowliest believer can share in the blessings of the greatest. True disciples gain reward.

True Disciples Will Serve - Matthew 11:1; Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:6

According to Matthew 11:1, after Jesus finished giving instructions to the twelve, *“He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.”* According to Mark 6:12-13 and Luke 9:6, the Apostles also left to do what Jesus had told them. They began going throughout the villages proclaiming the gospel and calling for men to repent, casting out demons, and healing many sick people everywhere. They understood the instructions and warnings and went out to serve the Lord.

Conclusions

Many people claim to be Christians, but the proof is in the pudding. A person who has truly put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sin based on His substitutionary atonement on the cross will demonstrate the hallmarks of a true disciple of Christ. They may fail at times in each of these areas, but their lives will be generally marked by them, and where they do fail, will be repentance and a striving to fulfill them. There will be humility in becoming like the master. They will fear God more than man. They will confess Jesus publicly. They will value Christ more than family and even their own life. They will be rewarded because they help those that serve the Lord and will serve the Lord themselves.

If these things do not mark your life, then your very response will demonstrate the true nature of what you believe and your relationship with the Lord. If you are defensive or angry, then you need to go back and start at square one and learn what it means to be poor in spirit. You need to understand that salvation comes only by Jesus Christ and only according to His plan, and He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

If you are sorrowful but unwilling to change, then you are on the dangerous ground of complacency. Sorrow alone is not enough. Godly sorrow brings repentance which results in change.

If you are burdened to get right with God, then the Holy Spirit is working on your heart. You need to follow His lead, confess, repent and thank Him for His forgiveness, and then continue to strive against the sin that so easily entangles you while fixing your eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12). You can be confident that the Lord will continue the work He has begun and He will develop these characteristics in you.

If these hallmarks fit you, then praise God for what He has already done in your life. Go out and be a blessing to someone else by showing them the way to be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sermon Notes: *Marks of a True Disciple*
Matthew 10:34-11:1; Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:6

Introduction

We praise the Lord whenever we hear someone has made a profession of faith - and pray for their _____
Not every profession of faith is true for there are three types of soil that yield no _____ - Matthew 13
We live in a time when the gospel is often perverted with salvation from _____ left out
There is a problem when a Christian does not _____ in the good works God has prepared (Eph. 2:8-10)
Jesus calls people to choose between the only _____ possible paths of life - Matthew 7
We can apply the _____ of Jesus' instructions to the Apostles in Matthew 10 to our own lives
We will face dangers in following Christ, but we can be _____ of the future because of His promises
Matthew 10:34-42 helps correct the _____ of the idea that a person is saved first, then becomes a disciple
A disciple is simply a learner, a _____ who follows a teacher to learn and become like them.
People must learn something of the identity and work of Jesus - be a _____ - before they are saved
Not all disciples are saved, but all true Christians are _____

True Disciples Are Humble - Matthew 10:24-25

A disciple strives to be like Jesus and _____ to His will

True Disciples Confess Christ - Matthew 10:33-34

To confess (to agree with) is to _____ your belief along with a dedication to live according to that belief
Confession of Jesus is to be _____ (before men) and an ongoing affirmation, not a one time event
False disciples will _____ Jesus when faced with persecution

True Disciples Will Be Opposed - Matthew 10: 34-39

Jesus came peacefully at His first coming, but belief in Him causes _____ among people
Christians have _____ persecution and martyrdom from the first century to the present time
Since it is a spiritual division, it will even set members of a _____ against each other

True Disciples Love Jesus More than Family - Matthew 10:37

The relationship between parents and their children are close, but love of Jesus must be _____
_____ Jesus out of fear it will interfere with your marriage reveals ignorance of Jesus and marriage
Becoming a Christian does at times fracture families - and can even lead to _____ in some societies
To love family more than Jesus proves you are not deserving to _____ to Him
To belong to Christ is a _____ so precious that no other relationship can compare

True Disciples Love Jesus More than Life - Matthew 10:38-39

The Jews of that time would have easily understood the cross to be a reference to _____

Spending your life in self-centered pursuits will end in _____ - a futile life from the eternal perspective

Submitting your life to Christ to be used however He sees fit results in purpose in the present and eternal ____

“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to _____ what he cannot lose” - Jim Elliot

True Disciples Will Receive a Reward - Matthew 10:40-42

Jesus rewards the _____ that is done on His behalf

In God’s work, the lowliest believer can _____ in the blessings of the greatest

True Disciples Will Serve - Matthew 11:1; Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:6

Jesus left to minister in other cities and the disciples _____ His instructions to go out and do the same

Conclusions

A true Christian will demonstrate these characteristics of being a disciple - though they will _____ at times

If you are defensive or angry, go back to the starting point of _____ for only there will you find grace

If you are sorrowful but unwilling to change, you are on the dangerous ground of complacency - _____

If you are burdened to get right with God, then rejoice, the Holy Spirit is _____ - follow His lead

If these characteristics already mark your life, then rejoice and go out and _____ others be true disciples

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God’s Word to your children’s lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times “disciple” or “follower of Jesus” is made. 2) Discuss with your parents what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. How do you respond when you hear someone had made a profession of faith in Christ? How do you respond when time goes by and there is no obvious evidence they are walking with Christ? What are some of the common ways the gospel has been perverted in America? What choice does Jesus call people to make in Matthew 7? What have you learned from the studies in Matthew 10 so far? What can you be confident about as a disciple of Jesus? What is wrong with the idea that a person becomes a disciple of Jesus after they are saved? Explain. What is a simple definition of a disciple? How does this show that a person is a disciple before they are saved? What is the importance of humility in being a disciple of Jesus? What does it mean to confess Jesus? Why must this be public and an ongoing affirmation for a disciple of Jesus? Jesus came in peace and preached a gospel of peace, when then does belief in Him cause so much division even in families? Why would someone be unworthy of Jesus if they loved a family member more than Him? Why would a family turn against those within it that become Christians? Do you know of believers who have experience this? What did the cross to the Jews of that time? What does Jesus mean in Matthew 10:39 that a person who has *“found his life shall lose it”* and a person who *“has lost his life shall find it.”* What rewards can a disciple receive and what are the conditions for receiving them? How well does your life demonstrate these characteristics? If there are areas in which you lack, how do you plan to develop them?