

### 13. Patterns of Discipleship (1Q Discipleship 2008)

**Biblical material:** Matt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 6:12, 13; 16:19-31; 17:4, 5; 18:9-14; Col. 1:14; 1 Tim. 5:16.

#### Quotes

- Compassion is the basis of morality. *Arnold Schopenhauer*
- To care for anyone else enough to make their problems one's own, is ever the beginning of one's real ethical development. *Felix Adler*
- If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. *Dalai Lama*
- ...when we finally know we are dying, and all other sentient beings are dying with us, we start to have a burning, almost heartbreaking sense of the fragility and preciousness of each moment and each being, and from this can grow a deep, clear, limitless compassion for all beings. *Sogyal Rinpoche*
- No one can sum up all God is able to accomplish through one solitary life, wholly yielded, adjusted, and obedient to Him. *D. L. Moody*

#### Questions

What aspects of the life of Jesus are most important for us to demonstrate as his disciples? How do we develop the right kind of spirit to those around us? How come we can't do more miracles? What role does our ego play in our discipleship? Can we over-analyze ourselves as Jesus' disciples? What is the best kind of outlook to have?

#### Discussion

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:8 NIV). This week's memory verse if taken as definitive of discipleship should challenge us, if we're reading and understanding! Have you carried out all four aspects of your discipleship this week? (Maybe the first, since we have quite a few medical personnel present...). Clearly discipleship has changed over time, and that is not necessarily good or bad...

But the real issue is not in miraculous signs, but in demonstrating God as he truly is. The first four texts for this week cite Jesus' compassion. Why did Jesus heal people? Because he cared so deeply about them. Even when he knew that he would raise Lazarus, Jesus still wept along with everyone else there. Every miracle is to help us, and the side aspect of “vindicating God” is just that—not the primary motive. Of course, people would not have come to Jesus in the numbers that they did without the miracles. But when Jesus saw they were following just for miracles, and when they wanted to make him king as a result, he stopped. And the people left him. His compassion continued, but to heal everyone clouded the mission, in an odd sense. God does want to save and heal everyone—but he wants more than just healing from a particular problem or disease. He wants to salvation-heal us, and do so eternally.

And we as his disciples must have the same perspective. People may ask for miracles, like raising someone from the dead. But why? To prove something? To demonstrate might and power? To make us look good? To bring someone back to this life so they can die again?

It's interesting that Jesus is only recorded as performing resurrections three times, while the miracles of healing were countless. Why? Not so much because it's harder for God to do (!),

but because of what it meant for the person concerned. Even resurrection isn't a cure-all! You still get sick, you still suffer, you still die. And experience this sinful world again. Not such a great deal, maybe...

So let's not look for the big-bang miracles. Our role is to respond just as Jesus did—with compassion. We truly care for those around us—which is the exact opposite of the selfishness of sin. In whatever way we can, we try to help, we share the grief, we sympathize. Like Jesus who came and lived among us, we are living here in this world as a spectacle to the universe, to angels and to human beings, of what God is really like. That's our role, one that we cannot and dare not fake.

A couple of stories here. First the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Why does Jesus tell this parable? (especially with the way it's been so badly misunderstood!) To make the point of what is really valuable, and what true compassion is all about. Truly uncaring people wouldn't even respond to resurrected prophets, says Jesus.

In the story of the Pharisee and publican (Luke 18:9-14), Jesus points to the right attitude that makes us right! It's not about status or ritual observance, but of recognizing our need, and coming to God for all the good gifts he wants to give.

### **Comment**

Do not scrutinize so closely whether you are doing much or little, ill or well, so long as what you do is not sinful and that you are heartily seeking to do everything for God. Try as far as you can to do everything well, but when it is done, do not think about it. Try, rather, to think of what is to be done next. Go on simply in the Lord's way, and do not torment yourself. We ought to hate our faults, but with a quiet, calm hatred; not pettishly and anxiously. *Francis de Sales*

### **Ellen White Comments**

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139}

But he whose eyes have been opened to see the love of Christ, will behold the character of God as full of love and compassion. God will not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son... (Ps. 103:13 quoted). All despair is swept from the soul when Christ is seen in His true character. {ISM 371}

But if those whom the Lord has made stewards, regard their treasures as his gifts, and seek to manifest compassion, sympathy, and love for their fellow men, they are in harmony with the character of God, who gave his only begotten Son to die for their salvation. If they value the souls of the human race according to the price paid for their redemption, they will not work out their natural impulses, but will manifest the attributes of the mind and will of God, and will be channels through which God's generous, loving sentiments may flow to humanity. {SpTA06 35}

Only as we contemplate the great plan of redemption can we have a just appreciation of the character of God. The work of creation was a manifestation of His love; but the gift of God to save a guilty and ruined race alone reveals the infinite depths of divine tenderness and compassion. (John 3:16 quoted). {ST, July 13, 1904}

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