

All right, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us today. Last week, we kicked off our big new Spring series, A Different Way: Do What Jesus Did. I'm really hopeful for how God is going to move in this series and in this season. We started by just calling out for God's grace. All week, we've just been praying together as a church of Jesus, help me be open to a different way. The reason we want to do this series is because there is a growing sense of hunger and thirst for righteousness. There's this growing sense in our church of people longing for more, longing for the deeper life, longing to walk in the Spirit, longing to know God and to become like Him and to really be His disciple.

There's this sense of, I want to learn how to live in God's kingdom and do life with Him. And so what we're doing in this series is we're just acting like we're a new creation in Christ. We're just trying to act like we can actually take off the old self and put on the new self. Like we actually can count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. We're acting like we're partakers of the divine nature, that we live in God's kingdom, and we're actually acting like we can actually do the things that Jesus did. You see, if we're honest with each other, there is a growing sense of discontent with American Christianity. All you have to do is look around. You might feel it. The people around you are experiencing it. The people in the world are experiencing it. I'm like, there's this growing sense of discontent in American Christianity and partially because it just doesn't work.

I mean, if you look at what we've reduced American Christianity down to, it's a one-hour-a-week, one-hour-a-month, one-hour-a-quarter gathering. We've made American Christianity comfort, convenience, consumerism, control. We identify with Jesus. We're a fan of Jesus. We believe in Jesus. We can speak the language of Jesus and we want Jesus. But we just want Jesus... and the world. Jesus and our flesh. Jesus and our way of life. We want Jesus and something else instead of just Jesus. And so, it's almost like we've made Jesus a buffet line, and we go through and we want some joy and we want His peace and we want forgiveness. And man, American Christianity, we want a super scooping of eternal salvation.

But then, we don't want any obedience. And we'll pass on the holiness. And servanthood, that's not really for me and my meal right now. And so, we claim Jesus, but we have no intent to actually follow Him or obey Him. And the problem is, it just doesn't work. It's a form of godliness without any power. And what happens is we just never change. We don't grow. We don't become healthy. We don't become free. It's like some of us have said we're an American Christian for 20 years, but we still worry as much today as we did when we got saved. Every year we're a year older, but our anxiety and our fear and our addiction and our sin patterns, they don't seem to be getting any smaller. In fact, they feel like they're getting bigger. And the sad part is, is at some point we've come to this conclusion where we no longer even expect to change. We no longer even believe that it's possible to grow. And we don't expect the people around us to change or grow.

And so, it's like we've reduced Jesus to the forgiveness of our sins and eternal salvation when we die. We've reduced Him to taking care of our past and our future somewhere way off there. Which means He has no relevance to our life in the here and now. And we forget that in Jesus, He calls us to go from glory to glory. Not in the way back there and not in the way out there, but in the here and now. So maybe, just maybe, it's time for a different way. You see, what we said last week is that if you want to do the things that Jesus did, you have to first do the things that Jesus did. If I want to do what Jesus did on-the-spot, I have to first do what Jesus did behind-the-scenes. If I want to live the life of Jesus, I have to take on the lifestyle of Jesus. If I want to do the works of Jesus, I have to first walk in the ways of Jesus.

And you say, "What does that mean?" Well, it means if you want to do the things that Jesus did, you have to first do the things that Jesus did. If you want to do the things that Jesus did, like heal the sick and raise the dead and cast out demons. And live free from the love of money. And live free from anxiety and fear and worry. And love your neighbor and be deeply connected with God, and have a sense of internal security. And have joy and peace and hope in your life. Then you first have to do the things that Jesus did. His lifestyle. Things like prayer, and fasting, and Scripture, and silence, and solitude, and Sabbath, and confession, and celebration, and generosity, and servanthood. We have to take on His disciplines, His habits. We have to practice the way of Jesus so we can live the way of Jesus.

You say, "What are the things that Jesus did?" Well, we showed you this graphic, and we just said this is just a great example of the things that Jesus did. You read the Gospels. This is what you see. Jesus had peace in chaos. He had self-control in the face of temptation. He had joy in every circumstance, purpose in the mundane routine of His life. He had hope in the midst of despair, wisdom in life, love in relationships. He was free from the world. He was able to forgive no matter what. He had this deep connection with God. These are the things that Jesus did. And isn't this what you want in your life? Without even knowing you, I know you spend most of your life pursuing these things. Why? Because this is what we long for as humans. The only question is, how are you trying to get this? You're trying to get this primarily through counseling, medication, self-help, striving, performing, earning, success, control, the hot baths, long walks.

We said all that last week. How are you actually trying to get this? Or are you trying to do the things that Jesus did so you can do the things that Jesus did? See, in Mark 9, there's this really interesting story. Jesus goes up on the Mount of Transfiguration, and this man brings his demon-possessed son to the disciples and he asks for their help. And the disciples do everything they know to do to cast out this demon. Everything they've watched Jesus do. Everything Jesus has taught them. They know it's possible and they throw every trick they have at it, but they can't cast out the demon. And Jesus comes back down off the mountain and the exasperated father brings his boy to Jesus and says, "Jesus, I brought my son to your disciples. They couldn't do it. If you can, will you take pity on us and heal my son?" Jesus says, "If you can? Everything is possible for him who believes."

He says, "I do believe, but help me in my unbelief." And with a single word, Jesus casts the demon out of the boy. He's completely healed. Everyone is amazed. And then, later when Jesus and the disciples are alone, they asked Jesus, "Jesus, why couldn't we cast that demon out? We did everything we knew to do and we couldn't cast it out. Why?" Jesus looks right back at them and He says, "This kind can only come out by prayer and fasting." Now, if you're familiar with the story, the most interesting part about the entire thing is nowhere in the story does Jesus pray or fast. So, they're a little confused. This kind can only come out by prayer and fasting. What is He talking about? He's saying, "If you want to do what I do on-the-spot, you got to do what I do behind-the-scenes." There was no prayer and fasting on-the-spot.

There was just a healing. There was just the power of God. There was just life. But Jesus lived a lifestyle of prayer and fasting behind-the-scenes. This kind can only come out by prayer and fasting. These are the kinds of things that can never happen on-the-spot. They only happen first behind-the-scenes. If I want to do what Jesus did on-the-spot, there's a word for this, I first have to be His... disciple behind-the-scenes. So, you ready to talk about this? Okay. The word disciple. It's a word we're familiar with and yet it's foreign to us at the same time. We know Jesus had disciples. We know we're called to make disciples. We use words like discipleship. But if we're honest, the word has a lot of mystery to it. We kind of keep it at a distance. If we're honest, it's a little bit intimidating. So, let's just redefine what a disciple is.

Again, a disciple is simply a learner, a student, a follower; one who becomes like the one they're following. A disciple is someone who has considered their ways and counted the cost and decided they want to follow Jesus. They want to be with Jesus. They want to be like Jesus. They want to learn to think like Him and talk like Him and act like Him and live like Him. They have decided to arrange and rearrange their life around Jesus. To order and reorder their life around Jesus. They have decided to come to Jesus with an intent to obey, an intent to follow. And they've submitted and surrendered their will to Him. And they aren't perfect, but when Jesus shows them where they're off, they're quick to repent to get in alignment with Him. And they have decided that Jesus is going to say things like, "You have heard it said, but I say to you." And they have decided that whatever Jesus says is what is good and what is true and what is right.

So, they want to actually become like Him, not just identify with Him. In fact, Jesus says, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." A disciple is someone who is training and being trained to become like their teacher. It's a disciple. It's someone who is training and being trained to become like their teacher. Now, whether you realize this or not, you currently, in this moment, are a disciple of someone or something. The only question is that you choose that thing intentionally or unintentionally. You're a disciple of something. You're a learner, a follower, a student of someone or of something. Make no mistake about it. There is something that is forming and shaping and pressing and conforming your life into alignment with it.

The only question is, have you chosen it intentionally or have you unintentionally allowed it to form and shape your life? Like you might be a disciple of Fox News. You might be a disciple of social media. You might be a disciple of the algorithm. You might be a disciple of ChatGPT. You might be a disciple of Hollywood, Silicon Valley, Washington DC, Wall Street. You might be a disciple of Netflix. You might be a disciple of that celebrity or of that influencer, but make no mistake about it, someone or something is teaching you how to live your life. The only question is, did you choose it? Or did it choose you? And you say, "Well, how do I know what I'm a disciple of?" Well, you have to ask questions like this, who defines what is good and true and right in my life? Who do I submit and surrender to? Who defines what success looks like?

And how I should live my life and how I make decisions and how I should be a mom or a dad or a student or a worker? Who defines what's normal? You want to know how you know who you're a disciple of? Whose thoughts do you think? Whose words do you speak? Whose truths do you believe? Whose actions do you emulate? And whose ways do you walk in? That is who you are a disciple of. So, the question I have to ask myself is, am I a disciple of Jesus or of something else? Am I training and being trained to be like Him or to be like something in this world? Because Jesus says, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you." In other words, Jesus says His disciples arranged their entire life around Him. They order and keep reordering and rearranging their life with Him at the center. And when they have chosen to arrange their life around Him, it impacts every other thing in their life.

Whatever you arrange your life around is who you are a disciple of and it impacts every other area of your life. The question is, have you arranged your life around the right thing? Now, do you remember the story of Peter? Peter's a fisherman. He's married. He's got his life. He's living his way. And then, one day Jesus comes walking down the shore of the Sea of Galilee and completely interrupts Peter's life. And He comes to Peter and says, "'Come follow me,' Jesus said, 'And I will make you fishers of men.'" Come and follow Me. It's an invitation to move, an invitation to respond. And when He says, "Follow Me," this is not figurative, flowery, subjective language. This is not Jesus saying, "Hey, stay where you are. Keep living your life, but just think about Me every once in a while. And put one of My little fish things on the back of your boat. And go to church when you can, and do some good in the world. All right. Take it easy." No.

This was very practical and very literal. "You follow Me now. You come where I go. You stay where I stay. You live how I live. You learn to do life the way that I do life. Come and follow Me. Be with Me in relationship. And I'm going to teach you how to live your life. I want to be your teacher. I want to be your Rabbi. And I want to teach you the best way to do your life and I will make you. You don't have to change yourself because you can't. But if you come and follow Me, I will shape you and form you and mold you into My image and My likeness." And it says, "At once they left their nets and followed Him." In other words, Peter considered his ways. He

counted the cost and he left everything. He left all of the way he was doing his life to say, "I'm going to learn how to do it Jesus' way." Now compare that to the rich, young ruler.

He's rich, he's young, and he's a ruler. If we're honest, it's the life we want, but what a burden to bear. What a hard way to have to live your life as a young person. And he comes to Jesus and he says, "Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In other words, he sees value in Jesus. He's inspired by Jesus. He sees good in Jesus and he wants what? Forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. And Jesus says, "You know the commandments, keep them." And the man says, "I've kept all of them since I was a boy." And then, look what it says. Jesus looked at him and it says, "He loved him. 'One thing you lack,' He said, 'Go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow Me.' At this, the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth." Here it is again, come follow me. Not figurative, subjective, flowery language.

Very practical. "You, come follow Me right now." And Jesus loved the man, which means He had good will towards the man. His will for the man was good. And He says, "One thing you lack," what was he lacking? Jesus. See, this man was a disciple of money. Money was his teacher. Money was his leader. Money was his Lord. And Jesus is saying, "Hey, if you want to be My disciple, you can't be a disciple of money. And so, the thing that you lack is Me. And the greatest barrier between you and Me right now is your money. And so, I don't need your money. In fact, I'm asking you to give it to the poor. I'm going to free you from the love of money and teach you how to do your life." But the man didn't want to walk in the way of Jesus in the area of finance. He wanted the way of Jesus in the way of forgiveness and eternal salvation, but not in the way of finance. So, his face fell, fell sad, and he went away because he had great wealth.

The more success you have in the things and the ways of this world, the harder it is to submit and surrender those things to Jesus and choose His way. So, can I ask you a question? Are you more like Peter or like the rich, young ruler? At once, when He points something out, are you willing to change your way? Or do you often have your face fall sad and go away in a different direction because Jesus invited you to take His way in a way you didn't want to take? And what I love about Jesus is He doesn't violate the man's free will. He has given you the ability to choose who you want to be your teacher, who you want to be a disciple of, and He will not violate it. He will not force you. He will not convince you. He will not lower the standard though either. And so, He loves you. And He says what you need to hear. And He invites you to come and follow Him. The only question is, will you choose to be His disciple?

I mean, Jesus says, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" That's a really fair question for Jesus, isn't it? Like, come on. Like, "Why do you call me Lord? Why do you call me master? Why do you call me God? Why do you call me Savior? Why do you call me teacher and then do not do what I say? It's a little paradoxical, isn't it? Because to be Lord means I know what's best, so come and follow Me." And so, every place where I know what God asked

me to do, but I choose to do it my way is a place that I'm saying, "I know better than you, Jesus, in this area." We just kind of got to say it like it is. It's like when I do it my way, what I'm saying is, "Jesus, I know more about sex and money and time and mental health and my life and relationships than you do. That's why I'm taking this way instead of Your way."

And we have to acknowledge the paradoxical nature of which American Christianity exists in. We trust Jesus, just catch it, for our eternal salvation, but not our daily life. I trust Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins, but not for the freedom of my current struggle. I trust Jesus for the next breath of air I breathe. Like that one. But not for the financial provision of my life. So, we have to acknowledge that many of us build our lives on an unstable paradoxical foundation in and of itself. I mean, it says, "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did." If we say we're a follower of Jesus, then we actually got to do the things that Jesus did because we're following and learning and becoming like Him. This is why Jesus says, "If anyone" – that includes you, yes? – "would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

We love the cross of Jesus that was for the forgiveness of our sins that offered us the resurrection life. We're just not so sure we want our own cross. And so, we're a fan, but not necessarily a follower. And we forget to be a disciple means we have to deny ourselves. He says, "If you're going to come and follow me, you're going to have to deny yourself and pick up your cross." What does that mean? It means you have to die to your way of life. You have to die to your pride and your opinions and your rights, and you know better, and you want to do it like this and your feelings. That might be the hardest one for some of us to be crucified on. But if we want to experience a resurrection, there has to be first a crucifixion. So, could it be that we never experienced the resurrection life of Jesus because we're unwilling to first experience the crucifixion of our own flesh nature?

If I'm not willing to pick up my cross and die to myself, I can't then step into the resurrection life that He offers me. Which is why He says, "Whoever loses his life will save it." If I will deny myself and be crucified with Christ, I can rise to new life in Jesus. You see, every one of us at some point in time has to make a decision of whether or not Jesus is worth following. Just think about this with me for a second. At some point in time, you have to decide, is Jesus worth following? Like, does He know what He's talking about? Is He smart enough to follow? Is He wise enough to follow? Does He know what He's talking about? Does He have any clue? Is He good enough to follow? Because Jesus is either right about everything or He's right about nothing.

He's worth following in every way or in no way. He's either right about it all or He's right about none. He's either Lord of all or Lord of none. He either is worth all of my life or He's worth none of my life because He can't be mostly good. Usually true. Often right. For the most part, pretty good. Hence the paradoxical nature again. He's either worth following with all my life or with none of my life. And what we forget is that Jesus came in many ways to just show us how to be human. Right? Stay with me on this. Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. What's

amazing about Jesus is when we look at Jesus, we see exactly who God is like, and we see exactly who humanity was created to be.

Jesus says, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. You want to know what God is like? I am the Son of God. I'm the exact representation of who God is. But you know what else I'm also like? I am the Son of Man. And I poured Myself out and I took on humanity and I moved into your neighborhood to show you a new way to be human." In fact, this is why it says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth," – this is His humanity; this is Jesus, the man – "with the Holy Spirit and power and how he went around doing good, healing all who are under the power of the devil because God was with Him." Jesus, the man, showed us what it was like to be a man in relationship with God and what that life could be like. Jesus showed us what it's like to live in right relationship with God and what this life actually looks like. This is why He says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." We literally read this and think, Jesus is the only way to heaven.

That is so true and so what this means, but it means more than that. It means He is the way to be human. He is the way to live your life. Do you know that the Bible says that Jesus, if you can catch this, is both the firstborn of creation and the firstborn among the dead. The word firstborn in the original language is the word prototype. He is the prototype of the resurrection life. In other words, He is the standard and the source of a new way to be human. I mean, think about it. When God made Adam in the Garden, we knew how to be human. We knew how to walk with God and live with God and what we were created to do and what it looked like to be human. But when we sinned, we lost the ability to be human. We were lost. We were lonely. We were broken. And then Jesus came as the firstborn among the dead, the prototype, to show us a new way to be human. A new way to live our life.

Are you with me on this? For six days in creation, God creates all things. And then, on the seventh day, He rests. Do you realize after those first six days of creation, He doesn't create anything again until you are a new creation in Christ? And He created an entirely new reality for those of us who, by faith, have chosen to be crucified with Christ and rise to a new life. And so, Jesus is now the standard and the source of what it looks like to be a new creation, how to live as a human in a new way. You say, why am I telling you all this? Because if you don't believe that, you will think, all the things that Jesus did, He did because He was Messiah and Savior and Lord. No, He did all the things that He did to show us what it looked like to be human. That if you want to be free and full of life and vibrant as a human, you got to do the things that Jesus did – His lifestyle – so you can do the things that Jesus did.

See, every place that you decide to do it your way instead of God's way, you're saying, you know how to be a human better than Jesus. So, when you do your sexuality in any way that's outside of one man and one woman in a covenant of marriage relationship, what you're saying is, you know how to be a human better than Jesus who created, redeemed, and blessed sexuality. When I do my finances in any way other than tithing, giving my first best 10% to God and refusing to live with the love of money and refusing to live in constant and chronic debt,

what I'm saying, just acknowledge it, I'm saying, I know how to be a human better than Jesus who created, redeemed, and blessed money. When I do my relationships and I hold on to offense and bitterness and anger and wrath and trying to get people back, what I'm saying is, I know how to do humanity, relationships, better than Jesus who created, redeemed, and blessed relationships.

When I do my time and I work seven days a week and I don't take a Sabbath and I'm always busy and I have no margin and I fill my life to max-capacity, what I'm saying is, I know how to be a human better than Jesus knows how to be a human, who is the one who created, redeemed, and blessed time. This is why it says, "The Lord Almighty says, 'Give careful thoughts to your ways.' You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages only to put them in a purse with holes in it. This is what the Lord Almighty says, 'Give careful thought to your ways.'"

When it says it twice, it's trying to get our attention. Consider, give careful thought. Put some time into thinking about the way you live your life. How's it going? Do you feel like you plant, but never harvest? Do you feel like you eat, but you're never satisfied? Do you feel like you drink, but never have your fill? You put on clothes and you're never warm? You go and acquire all this stuff, but it feels like it's fleeting and running away from you? Like, consider your ways. How's the way of your marriage going? How's the way of your mental health going? How's the way of your emotions and your time and your finances and your family? Like, have you given any thought to the way you live your life? What I think happens to a lot of us is we live life our way, but we say it's in the name of Jesus. And then, when it doesn't work, we get disappointed and mad at God.

So, I do my life and I claim the name of Jesus over it. But if we're honest, that way doesn't look anything like the way Jesus lived His life. And then, when it doesn't work, we get mad and disappointed and offended at God. I think a lot of American Christianity has a lot of offense to God because we've confused His way and our way. We've put His name on our way. And then, when it doesn't work, we think it's His fault. See, a great question that every one of us has to answer is, what is it that you want from God? Do you ever think about that? What is it that you want from God? Why do you claim His name? Why do you gather in a room full of people that are gathered around the name of Jesus? Why do you call yourself a Christian or a follower of Jesus? Like, what is it that you want from God?

One day Jesus was walking along and two of John the Baptist's disciples, because disciples can be learner students of anyone or anything, but these two men are disciples of John the Baptist. And as they see Jesus walk by, He catches their attention and they start to follow Him. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" It's the question He asks every one of us to the depths of our soul. What do you want? What do you want? What do you want from Jesus? You want forgiveness? Eternal salvation? You want comfort? You want



religion? You want Him to alleviate some guilt in your soul? You want Him to bring some peace to the chaos of your life? Do you want other people to think well of you because you claim the name of Jesus?

Do you want bread and fish – what He can do for you? Or do you want Jesus? And do you want to be a disciple and be with Him and become like Him? What do you want? It's a very kind, very honest, very authentic question. And they said, "Rabbi," which means teacher, "Where are you staying?" Remember, following is not subjective. It was very literal. Where are you staying? Like, "Jesus, we want to follow You. We want to know You. We want to become like You. And we want to learn how to live in your way." "'Come,' He replied, 'And you will see.'" Whatever answer you answer to His question, what do you want, He will always respond with kindness and compassion. And He will always invite you to come and see who He is and what He offers.

And I think a great problem that happens in our lives is Jesus invites us to come and be His disciple and we come wanting something different than that. So, we come into our relationship with totally different premises. And when it doesn't work out, we get mad at Him and say it was His fault and we're disappointed and it didn't work. But Jesus doesn't invite you to a life of bread and fish. He invites you to a life in His kingdom as His disciple, learning how to be a human. And I get it. Some of you right now, you're like, "Dude, I hate this message." I get it. Because some of you, you're probably sitting here and you're like, "This whole disciple thing, I don't want to be a disciple. I'm happy being a Christian." Totally. Do you know what a Christian means though? Christian just means "little Christ." So, I'm going to be a little Jesus like learn how to do the things that He did so I can do the things that He did. In the Bible, they're not called Christians. In the first century, they weren't called Christians. They were called "Followers of the Way."

Which means the way they lived their life was learning how to live their life the way that Jesus did. And I think sometimes we forget that Jesus is so clear. I don't preach enough on this and so, I repent and apologize to you for this. But we don't talk enough about Jesus saying, "Count the cost to follow Me." Like, "There's actually a cost to following Me and you got to count it." In a run on talking about what it means to be a disciple, He tells the story and He says, "Which of you would build a barn without first sitting down and considering whether or not you have enough money to actually do it? And which of you is a king? If you are going to go to war with another king, would you not first sit down and think, 'Can I actually win this battle?'" You would count the cost. You would consider it. And then, He says, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything He has cannot be my disciple." You say, "So, I have to give up everything and live in poverty to be a disciple of Jesus?" No. He's saying, "You have to be open to my way in any and every area of your life."

And we get so lost in counting the cost. I have to die to myself. I have to give up my pride. I have to give up my rights. I can't do my sin. I can't do the – it's like, so hard. It's all this stuff.

Yes, count the cost. But what does it cost you to not follow Jesus? What does it cost you to be a disciple of the world instead of Jesus? You know what it costs you? That. Is this a cost you're willing to pay? Is that the cost you're willing to pay for your family and your relationships and your life and your soul? Because that's a high price.

And what we forget is that the way of Jesus is not hard. This is love for God, to obey His commands and His commands are not burdensome. His way is easy and light. It's not hard and heavy. Yes, there is a cost. The cost is dying to my way and taking His way as a disciple. And what does He give me back? He gives me back this. He gives me back this. See, we forget and we think Jesus invites us to forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. But what He really invites us to is life in the kingdom with Him. That's why His main message was, "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand," and why He went around preaching the good news of the kingdom, the Gospel of the kingdom. And what is that? It's just simply that He came to restore your identity, reconcile your relationship, and redeem your purpose. That He's come to make you like Him, forgiven and free, included in Christ. He's invited you into this ongoing relationship with Him where He literally invites you into the eternal loving community of the Trinity.

If I'm included in Christ and Christ is in the Trinity, I have now just been invited into the loving eternal relationship of the Trinity itself. And then, He invites me to do the very things that He did. This is the gig. This is what He – this is a disciple. This is the kingdom. This is what He invites you to. We've used this language for years. Let me give you a different language for this series. He invites you to become like Jesus, to be with Jesus, and to simply do what Jesus did. Doesn't mean perfect. Doesn't mean you got it all figured out. I mean, have you read the Gospels? When those disciples got invited to follow Jesus, they were a mess. But they had made the intent to say, "He is the one I will follow." And when He shows me that my way is different than His way, I don't want to live in a paradox of life. I want to, by faith, say, "Jesus, I don't get it. I don't like it. It doesn't make sense. But because You say so, Lord, I will do it."

You with me on this? Let me try to pull it all together real quick on this. Jesus basically summarizes all of what it means of being a disciple to two things. Two things. The first is obedience. "If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples." He says to be his disciple, I have to obey. Because you say so, Lord, I will do it. I don't have to like it. I don't have to get it. It doesn't have to make sense to me. It doesn't have to be what anyone and everyone else is doing. It usually is not what everyone and anyone else is doing. But if I have set my attention to be a disciple of Jesus, I actually have to live a life of obedience. So, obedience and love. "A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

He says, "If you're really My disciple, you will live a life of love. You will become a person of love and you will walk in the way of love." So, hear me. Obedience and love are both the intent and the result of being a disciple of Jesus. Obedience and love are both the intent and the result of being a disciple of Jesus. If I'm a disciple of Jesus, I enter into that with the intent to

obey Him and the intent to become a person of love. And as I walk with Him and follow Him, the result is, I become a person of obedience and I grow into a person of love. And you've been invited by Jesus to be His disciple.

This is why that big verse at the end of Jesus' time on earth, when He is ascending to heaven, "Therefore, go and make disciples" – that would be you – "of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you and surely I am with you always." Can I just tell you? This is what I want from God. This is what I want. This is my premise. This is why I come to the table. This is why I'm here. This is why I do this. This is what I want for you. But if you don't want it, that's okay. This is what I want. I want to be a disciple, a learner, a follower, a student of Jesus. I want to be baptized, not just into water, but I want to be immersed into the name or the reality of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the power of the Spirit. And I want to learn to obey Him in every area of my life and be with Him and learn how to live in His kingdom. This is what I want.

But it's not what I always wanted. And so, you might be here today and you're like, "I don't really want any of that." That's okay. You can call out to Him and ask Him to change the desire within you. To say, "Jesus, please change my appetite from the things of this world to You. Because Jesus, I really want to do the things that You did. I really do. And I chase these really hard in my life. But if I'm learning that if I want to do the things that You did on-the-spot, I have to choose to first be Your disciple behind-the-scenes. Because I can't do what You did if I don't first learn how to do what You did." Because this kind can only come out by prayer and fasting. Or what Jesus did behind-the-scenes before the moment.

And so, here's my really honest, really genuine question for you today. Have you ever decided to be a disciple of Jesus? Not, are you a Christian? Not, have you prayed a prayer? Not, have you raised your hand or experienced salvation? Not, are you a good person? Not, are you trying to do good things? Have you ever decided to accept Jesus' invitation to be one who is training and being trained to be like Him in the here and now? Like, have you ever accepted, "Come and follow Me"? "Come and follow Me and be with Me and let Me form you and shape you and mold you." Have you ever come to Jesus with the intent to say, "My intent is obedience and love. And I know it's so far away from the reality that I'm currently living, but Jesus, You say that You will make me. And so, I need that grace because I can't make myself."

See, I think you can go to American church for 50 years and never make the choice to be a disciple. And nowhere in the Gospels do we see Jesus offer easy and cheap and free salvational moments and then say, "Now, go back and live your life exactly as it was." The grace of God was available to anyone and everyone, but it always was an invitation to a new way of being human. To a new way of life. To a new existence in God's kingdom for what you were created for in the first place. The standard is not the world. That is not the way to be human. That is the way to be dead.

Jesus is the prototype of being human and being alive. The only question is, will I accept that invitation? And some of you, hear me, you're sitting here and you're like, "I'm too young or I'm too old to be a disciple. I'm saved. I'm good." You're not too young. Students, hear me. The greatest decision you will make in your life is not to raise your hand and pray a prayer, be a Christian, identify with the church. It's to say, "I have decided to be a disciple of Jesus. And I will learn to live my life the way He lives His life." Listen, because most of his disciples were teenagers when He invited them. So, you are not too young. And if you think, "I'm too old. I'm 50 years, living my way, doing the thing. I'm saved. I'm good." Listen, Nicodemus was an old man. And when Jesus showed up, he was confused and disoriented and a little frustrated with the sermon series that Jesus started. Okay. It's like, "Don't be talking to me about a different way. I got a good way going here." And he didn't like it and he didn't get it.

But three years later of wrestling and struggling and seeking God, Nicodemus buries the body of Christ as a disciple of Jesus saying, "It doesn't matter how long I've walked in that way. I can change today in Jesus' name. And He has drawn me to a new life and a new reality and a new experience." Have you ever decided to be a disciple of Jesus? And so, here's the practice for this week, right? Every week in this series, there's something to do. Jesus, give me a desire to be Your disciple. That's it. Could you pray that this week? Not, "Okay, I'm a disciple. Okay, here I go. Okay, I'm going to do it." It's probably not going to work out all that well for you. Because we can't do it. So, I'm trying to – this whole series is, we can't do it, but we can position ourselves in ways that open us up to God's grace.

Jesus, my heart doesn't feel it. Jesus, if I got to give up this, this, and this, I don't know that I'm in. Jesus, I got no idea how You're going to take care of that, that, and that. But I guess I can just say, "Would You give me a desire to be Your disciple?" Because if I'm honest, there is an aching and a longing in my soul for more. I don't think that more is found in You, Jesus. I think it's found in sex and money and control and comfort and travel and feelings and family and friends and parties and activities in my life. But the more I do those things, the even emptier I feel and even less there is in my soul. So I'm losing my soul while I'm trying to find those things, which is something You actually just told me. So, maybe, just maybe, You are actually right. And I acknowledge my life exists in this continual paradox.

And I don't like being a duplicit person. And I don't like to be divided in my own self. So, maybe, just maybe, Jesus, You could give me a desire to be a student of You and start doing some things that You did so I can do the things that You did. Close your eyes. Have you ever made the choice to say, I want to be a disciple of Jesus? It is really hard to live a different way without starting there? What's the Holy Spirit been moving or speaking or stirring in your heart?

Let me remind any and every one that's listening, the beauty of Jesus is there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Nothing that Jesus is saying to you today is condemning in any nature. He's trying to show you what is good and what is true and what is

right. And like the rich, young ruler and like Peter, He's looking at you and He loves you. And He is trying to show you some things in your life that are keeping you from Him. And He's asking you to trust Him in that way, that you might experience the life. The life of the kingdom. Not in the past or in the future, but in the here and now.

So, Jesus, give me a desire to be a disciple of You. Give us, as a church, a desire to be a disciple of You. I pray Jesus for the questions that were posed today, that they would lodge in our ears and in our mind and in our heart. And that this week they would come back up through the grace of the Holy Spirit. And we would work through some of those things with You because You're not asking us questions to hurt us. You're asking us questions to free us. Because You are the way and You are the truth and You are the life.

Don't let religion, the world, or your flesh keep you from the resurrected life of Jesus Christ in His everlasting kingdom. That is not then and there, but is here and now and offers you all the things you really want. You just access them in a very different way than the world around you. Thank You, Jesus, that You give us the chance to be disciples. What a gift. In Your name we pray, amen.