

The unlikely disciples

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[0 : 00] When I was younger, my mum and dad used to take us out on big warm walks. And if we went on a walk, a new walk, I don't know if you did this, but I used to love being given the walk a book.

My dad used to put it in a protective waterproof kind of thing so it didn't get wet. I used to have it over my special strap that went over my shoulder. My dad had already memorized the walk so it looked like I was directing everyone but actually he knew the whole time.

And it told you where to turn, where to look, how to keep on track, the little sty that would take you over the wall so that you would go in the right direction. You had to follow the book, what the book said to go in the right direction.

To be a disciple, to be a follower of the Lord Jesus, we have to have our eyes open to what Jesus is telling us.

To follow him, to know the map really of how he wants us to live. And he's given us in his word a big picture of what the plan is, a big picture plan.

[1 : 08] Now all of us will have individual plans for our own lives, but there is a big picture plan of God's plan for the world. That God's mission, God's mission from the beginning of history to the end, is to draw all people from every place to glorify him in every part of their lives.

That's why we're here in Winchborough, isn't it, that we as a church, a body of people here, would be drawn increasingly ourselves to glorify God in every moment of our lives.

That we would be built up and strengthened in our faith, not to merely gain head knowledge, but that it would be demonstrated in our affections, the way we feel to us, of love for him.

And that his power working in us would change us from the inside out. But we're also here, as much as we're here to do that, we're here in order to draw people from Winchborough and the surrounding areas of West Lothian to glorify God in every part of their lives too.

That through our lives and what we say, that they might be able to comprehend the beauty of Jesus themselves in a metaphor way.

[2 : 27] That is God's big picture mission. And it is happening, not just in Winchborough, throughout every nation where there are followers of him. And has been happening since the beginning of the beginning, really, where God called the people.

That is his mission, to draw people from every nation, to glorify him in every part of their lives. And the reason I'm starting off with that is because what we realise as we read this passage, as we have gone through this section of Mark chapter 5 to 8, it's actually really all about the disciples.

Because as we move to our passage this morning, it appears that the disciples are not moving forwards as God, as Jesus would want them to.

They're not moving forwards in understanding God's big picture plan, his mission to the world. And in fact, over the past few weeks, you could see that it looks like they've gone backwards.

They're hard hearts, we saw a few weeks ago. God had fed 5,000, he'd walked on water, and they had hard hearts. The last people you would expect to have hard hearts, but his 12 best friends have hard hearts about who he is.

[3 : 44] In order for them, and in order for us to grow, to move forwards as disciples, I want to suggest three things that we learned this morning from observing these two miraculous events that Jesus encounters two different people.

So, the discipleship is the understanding of what it means to be a disciple, what we know in our minds, the character of a disciple, and then the actions of a disciple.

I mentioned earlier, the last few weeks, just to give us a little bit of context, the disciples didn't understand about the loaves, and they didn't understand about feeding the 5,000, they didn't understand about the walking on water.

They were hard-hearted. And immediately after, what did we see last week? Jesus teaching on what a heart is like. That it is, the reason they have hard hearts is because deep within their hearts, it is evil that bubbles up.

The origin of evil is somebody's heart. It's not external, but it is internal. They were just like the Pharisees, hypocrites and legalists, and their problems were with their hearts.

[4 : 59] And this week, what we see is, along come two people, unexpected, and it is the unexpected people in the encounter Jesus that actually teach the disciples about what it actually means to be a disciple.

The ones who in society will not be given the time of day, school the disciples. So, firstly, I want to get to, let's dive into it.

The first thing I wanted to look at is the understanding of a disciple. The understanding of Jesus' identity, and the understanding of Jesus' mission. This woman that we encounter in the first section from verse 24, you'll notice she is a complete outsider to God's people.

Jesus has traveled, he's traveled outside of the boundaries of Israel, up to Tyre and Sidon. Verse 26 is there to point out that this woman that he meets is not an Israelite, she's not Jewish.

She's Greek born in Syria and Phoenicia. Anyone not born of Israelite descent, who's not Jewish, all, there's that term that we know, they can be collected together and referred to as the term Gentile.

[6 : 18] She is a Gentile. This woman, this woman, is the last person you would expect to have faith in Jesus, to understand who he is, and to understand God's mission.

And, in the midst of all that, Jesus acts in a way that you don't expect him to either. She's the last person, but what we see is that she gets it.

She comes to Jesus, he's entered this house, as we said, he's entered the house, he's eating. And this woman comes to Jesus.

She must have heard that he was there. She must know something about him. Word has spread not just in Israel, but outside its borders. And he says to her, when she asks, when she comes to him, verse 27.

First let the children eat on their walk, you told her. For it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs. Now, what Jesus says to her, I don't know about you, but doesn't it, it does seem quite offensive.

[7 : 27] It does appear quite derogatory. It appears to, certainly appears to me, like he is denying a genuine request, motivated by faith in who he is.

And on top of that, nowhere else does Jesus speak or do this to any other Jew or Gentile that comes to him. He's, it's not the first time a Gentile has come to him, he's healed Gentiles, non-Jews, before earlier in Mark's Gospel when we read in chapter 3.

So you do instantly question, why is he speaking to her like this? Instead of seeing it as a rejection, perhaps it's better to see this as a test.

I've mentioned earlier, remember what Jesus said about the heart. Nothing going into a person defiles them. Food doesn't defile a person and neither does racial background.

What she says, what comes out of her, reveals her heart. Because what comes out of her heart is not evil but humble and pure. There is so much that I could say about what she says.

[8 : 40] What she says is packed with depth. Verse 28, she calls him Lord. Lord. Even the dogs under the table, people change his clothes.

That's the first thing that I want us to see when we read, there's a few things we're going to look at from that verse 28. The first thing I want us to see is that she has understanding.

Jesus talks in this kind of cryptic parable, doesn't he? But she understands the cryptic parable. When Jesus refers to children eating, when he means children, who he's referring to is the Jewish Israelite nation.

Spiritually speaking, they were God's chosen nation. He's peaceful. First and foremost, as we know, Paul says in Romans 11 that the blessings, first and foremost, the blessings belong to the children of Abraham.

Genealogically, those who came through his family life. Which means that when Jesus says dogs, he's meaning everyone else who's not Jewish, the Gentiles.

[9 : 50] But God's plan was always to include the Gentiles. The plan was, this is how the plan worked. Israel's purpose in receiving the blessings of God first was to be a light to the Gentiles, to draw all people from every nation to worship him.

That was their purpose. So the purpose was, they were always supposed to come to God. They were to be drawn by the Israelites worship and holiness and distinctiveness.

Her answer is packed with understanding because it demonstrates that she understands God's plan. That whilst the blessings did come to the Jews first, it was never supposed to be limited.

His plan was always to redeem the people from every tribe, tongue and nation. And she knows that she has just as much right as anyone else to come to God.

She knows she has just as much right to come to God. But in coming to Jesus, it also shows that she knows that he is the God of the Old Testament who's doing that.

[11 : 06] Even dogs, even Gentiles can receive something from you, she's saying. The living God, what she's subtly telling him is, I know who you are.

I know you're the living God. And if you're the living God, I know what you're like. I know that your heart is to have compassion on all people, and that includes me.

She knew that a crumb, just a crumb of Jesus' power is enough, and that he won't be proud of her. Because God's care does not have boundary lines, but is available to all who call on him.

She has the understanding of the true disciple. She has the understanding of the true disciple. The healing of the man that we looked at that comes in the next reveals Jesus' identity as well.

In Isaiah 35, the prophecy of God reads, Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

[12 : 12] Water will gush forth in the wilderness to streams in the desert. Both of these reveal who Jesus is. And that they get it.

God's mission, Jesus' mission comes from his character. To draw all types of people to himself. Which means the good news of Jesus is not exclusive to a certain type of person, but offered to us all.

To all. Which means, which really means, that your position in society, your upbringing or background, whether you offer money or was brought up by your bootstraps, whether you went to church your whole childhood or didn't go at all, whether you actually take care of yourself or not, whatever you look like, whether you've been a goody two shoes or a robe.

Jesus comes from all types of people, anyone who bears his image. There's no distinction for the type of person you've been to.

Who thought. And she does it. She understands. She has understanding of who Jesus is.

[13 : 26] And she has understanding of his mission. Which means she can move forwards as a disciple. The next thing I want to look at is the character of a disciple.

The character of, in particular, this woman. But not less the character of those who bring the mutant deaf man as well. Because there's something else that this answer reveals. The second thing that this, that verse 28, this answer shows us, is her character.

It shows us that in her character there is a desperation and that there is humility. The woman, verse 25, falls at Jesus' feet. And verse 26, begs Jesus to drive out the demon from her daughter.

The same happens with the group of people. Verse 32. Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk. And they begged Jesus to place his hand in them. And there's total desperation.

We all know that feeling that when we feel like nothing else can be done. Like you're at your wits end. It feels sometimes like you've run up a dark alley and you hit a wall with an obstacle that's too hard to scale.

[14 : 36] Too tall. How have you done? And you're desperate. The women and the men who bring the mutant man are desperate. But interestingly, they're not desperate for themselves, but for Jesus to act as someone that cared for.

They have a heart and compassion and empathy for other people. So there's desperation. But importantly, and by no means second, we see humility.

Verse 28. Even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. Isn't it interesting? Isn't it amazing that she doesn't take what Jesus says as an insult?

That she's willing, happy in fact, to accept the role of a dog if it means being fed by him?

If it means receiving from him. Jesus responds to her willingness to humble herself to the lowest place. Verse 29. Verse 29. For such a reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter.

[15 : 41] She went home and found her child lying on the bed. And the demon gone. She's schooling the disciples on what it means to be a disciple. Because, remember, you remember the disciples?

They had problems receiving the kingdom as a child. The woman has no problems receiving the kingdom as a dog. This no one, a Greek, not Jewish at all, has a clearer understanding of God and his part of Jesus Christ in the character of the disciple.

She has a desperation for Jesus and a true humility of heart. Desperation of humility. Attitude in the character of the disciple.

I mentioned in the first point about the understanding. And actually what I think is that these three things come together. Firstly, you have to understand who Jesus is and what he's here for us.

When you know who he is, there comes a moment where you have to be desperate for him because of the grace. Then finally, when you're that desperate for him, you will lower yourself to whatever position you need to receive when you ask for it.

[16 : 56] Humble yourself, taking the Lord's position, doing whatever Jesus asks of you. And invariably what that means is thinking, as we've said so many times, it comes through so often.

One of the key markers, the key values that we have as a local church is humility. This thinking of other people and other people's needs is more important than we want.

But she didn't care what people thought of her. She didn't care. She was happy to take the place of a dog in front of everyone eating. And neither did the men, happy to get their hands dirty for the good of this man who would have been in society, marginalized and forgotten.

For the good of someone else and the glory of Jesus Christ, doing whatever he wants to. We've seen the understanding. We've seen the character.

And finally, the actions. The final point actually. I want to move on to actually demonstrate what happens when desperate people humble themselves before Jesus.

[18 : 07] And it's connected to something. It's not actually just entirely just in this passage. It's connected to something that happens throughout the Gospels, which actually seems quite strange.

It's when Jesus heals people. When he casts out demons. And he does what we read about in verse 36. Look with me. Jesus commands them not to tell anyone.

It's not the first time we see Jesus say that. He often tells people not to tell people about him. And then they always do. It's worth stopping and considering what is going on.

Because there's other times when Jesus says that the healed person should go and tell. He sends one guy to the synagogue and says, tell them what's happened.

Do right by the law of Moses. Remember the man in the Gerasenes, chapter 5. He's told that he should announce it. What's happened to his whole family and the whole region.

[19 : 09] What has been done for him. What is going on here? Why does so often does Jesus say, keep this to yourself? My hunch is, and I think this is true, is that Jesus doesn't want to call attention to himself as a miracle worker.

Because his desire is for God to grow and grow. He demonstrates the same humility. The honor that he doesn't want to receive.

Is actually modeled by Jesus and those who are coming to him. The reality is, that whilst there seems to be a desire from Jesus to hide the miracle.

Jesus' power is divine and it changes people's lives. And the fact is, it is just too amazing for anyone to keep in.

How could, let's just stop and think. How actually could that be kept in? Because when you think about it, it is actually impossible. Let's just take for example the deaf and mute man.

[20 : 16] How does that conversation go the next time somebody talks to him? Or the guys who took him up to meet Jesus. He would have been known in the community because of his affliction and his disability.

And now this man who has been there for years, who couldn't hear, who couldn't really speak, can hear and can speak. How does that conversation go when people say, oh what has happened to him?

There is only one thing that would come out. What the blokes who took him to, who begged Jesus would have to say. What else is going to come out? We took him to Jesus and he changed him.

This man is changed. His whole life is turned upside down because he encountered Jesus Christ. What else could they say?

Jesus never sought glory for himself. But what he does is divine. His works are the works of the triune God.

[21 : 17] And Jesus is magnified because of what he does. In an honor shame culture, Jesus has a surprising existence to honor. But it is in the resisting of honor that is exactly what he receives.

He is magnified because what he does can only be attributed to the living God. This must be who he is. And people come to him from everywhere.

And they leave not being able to contain who or what they have experienced and encountered. Because when they encounter Jesus Christ, their life changes.

People were guessed and he, but no. Who did they wonder if you were ■■■■■■■■? In verse 36. In verse 36. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more he kept talking about me.

people were overwhelmed with amazement. He's done everything well, they said. He even makes the deaf, hearing, and mute speak. People cannot help talking about him. It's overwhelming.

[22 : 19] They're bursting at the seams with amazement. And notice with me, whilst he tells them not to speak, he never condemns them for doing so. That's never said, is it?

That he doesn't stop them. With ourselves, we know that what we're amazed by, and what we enjoy, we like to get excited about.

We're overwhelmed and bursting at the seams. We can't keep it in. If I ask Gaz about Formula One, he'll talk all day. If I ask Craig about Celtic, or teams of the past, players from the 90s, it's coming out of him.

Joy, because those moments have meant something in his life. What we're amazed with, what we take joy in, the things that we've encountered that have mattered to us, they've impacted us.

We've experienced something and it impacts who? It impacts our lives and we can't keep it in. Now each of us have put our trust in Jesus Christ. I've encountered Jesus in our life, transforming us.

[23 : 29] And each one of us, each one of us, you, you are evidence of Jesus' miraculous power working in your heart. What Jesus has done in your life is no less astounding than the miracles we read about here, in your life.

Unlike the people who see the mute and deaf man who naturally would want to know how this happened. If people knew or could see what you were like before you met Jesus, they would be amazed.

They would be amazed at the testimony of your life. Now, when Christians talk about testimonies, we often revert to talking about how you or whoever became a follower of Jesus.

Their conversion, like I said. And don't get me wrong, we celebrate that moment. We could, it's a great thing to recall our own conversion, the moment we turned to faith in Christ.

it's a brilliant moment in our lives. But, do you know that your testimony is more than that moment? It is more than that moment. Every day of your life is a testimony because every day by God's miraculous power, a crumb of his power is changing you to be more like him.

[24 : 44] Every day is a testimony of Jesus in your life. Can I encourage you? Can I suggest that you allow, that you let your life, how you live and how you speak and what you say, that you let it, by God's grace, you might even strive to make sure that each day of your life is a testimony of God's miraculous power.

Saying no to temptation, saying yes to wise and right women. And your life will be a testimony and people will be overwhelmed with amazement, not at you, but at Jesus Christ and what he has done and what he will continue to do in your life through you.

Because his works in you are the evidence, the testimony of who he is in your life. You are all miracles. You are all miracles.

And testimony of his grace. What does discipleship look like? Having knowledge of God, knowledge of Jesus and his mission.

Having the character that is desperate for him and humble like him. And having the action that one, and then having the actions, the knowledge that he's aware that God, that you each day are a testimony of his grace, a trophy of his grace.

[26 : 12] That God will work to you and people will be amazed at Jesus because of the way that we make love for ourselves. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. .