

THE GOAL OF JESUS' DISCIPLE MAKING

Mark 1-3

Mark 3:14,15

“He appointed twelve--designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”

The number of Christians has grown and is today in the millions, tens of millions and even billions, in Korea, U.S., and worldwide. In particular, they say U.S. has about fifty millions believers, however, American society is becoming gradually corrupt and resembles that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The reason is today's church, unlike Jesus, does not give discipleship training. As a result, the church has lost its influence as the light and salt of the world, and has been thrown outside to be trampled by men. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus gives disciple making as the supreme command by saying “go and make disciples of all nations”.

Through today's passage, may we learn firstly, what was the motive of Jesus' command to go and make disciples? (3:1-12), secondly, what sort of people did Jesus choose as his disciples? (ch1,2;3:16-19), thirdly, what was the goal of his disciple making ministry? (3:13-15) Through this message, may God help us to renew God's call as Jesus' disciples and missionaries so that we may grow into powerful disciple makers.

I. The motive of Jesus' disciple making (3:1-12)

First, it was because of the stubbornness of the religious leaders of the time. (3:5) One Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue. And a man with a shriveled hand was there. The religious leaders were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. They watched him closely to see if he would heal the man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath. When Jesus saw the man, he had a shepherd heart towards him. Jesus wanted to heal the man. Jesus said to the man with a shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” (3) When Jesus said this, he felt the sharp eyes of the religious leaders upon him. They were ready to accuse Jesus if he healed the man on the Sabbath. Then Jesus asked the religious leaders. “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. Jesus was angry and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts. Jesus healed the man with a shriveled hand. In order to help the Pharisees to overcome their stubbornness, Jesus challenged their conscience with the word, and healed the man. The Pharisees remained silent to hide their wrong. They went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. (6)

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Israelites. They should have been shepherds to suffering souls such as the man with a shriveled hand. But instead they had an evil intention to arrest Jesus by using the man with a shriveled hand. Jesus was deeply angry and in distress at their lack of love and justice. Yet he could not stop the gospel ministry. Jesus decided to raise new leaders who would look after the flock. Today as well, Jesus is angry and in distress if we abandon the responsibility as new spiritual leaders in this generation and just use the flock.

Second, it was because of the wandering sheep without a shepherd. (3:7-12) Despite the religious leaders who were looking for a chance to accuse Jesus, he healed the helpless man with a shriveled hand. Because of this, the Pharisees began to plot with the Herodians how they would kill Jesus. Jesus left them and withdrew to the lake.

At that time, what happened? Look at verses 7-11. “Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”

Why did the large crowd come to Jesus? Look at verse 8b. “When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him” They heard the news that Jesus had healed a man with a shriveled hand in the synagogue. Jesus valued one person’s life more than keeping the Sabbath law. Jesus also knew that he would be in danger of being accused or even killed if he healed the man on the Sabbath. Yet Jesus loved the man with a shriveled hand, his sheep, more than his own life. Jesus’ great love of coming to give his life for all men is well revealed through this incident. He was totally different from the religious leaders who were only interested in using the sheep and satisfying their own desires.

What had they heard about “all he was doing”? Of course, it referred to Jesus’ great power of healing the man with a shriveled hand with just his word. Most of all, they saw the image of a true shepherd in Jesus. The crowd who were suffering from diseases and evil spirits wanted to be healed by Jesus’ great power. They also rushed to Jesus in order to be comforted by his love. Many people came to him from all Judea, Samaria and even from the Gentile regions.

What did they want? They wanted to see a shepherd who was full of God’s word and love like Jesus. Matthew 9:36 says that Jesus saw the crowds and he had compassion on them. “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus also gave his disciples a topic to earnestly pray for. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Mt 9:37-38)

Another reason that Jesus raised the Twelve was that there were many sheep but there was no shepherd who might help them. Jesus saw the stubborn servants of God. He saw the large crowd looking for a shepherd. Luke 6:12 says that Jesus went up to a mountain with all those problems. There he spent the night praying to God. In the midst of all those problems, he wanted to hear God's voice and do what God wanted him to do. What he did the following morning was to call his disciples and chose the Twelve.

II. The standard to be chosen as Jesus' disciples (3:13-15)

Look at verse 13. "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him." When he chose his disciples he did not ask them to submit a CV or a school reference. He did not see what tribe they belonged to. He did not require any written or oral test. He just called those he wanted. Jesus is all mighty. He knew everything and chose the disciples whom he thought fit. That he called 'those he wanted' means the Lord's sovereignty.

Jesus called us as his disciples and missionaries, and his call does not change even though we may commit sin. Romans 11:29 says, "For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable." God's call is irrevocable. God called us as his disciples and missionaries and he never regrets his call. God called us as missionaries and has used us so far. His call is absolute and it is by God's absolute grace. We must renew the grace of God's call that he chose us as missionaries according to his sovereignty.

God's call itself is great grace for us. Romans 1:5 says, "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." The basic grace we received is the grace of salvation through the gospel. We also received the grace of calling for the mission. The Apostle Paul always remembered God's call and gave thanks for it. Likewise we must always thank God for his grace, which even the angels desire, that he called us and used us so far as his disciples and missionaries. God did not call us as missionaries but also as disciple makers. Matthews 28:19 says, Jesus commanded, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" This is the Lord's supreme command. We must renew God's call to be his missionaries as well as disciple makers and always work as disciple makers.

Who were the Twelve that Jesus called? Look at Mark 3:16-19. "These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." If we analyze each person one by one we find that each has their own character. Simon Peter was strong and had leadership ability. He had a big mouth yet his inner person was weak. On the contrary, John was quiet yet thoughtful. He was also a man of hot temper. James was ambitious and once he got hold of something he never let go.

Andrew was simple yet positive. Philip was complicated and passive. The tax collector Matthew must have been very selfish. Thomas was doubtful and a positivist. Bartholomew was passive and Simon the Zealot was a patriot. James son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus were quiet and patient. Judas Iscariot was an opportunist who betrayed Jesus. When Jesus trained the disciples he did not ignore their personal characters but helped them individually. He did not treat them just as a group but helped and trained each of them as a unique individual. The reason was to raise them to be shepherds to bear with similar kinds of people like them.

From an objective view point what were the standards of choosing the Twelve?

First, he chose faithful people. (1:16-20, 2:14) Jesus called Peter and Andrew when they were casting a net. (1:16) Also he called James and John when they were preparing their nets in the boat. (1:19) Jesus called Levi the tax collector when he was sitting at the tax collector's booth doing his job. (2:14) There must have been many young people doing nothing at the lake of Galilee. Yet Jesus called none of them. The Bible says, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." Jesus wants his servants to work hard. Jesus called hard working young men as his disciples.

Second, he chose teachable people. (1:16-20) Jesus called Levi the tax collector. Levi was despised yet when he was called he immediately resigned from his lucrative job and followed Jesus. Like new wineskins, the disciples had a learning mind that meant they quickly received whatever Jesus taught them. In those days all the Pharisees and teachers of the law rejected Jesus' gospel. It was because their idea of the Old Testament was fixed and their culture was based on the Old Testament. But even though Jesus' disciples grew in the same culture, their hearts were flexible enough to receive Jesus' words like new wineskins.

Third, they had courage to make a decision of faith to follow Jesus. When Jesus said to John and James who were preparing the nets "Follow me", they made the decision of faith and followed him leaving their father and the boat. It was never easy to give up one's father and boat in order to follow Jesus. Yet because they thought following Jesus as his disciples was the most valuable thing they could make such a decision.

III. The goal of disciple making (3:13-15)

Look at verses 14, 15. "He appointed twelve--designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." Here we learn what kind of people Jesus wanted to make the Twelve into. We can find the goal of Jesus' disciple training. What was the goal of Jesus' disciple making?

(1) To help them to know Jesus personally by being with them. (14a)

Look at verse 14a. “He appointed twelve--designating them apostles--that they might be with him.” Jesus lived a common life with his disciples. More than 65% of his disciple training was carried out through common life with them. Why did Jesus live with them?

First, it was to help his disciples to know Jesus personally through common life. The best way to know Jesus personally is to live a life together with him.

Second, it was to help them to learn Jesus’ life style by being with them. Jesus wanted the disciples to see and learn his life through common life. How did he live? How did he serve the ministry? Jesus wanted them to learn such things.

Third, through common life, Jesus wanted to protect them from the evil influence of the world. In Jesus’ days, the world was evil and the yeast of the Pharisees’ hypocrisy and legalism was rife, the yeast of the Sadducees’ worldliness was strong. Today we live in the world which is like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Materialism, hedonism and post modernism suffocate us. Young people in this generation are easily influenced and polluted by the world. To raise them into Jesus’ disciples is more difficult than gaining a PhD degree. This is possible when we firstly help them to lead a common life so that they may be protected from worldly influence, and train them to grow into disciples. How can we actually live a common life with Jesus today? The best way is to live with those whom we strive to raise into disciples. Today, however, common life with disciples is not easy. So alternatively, we can help them to live in the same block of apartments, even though we may live on a different floor, so that we can see them and spend time together. Or even though we may not live together, we can share our life with them by studying the Bible one to one, sharing testimonies, listening to the message, and reading the Bible together. Through praying together and visiting, fishing, studying, and playing together we can be with them. There are many other possible ways.

(2) To raise them into evangelists. (Evangelist, Bible Teacher)

Look at verse 14b. “that he might send them out to preach”. Jesus called the disciples so that they might become excellent Bible teachers and evangelists. Jesus called the Twelve and trained them for three years to make them into powerful servants of God’s word and evangelists. If we read Acts chapter 2, we find that when Peter preached three thousand people repented and accepted Jesus. (Acts 2:41) All the disciples went out and were preciousely used as powerful evangelists. In order to raise the Twelve into great evangelists, he sent them out in twos for field work training. Many a time, Jesus helped them to see and learn how he preached and taught the people. Levi was a harsh man because of his tough life as a tax collector. Yet Jesus bore with him to the end. As a result, he became the author of the famous Matthew’s gospel through which many came to know and receive Jesus.

(3) To raise them into those who have spiritual authority to solve the problem of the flock. (3:15)

Look at verse 15. “and to have authority to drive out demons.” In Jesus’ day, there was no modern hospital with good facilities or big university hospitals like today. Most of the patients who suffered from cancer, liver disease, or from infectious diseases died. They did not have any psychiatric ward and there must have been many mental patients. In any generation, when life is tough, many people become mentally ill. In Jesus’ days, there must have been many who suffered from diseases and demon possession. In any generation, in which people do not have God in their hearts, the demons harass their souls and people are afflicted by evil spirits. They cannot be cured by modern medical treatment, by psychology, or by social welfare. Jesus healed all the sick people who came to him.

In particular, he healed many who were possessed by demons with his word and restored their whole character. When Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs he gave them authority to drive out demons. (6:13) The young disciples went out and preached the message of repentance and healed many. (6:13) It was when Jesus together with Peter, John, and James were on the transfiguration mountain. (9:2) They had driven out the demons in chapter 6, however, in chapter 9, the nine disciples could not heal the boy who was possessed by an evil spirit. They were humiliated as impotent servants of God. Then Jesus returned and healed the boy. When the nine disciples seriously asked Jesus why they could not heal the boy, Jesus answered, “This kind can come out only by prayer.” (9:29) The way to have spiritual authority is by receiving the Holy Spirit through the life of an earnest prayer. When we honestly repent and pray earnestly we can receive the power of the Spirit, and then we can effectively handle the serious problems of sheep.

In conclusion, today there are numerous churches and thousands of believers, but we see the sad reality that believers have lost their influence as the light and salt and are trampled by men. Churches are influenced by materialism and secularism of the world and are gradually losing their power. As Jesus saw the stubbornness of the religious leaders and so made disciples in order to solve the problem of the time, we also must make disciples.

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