

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

REVIEW: So far this summer we have been building to a sort of crescendo moment. We began with elevating church membership, talked about the fact that the glory goes to God in all things - including our schedules. We have drawn comparisons from the story of Les Miserables regarding the gospel, how we can be fully known, and how we can show grace and mercy to others because of the gospel. Last time we were together we looked at the idea of biblical community: how it is not an option, but a requirement to live the Christian life successfully.

INTRO: Today, we begin one of the two defining moments of this sermon series. We can call this area any number of things: fellowship - although I have grown to like that word less and less considering it has become so nebulous, and basically a junk word that means eating and general conversation. We can call it community, which is closer to what we are getting at in the idea. We can even call it discipleship, which is really what community is intended for.

Today will be the first of two sermons that will wind up being just as practical as I can possibly make them. This is one of those sermons that is not just dealing with biblical reasons for why we do something, but then expects that you will respond and do it.

I. Maturity

A. It is something that we desire for our children

1. In fact, hopefully all parents realize that your job is to train your child in such a way that they do not need you
 - a) So when your baby moves away from the house, take pride mom and dad
 - b) That means you have been doing something right that they can stand on their own two feet
2. We also pray for our children to develop in a healthy and whole fashion
 - a) We do not want our kids to have developmental issues
 - b) We want for them to grow and mature at the correct times and in the correct ways
 - c) Now, maturity is not a competitive sport
 - (1) Just because your kid reads a grade level above is no excuse to be arrogant
 - (2) Nor do you need to freak out if your kid didn't walk at the same age as your neighbor's kid
 - d) Unless you have developmental issues, in which case more people often get involved in the process
3. The fact is that all of us are maturing - regardless of age

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- a) Its easy to see the maturing process in the kids
 - b) But even us mid-lifers and beyond are still maturing and will be until the day we die
- B. Maturity in Christ is a focal point for us in the church
- 1. Matthew 28 - many of us know the words, "Go and make disciples of all nations..."
 - a) Did you see what we are to make?
 - b) Disciples - NOT converts
 - 2. Let me ask you, when you had your first child, no doubt you planned for what was ahead, purchased a crib, and baby toys, and diapers and pacifiers, etc.
 - a) The day comes when the baby finally arrives and you are thrilled to welcome this new member to your family
 - b) You bring little Johnny or Susie home from the hospital, lay them down in their crib and say, "Okay, we put the diapers over here, your clothes are in this drawer, breakfast will be at 7, and if you need anything, just let us know"
 - c) Of course not - you waited on your son or daughter hand and foot - you expected there to be a time and process of maturing for this new life
 - 3. Why do we treat the spiritual life as if new birth is the end goal?
 - a) Why do we think getting them to say "yes" to Jesus is where it ends, and our responsibility ends
 - b) Why is it that we do not reframe our thinking to make becoming like Christ our goal?
 - c) We would never treat a baby like we often treat new believers
 - 4. The sad thing is, many people in the church settle for being saved, and make little progress to becoming more like Jesus
 - a) A process called discipleship
 - b) A process we will look at carefully today
- II. Discipleship is best achieved through community life
- A. We here at the church are a part of a community - the larger community of FCC
- 1. Let me tell you one of the coolest things to come out of the mission trip: the YG began to refer to itself as family
 - 2. But let's face it, it is so easy to hide in a large group
 - a) We don't really have to get to know anyone
 - b) We don't really have to be known
 - c) How many have ever lied in church on Sunday morning - "How are you?" "Fine." - when the reality is life is anything but fine
 - 3. The truth is that discipleship is best achieved through small communities

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- a) Yes, you can hide within a small community if you want - foolish though that is
 - b) But being in a place where you know others and are known helps to push us on toward maturity
- B. So one of the out-workings of this of this will be small groups which is a ministry that we would like to get started again - which we will be calling Life Groups
- 1. Remember we have talked about giving our time to God as our first fruits
 - a) Not cram our schedule with everything we can fit in and then squeeze God in if we have room
 - b) But placing God in the calendar first, and letting life wrap around that
 - 2. This is one of the ways that we are suggesting that you do that
 - a) Church on Sunday morning - for praise and worship of our Savior - for conviction from the Word
 - b) A small group - which next week will dig into what form that will take - for accountability regarding that conviction
- C. Let me take you to a passage of Scripture to help you see this discipling, maturing, and growing process at work

III. Marks of maturity - Romans 12:9-13

- A. By the way, if ever there was a book that displays that we live our Christian lives out of the gospel, Romans is it - the first 11 chapters are the theology on which the rest of the book (the practical outworking) is based
- B. The first mark of a maturing disciple is "Love must be sincere"
- 1. Other translations use the word genuine
 - 2. The Greek word literally means "without hypocrisy, pretending, or acting"
 - a) Anyone ever put on an act at church before?
 - b) Basically what this is saying is, church is supposed to be a mask free zone
 - 3. What this means is that the church should be a place where safety is found to confess sin, struggles, fears, and failures
 - a) Genuine community is bonded together by what the gospel tells us about ourselves - we have all fallen pitifully short of God's glory
 - b) Each one of us still does battle with sin
 - (1) Oh, we have been declared right before God and have His power to say "no" to sin now - that is positional sanctification
 - (2) But we are still working out who God has created us to be - the process of sanctification
 - 4. I think sometimes we think that we have called the community of believers together out of our strengths and moral character
 - a) The fact is Jesus called the community together

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- b) And it had nothing to do with our moral goodness but with His righteousness
- 5. The word for church means “gathering” but it is related to another family of words that means “to invite, to call, or be called out”
 - a) So we have been called out from the world
 - b) And placed together, as God draws together for Himself a people
 - (1) In the OT, Israel was “His people”
 - (2) In the NT, the church has taken over that role
- 6. How much righteousness do we have? - careful, its a trick question
 - a) The correct answers are: None! - in and of ourselves
 - b) And perfect righteousness through Christ
- 7. So that means we can stop pretending that everything is all right because we are all on the same playing field
 - a) I don’t have to impress you with my righteousness
 - (1) I tell my guys in my discipleship group that I am no more righteous than anyone else
 - (2) The reason people think that is because I have more head knowledge, having gone to MBI
 - (a) But that does not mean that all the head knowledge has filtered in to my heart
 - (b) I am still in process of that knowledge becoming action in life
 - b) So if I don’t have to impress you anymore it’s okay for me to admit that I have struggles
 - (1) Because I am a guy, and single are there times that I might struggle with lust - certainly - and if the married guys were honest most would probably say the same thing
 - (2) I love the congregation, its people, I love the YG, the kids - but are there days when I just don’t like some of you because you are driving me nuts? Sure
 - (3) Are there times that I struggle with anger or frustration or bitterness - yes, yes, and yes
 - (a) I’m a mess folks
 - (b) But its not up to my righteousness to justify me before God
 - (c) That’s all Jesus job
 - (4) And notice what I mentioned are primarily internal struggles
 - (a) We too often think sin is the check list of do’s and don’ts
 - (b) But the NT raised the stakes and it is not just about our outward behavior, but the inner person that drives the outer behavior

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- (c) Just because I can control my outward behavior, does not mean that those inner struggles are not still sin
- 8. Remember at the beginning of this series that it would be difficult because we are seeking to change a culture, this is one of those points
 - a) If we create or church culture so that we are honest and authentic, we experience freedom from the masks we wear
 - b) And this takes people willing to be bold and honest with their struggles
 - (1) It usually takes just one to get the ball rolling
 - (2) The first time I came to my guys and really opened up, I was looking for accountability
 - (a) I hadn't even done anything wrong
 - (b) Yet I felt horrible admitting my weakness
 - (c) That in turn allowed us an easier time in our Bible studies when it asked about sins and weakness
 - c) It also takes people sensitive enough to understand the difference between encouraging toward repentance and being judgmental
- C. The second mark of a maturing disciple is "hate what is evil"
 - 1. That is the sin that we confess, and need to welcome to be confessed
 - a) But we never downplay the devastation that sin can wreak in our lives
 - b) So we should be safe for confession, but not soft on sin
 - 2. The word hate speaks of an expressed hatred, not hidden
 - a) The prefix means to move away from - this hatred expressed should cause us to move away from the object that is hated - in this case sin
 - b) The word picture we get is to shiver in horror
 - (1) If you have ever jumped to what you thought was a hot shower only to find out it was cold
 - (2) That is the picture - your body shivers, and you move away from the cold water
 - 3. Yes, we absolutely need to create safe environments for us to sharpen one another
 - a) We are all sinners, trying to connect with others sinners for the purpose of being more like Christ
 - (1) Iron sharpening iron is not a pleasant process
 - (2) But it is a needed process
 - b) Even though we create a safe place, we do not excuse sin
 - (1) That means we do not pat each other on the back for being honest and open, and then say, "Well, no one's perfect"
 - (2) It means we lovingly encourage people to repent, and shift their focus from off of their sin and on to their Savior
 - 4. This is what Paul was taking about earlier in Romans

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- a) Shall we sin more so that we can get more grace?
 - b) Of course not!
 - c) If you understand grace, and how special it is, you will be that much more horrified by your sin
5. The reason we bring sin out into the open is so we can avoid blind spots
- a) That is why we need a loving community
 - b) We need others to be able to see in us the areas that we might be missing
 - c) This is what Proverbs 27:6 is all about
 - (1) "An enemy multiplies kisses" - someone that does not care about you only kisses your tushie
 - (2) "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" - they are willing to say the hard things - I just talked to the YG about this on the mission trip
 - (3) How many of you would let you kids play catch on Van Dyke?
 - (a) Oh, I know this could be dangerous but look, they are so happy
 - i) Until that gravel truck comes barreling through
 - (b) Your commitment and love for your child will do whatever it takes to get them out of danger
 - i) We need to be committed to one another that way
6. One of many reasons why I started discipleship groups in the church was so I could be in a group where we intentionally build accountability in
- a) I am in no way above anyone else
 - b) I need people in my life as well to help me become more like Jesus
7. We did not talk about this much when we talked about church membership, but church discipline is another way to hate sin
- a) Church discipline has gotten a bad wrap
 - (1) People think it is about finding people to nail to the wall
 - (2) Like the leadership of the church looks around for people to kick out
 - b) The reality is church discipline is a loving act, designed to call someone back to Jesus Christ, and display God's desire for holiness within His bride
- D. The third mark of a maturing disciple is to "Love one another with brotherly affection. Out do one another in honor."
- 1. That is the ESV version - a more literal translation, and one I like for that verse
 - 2. The word for love has two parts
 - a) Philos - brotherly love
 - b) Adelpbos - from the same womb

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- c) So because of our common bond in the gospel, we are to love one another as if we are from the same womb
 - (1) Which if you think about it, we are
 - (2) We were all re-born into Christ
- 3. Paul goes on to say that we “out do one another in honor”
 - a) Can you imagine if we took that verse seriously?
 - b) The focus would be off our own needs and on to others
 - (1) We would almost be getting into arguments over honoring one another more
 - (2) Why shouldn't I park to the back of the lot
 - (3) Why shouldn't I take the worst seat in the house
 - (4) My goal is to honor you
- E. Verse 12 reminds us of something we often forget - the book of Romans was written to the church in Rome - the whole church, not individuals of the church
 - 1. It was meant to be read, studied and put into practice in the whole group
 - 2. Too often today, we have so individualized everything that the Bible is about me doing these things - no, its about us doing them together
 - 3. We rejoice TOGETHER
 - 4. We are patient TOGETHER
 - 5. We pray TOGETHER
 - 6. While each of us can do those things individually to some extent
 - a) Since the letter was written to the whole church, those things would have naturally been worked out together in unity
 - b) That is where we need to go with it
 - 7. Within the church at large, and in Life Groups
 - a) We rejoice when someone does well
 - (1) When they come in with a report that they have had a good week - God has helped them to overcome that sin that they have been struggling with, we rejoice
 - (2) When they get the promotion at work, or their kid does well in some endeavor, or they were finally able to sleep all the way through the night - we rejoice together
 - (3) And more than that, we rejoice at God's grace in those situations - We praise HIM
 - b) We are patient with people
 - (1) I promise you that if you are in any church long enough, you will find someone that annoys you
 - (2) You may even find yourself in a small group with someone that annoys you

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

- (a)By the way, don't think that might not cut both ways
- (b)If you are annoyed by them, you may very well annoy them too

(3)This is where patience is put into practice - together

c) We pray - together

(1)When you have done life together for so long, you want to pray for those in your group

(2)Real community leads to empathizing with people, which leads to compassion for people, which leads to action on behalf of people, which leads to prayer for people

(a)When they bleed, you bleed too

(b)When their heart is breaking because their child has rebelled and is not walking with Jesus, your heart breaks

(c)When their marriage hits a rough patch - you feel it deeply

i) Which moves you to action (listening, advice)

ii)And the best action - prayer

F. The final mark of a maturing disciple is meeting needs

1. "Share with the Lord's people who are in need..."

a) Another verse says, "Do good to all people, especially to the household of faith"

b) We start with sharing with God's people

(1)We often limit that verse to sharing money or material goods

(2)We need to expand our definition of sharing to include

(a)Prayers

(b)Time

(c)Our skills

i) Are you a good car guy - share with those that need help

ii)Are you good with cooking - share with those that need help

(d)Our very lives

i) Paul mentioned that often about sharing his very life with those he ministered to

2. Practice hospitality

a) This may very well be a reference to all people

b) We share with those around us

IV.I bring all of these things up because out of our source of life, the gospel of Jesus Christ, we need these kinds of relationships to grow in our discipleship

A. We need to understand that Life Groups are not the answer to the issues of maturing in Christ

I Have A Dream - Discipleship

1. Life Groups are the program to help facilitate the environment for maturing in Christ
 2. Community centered in the gospel is the focal point
 - a) Community like we have been discussing here
 3. “Wait a second, Pastor, you make this sound so perfect, but I know it is hard, it is messy and sometimes I just don’t like it”
 - a) To that I say, “Amen and amen!”
 - b) It is not easy - it is messy
 - (1) In fact, having the guts to share is scary
 - (2) Having the guts to confront someone might be even scarier
 - (a) Because sadly, we seem to know how those occasions will turn out
 - (b) “Oh, you see this in my life, do you? Well, here is the list of things I see wrong with YOU!”
 - c) Just because it might be messy and hard, does not mean it is not worth it
 - (1) Would anyone say that marriage is a breeze?
 - (2) But is that difficulty worth it?
- B. Next week we will fill in the framework for seeking after life change in Life Groups
1. Again, we told you we would give you a manner of giving your first fruits to God
 2. Grabbing the calendar and making Sunday morning worship with your whole spiritual family, and being connected and known in a Life Group are two ways to present your first fruits
 3. After we flesh out what these Life Groups will look like, we will give you the last part of the first fruits for God that we desire for you to make room for in your schedules - serving