

Discipleship 4

St. John 02.07.17

Romans 12:1-2, 9-21; 1 Peter 4:3-11; Matthew 5:38 – 48

This week, we come to the half way point in our sermon series on Discipleship, a walk through life, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Just to recap briefly, where we are on that journey, let me remind you in the opening talk, we saw how Peter started to walk on water until his faith began to ebb away, so that he had to call on Jesus to save him.

Next we heard how Jesus invites people to 'come and see' what can be done in his name when we follow him, being where he is, doing what he does, even if that means treading a path that maybe unpopular with the world.

Last week, we saw how 'following Jesus' meant becoming integrated in Him, in a way that makes it possible to BE and BEHAVE as HE would be and would have behaved: being in tune with Jesus through prayer.

What then does it mean, when we speak of becoming DISCIPLES of Jesus.

The first thing to note when reading the passage from Romans, is that we are called to be honest with **ourselves**, discovering the truth about ourselves and accepting, what we discover, may not be acceptable to God. Paul tells us, when that happens, we find ourselves changing in response to God's love which encourages us to hate what is bad in us and at the same time, to hold onto the things that are good, so leading us naturally, to become people who experience the love and support that comes from God, through Jesus, His Son. When we reach that state of blessedness, it becomes possible to love those who hate us, and to

support those around us, who have a need to feel God's love in their lives.

Peter describes what it means to embrace God's love in our lives, by describing Human beings as being naturally self serving, seeking a way of life that is only satisfied by worldly values. The world around us then becomes the source and the limit of life.

For this reason, the Gospel is proclaimed.

Through the gospel proclamation of God's love for all humanity, we are shown that REAL life is to be found, not within us, but in the service of others, through the exercise of OUR LOVE for all humanity.

Through the gospel proclamation, comes understanding of the disciples who walked in the footsteps of Jesus. They spent their time with Jesus, discovering for themselves, living with Jesus meant having a life style that was contrary to common, worldly expectations. Jesus would speak to the 'untouchable', he would eat with the 'sinner', he would heal the 'hopeless'.

Finally, at the end of his earthly life, Jesus sought forgiveness for those who would kill him; "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do". *Luke 23.34*

Being a disciple, means, being a witness to Jesus. The best way to witness to Jesus is to live as he did, not as the world would have us live.

By living as Jesus would have us live, people we make contact with will, hopefully, come to recognise the benefits of living the life of discipleship in Jesus.

Probably, the most influential way of living the life of a disciple, is to be found in the way we treat others, especially when having positions of power or authority.

More than that, however, is the way a disciple will respond to hurtful treatment, bullying. The disciple of Jesus, takes such ill treatment on the chin, and does not seek revenge – not even to think of it, leaving the hurt received in God’s hands through prayerful petition.

For every disciple of Jesus, the challenge is to live life, not as users and takers, but as people who serve and give out, following our Lord who gave up everything to serve his disciples, as well as all who came to him in need.

Lord Jesus, you called for forgiveness for those who crucified you: fill us with your spirit, we pray, that we may bless those who seek to harm us. To bless them and to place our trust in you. For your name’s sake, Amen.