

Three weeks before the end of World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, known by most of his biographers as a pastor, prophet, brilliant theological mind, and eventually a martyr, was only 39 when the Gestapo executed him.

He was born into the German establishment. His dad was a world-renowned psychologist who, at a young age, took a professorship in Berlin. But Bonhoeffer, as he came of age, left his entire life of privilege behind, in part because of his growing conviction in the Lutheran church's complicity with the rise of Nazism in Germany.

At one point, when he was of his own substantial academic status, he left Germany to spend some time in New York studying at Union Theological Seminary. During his brief study in Harlem, he joined a church, Abyssinian Baptist Church, where, according to him, he first experienced real Christians.

This is quite a claim, with him coming from the most Christian country in Europe at the time. For Bonhoeffer, this experience within the black church in Harlem was deeply formative. It furnished in him an imagination of what it meant to live as a community of faith under the lordship of Jesus. One way you can read Bonhoeffer's story is by oscillating between these two poles of the complicity of the Lutheran church and the active, vibrant faith of the black church in Harlem.

His experience in Harlem prompted Bonhoeffer to return to Germany and start Finkenwalde, which was this underground seminary. It was used as a means of illegally training pastors in Nazi Germany, a way to resist, and to try to cultivate a counter-formative church.

His response was to say that we must form people against the powerful form of the world at the time. Bonhoeffer formed a neo-monastic community in Finkenwalde. All that means is they were an intentional community living under a shared Rule of Life with fixed-hour prayer and meditation rhythms. They would follow together even something as simple as a daily exercise routines. It was a monastic community, and out of that community, Bonhoeffer wrote his famous book *Cost of Discipleship*. He also wrote his lesser-known book, but just as brilliant, *Life Together*, which is essentially the explanation of that community at Finkenwalde. It was in that era that he wrote these famous words in a letter to his brother.

The renewal of the church will come from a new type of monasticism, which only has an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount in common with the old. It is high time people banded together to do this. Bonhoeffer

Consider the historical moment Bonhoeffer was in. What a stunningly hopeful vision. The audacity to say that the renewal of the church will

come. A conviction he held that with a deep formation stemming from the monastic movement out of church history with an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount is how the renewal of the church will come.

Now, I start with Bonhoeffer, not because I believe that our historical moment matches his in any way, but because I do believe the American church is at an inflection point in which it's facing complicity to the temptations of syncretism on the left and nationalism on the right, it is a church struggling with their identity. There is no better place to go than the longest teachings of Jesus to have a church rise up and be uncompromisingly faithful to Jesus' teachings than the Sermon on the Mount.

We began a three-month journey through the Sermon on the Mount. It's far and away the greatest sermon ever preached. And it's organized in such a way where ideas flow from one to the other. You could almost consider it a folio package of Jesus's greatest hits, a collection of his teachings put together.

They flow in a logical pattern, but they also are the high points of Jesus' teachings. And contrary to what many assume, Jesus did not come to invite people to start a religion. He didn't come to call converts to Christianity. He didn't even come to call people to be Christians. He came to call people to be his disciples.

He came announcing the good news of the gospel of the kingdom of God and then inviting others to apprentice under him to learn how to live in that reality. This message is an intentional follow up to the *Bearing Witness* series where we talked a lot about what the gospel is. What we'll find on this three-month journey is that the invitation from Jesus to discipleship is quite challenging. The invitation is simple but difficult.

G.K. Chesterton once said, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." What we'll find in the Sermon on the Mount is that this tends to be true. We'll be tempted to throw up our hands in these three months and say, "Jesus, this is just too hard. You're touching on topics that are too close to our very core, our identity. It would be easier if we were just complicit to the way of the world around us." But I just wonder if the renewal of the church could come from a new community dedicated to being formed into the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit with an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount. That's what stands before us.

The Sermon on the Mount actually starts in chapter 5, but this morning I'm preaching a sermon about a sermon. I'm presenting the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount next week, but this morning, we're doing some behind-the-scenes work with two goals in mind. My hope

for you, by the end of our time together, is the purpose of Jesus' sermon and the proper posture of us as listeners to this sermon.

We'll begin in Matthew 4. *"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'" (Matthew 4:17).* This was the beginning point of Jesus' public ministry. This is his thesis statement in one line. If you were to summarize everything Jesus did and said and taught everything he was about, it somehow finds its footing right back here. "Repent for the kingdom of Heaven has come near." This is one of those few occasions that I would encourage you, if that seems unfamiliar, to go back to about five weeks ago when I preached a sermon called "What is the Gospel?" I unpack this verse at a granular level. Here, Jesus announces this reality.

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. Matthew 4:18-20

Now, does that strike you as odd at all? It should. Jesus, at this point, is this upstart rabbi. He's largely unknown, and he's walking around the countryside saying to come follow me. These two people immediately leave their entire careers and their families to follow Jesus.

That should strike us as odd. That should provoke some questions in us. What was it that they understood about Jesus that would cause them to walk away from everything they knew right there in that moment? The text says "immediately."

To understand this, we have to understand the ancient educational system. The concept of discipleship did not start with Jesus and the church. It was part and parcel of that first-century educational system. There were plenty of rabbis or teachers before Jesus, and there were plenty of rabbis after Jesus. This model of education was radically different than ours. The way it worked was after going through some primary education, if you rose to the level of the elite, the best of the best, you would eventually go ask a rabbi, "Rabbi, can I follow you?" But notice the way it's inverted with Jesus. The common way, like our education system, is the best of the best. Many people apply for the best colleges and maybe half the people get in. That's the way it works.

Jesus flips the whole thing upside down. In the Greek tradition, the disciples were responsible for acquiring their own teachers. But here, Jesus invites any and all, not just the elites. He goes out to these fishermen, and he says, "Come follow me." He goes around and begins to make this call. The disciples understood the opportunity that was before them, and they left everything. But Jesus doesn't go to the elite. Jesus goes to the artisans, the shepherds, the fishermen, the tax collectors.

Jesus, as he begins to gather his group of disciples, sees that these very seemingly ordinary people with ordinary tasks are exactly the type and material and services that are necessary in the kingdom of God. The majority of Jesus' disciples were not expositors of the text. They were not preachers like myself. They did not go on to religious vocations. There was something about this message that Jesus was trying to instill in the

common person to say: "These are the people who are exactly who I need for the work of the kingdom of God, and these disciples catch that vision." Let's read on in Matthew 4.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. Matthew 4:23-25

So you can summarize Jesus' work in verse 23, this idea of teaching and proclaiming, or teaching and preaching, which may seem like the same thing to you, but they're subtly different. As a teacher, Jesus would present a set of ethical teachings and an apologetic instruction about the kingdom of God. Whereas his proclaiming or his preaching was aimed more specifically at bringing people into the fold. So, teaching about the life of a follower of Jesus and proclaiming as a way of sending out the invitation, the reality of the kingdom of God being available.

As he begins to do this, the impact of his vision is quite large. He gets this wide collection of people, all sorts of sick and broken ones, the paralyzed, those having seizures. All of this chaos of people begin to follow Jesus. It says these large crowds came from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan, which is their way of saying the known world. It's essentially from everywhere. People were hearing what Jesus was proclaiming that the kingdom of God was here. It was spreading throughout, bringing healing to all these individuals.

"Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them" (Matt. 5:1). Here is where Matthew sharply turns to the introduction of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount begins with Jesus seeing. He sees the crowds. Who's in the crowds: the disease, sick, suffering, and severe pain. The demon possessed, those with seizures and the paralyzed. When Jesus looks out into the crowds, he sees broken people. He saw the people in need of the grace of God. He looked into the crowd and saw those who were hungry for good news.

The Sermon on the Mount begins with Jesus seeing the crowds. The sermon begins with Jesus seeing you. He knows your hurts, your pains, and your afflictions. And what follows is Jesus bringing to you the good news. We'll hear more about this next week, but Jesus sees you. The invitation for all of us, right at the beginning, is for those of you who are here, Jesus sees you. Maybe you're unemployed; Jesus sees you. For those of you who are facing a painful diagnosis, Jesus sees you. He sees those who are struggling, those who are battling addiction, those whose marriage seems to be crumbling, and those who are afraid and lonely and scared and doubtful; Jesus sees you.

You have to see that because it's from this posture that Jesus will deliver this sermon as a way of saying there's an alternative way to live in this world. However, it doesn't bypass your pains and afflictions. He looks

at the crowd and proclaims the good news right into the middle of the brokenness. Jesus saw the crowds, but then he goes up. It says he went up to a mountainside and sat down.

Now this should ping some things in your mind in which you're thinking, "Okay, large groups gathering, someone's going up on a mountain, receiving teaching, and then giving that. That sounds a whole lot like Moses, and if it does, it's very intentional.

Matthew's writing to a Jewish audience in which the Book of Exodus was latent right beneath the surface of them. So he very intentionally, from Matthew 1 to Matthew 5, points to the Book of Exodus. Matthew is drawing this connection between Jesus and a new Moses. The difference, though, is that when Moses went up to Mount Sinai, he received the teaching. Jesus went up under his own authority and delivered the teaching. Moses was a proxy for the authority of God. Jesus is the authority of God in the flesh right there present.

This is why Jesus took the posture of sitting down. In the ancient world, the audience or crowd, would've stood and the teacher would have sat. So the posture of sitting down isn't just a narrative note, it's Matthew's way of saying that Jesus took the posture of the authoritative teacher. That's the position in which Jesus came from.

So when we go through this sermon on the mound, it is not Jesus just offering advice. He's not offering a few good quips. He is speaking with authority, with a body of knowledge about the way the world works. And this is not just the posture in which Jesus took, it's also the way the crowds will respond.

Right after Jesus ends his sermon, Matthew makes this note: *"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law"* (Matthew 7:28-29). The crowds respond to Jesus in his posture of saying, "I'm taking that position of authority." Jesus steps right into this. But let's be honest, in 2025, we don't like the word "authority." We don't like the idea of someone being able to speak with authority over us.

We have been shaped by a modern world that says, "I'm just a rugged individualist. I am the master of my own destiny. I'm the author of my own story, and no one can tell me what to do." That is the exact opposite posture of the follower of Jesus. We come to Jesus as our teacher, and of course, we view him as far more than just a teacher, but he's certainly not less than a teacher. What Jesus presents in the Sermon on the Mount is instruction. It's a body of knowledge about the way the world operates, and he invites us to step into that, to come under his authority.

What is so beautiful is that Jesus will not force you to come to him. Did you notice before with those disciples? He walked around and he said, "Come, follow me." He offered the invitation, but they did not have to follow. Here it says that the disciples came to him. He will not force you. He will not coerce you. He will not manipulate you to come to him.

One of the beautiful but also frightening realities is how practical Jesus is. Often in his teaching, he'll say there are two ways to live. He'll say something like, "Don't go pray on the corner of the street where you

can be seen by man. If that's what you want, you can have that. But if you want the affection of the Father, go in your closet and pray in quiet where the Father sees you." He says that there are two ways to live. He doesn't coerce; he doesn't manipulate. He simply names reality and places it in front of us. The invitation, if we choose to accept it, is for you and I to come to Jesus.

Well, what does it mean to come to Jesus? It means we submit to his authority. It's to bring the whole of our life under the direction of Jesus as Lord. It's to see Jesus not just as our Savior, of course he is, but also as the teacher for all of life. Has it ever struck us as odd that we're way more comfortable trusting Jesus with eternity than we are with our Mondays through Fridays? Isn't it odd that we will place eternity in his hands, but when Jesus has a few words about the way we spend and make money, we think, "Jesus, you don't know better. I'll just take that ticket to eternity." The invitation for us to come to Jesus is to come under his authority.

So what does it then look like? What is the posture of us as disciples who come to him? What is the posture that we come to? Some of these will seem obvious, but in Matthew 5:1, it says, "Jesus began to teach them."

We are Learners

The first posture for us as disciples is we are learners. We often overlook this, but in the 1st century, the category you would've placed Jesus in is a teacher or a rabbi. We're very comfortable talking about Jesus as holy, even pretty comfortable talking about Jesus as divine, but we often don't naturally think of Jesus as brilliant. You realize Jesus was brilliant, like the smartest man who ever lived. His mind was brilliant. One of the things we'll see in this sermon is just how articulate he was and how astonishingly smart Jesus was.

We are on the back end of a long historical drift that has relegated religion to the realm of emotion and opinion, but that's radically new in the history of the world. That's largely the result of a combination of empiricism and rationality that came out of the Enlightenment. Mix into that a heavy dose of secularism and radical humanism, and these two ideas became combined to divorce religion and theology from the common set of knowledge.

If you go to the Library of Congress, I was there a few years ago, you'll find these big plaques of the various disciplines in the world. There is psychology and sociology and all that. You know what's front and center? Theology. Because for the history of the world, theology was seen right there in the midst. It was a body of knowledge that could name reality. You can disagree with it, and that's fine in the same way that you could disagree with sociology or whatever it is, but we have divorced this and somehow caught the idea that theology is just opinion, thought, or emotion.

Jesus, what he will present as a body of knowledge, will say that it is better to give than to receive, and he means it. The world would actually operate better if we gave rather than focused on receiving. What I find so fascinating is, often, the onlooking world looks at Jesus' teaching and

says, "He's onto something." But often, we relegated it to this idea of opinion.

That movement that stemmed out of the Enlightenment reduced all knowledge to what you could perceive with your five senses. But we all know that there's way more to the world than just what your five senses can experience. I mean, why are we moved by the beauty of a sunset? Where does love and affection for a child generate? Why is it that when that child is born, your heart just aches for them? Why does a certain song evoke a rich sense of meaning and purpose?

Of course, the rationalist humanist will say, "Well, it's just synopsis firing in your brain." That is fine. I don't actually disagree that this is what is happening, but it doesn't explain why it's happening. There is a whole world that we all intuit is beyond the five senses, and Jesus is just saying that you bump into that world, that's the kingdom of God. Let me teach you about that reality. Then, Jesus will go on to display these things.

When confronted with love, meaning, and purpose, the purely humanist view cannot make sense of reality. So we, as disciples, come to Jesus fundamentally as learners. We want to learn. We want to hear about this way of life, which includes the forgiveness of sins, the reality of salvation, the way we interact with one another, how we interact with money and lust, and all these things that he'll unpack. We're learning what it means to steadily take on the life of reality, which Jesus calls the kingdom of God.

We are Practitioners

We must move from being a learner to the second posture, which is a practitioner. You are not meant just to accumulate knowledge. I'm a learner by nature, the way God's wired me. I love the life of the mind. A great Friday night for me is sitting alone in my home library, reading a book, and probably drinking a glass of wine. It's like, just leave me alone. That is like heaven on earth for me. I love the life of the mind. So, one of the things that has stunted my development into the way of Jesus is that I will often reduce maturity in Christ by just acquiring more knowledge.

Knowledge is essential. That's what I just talked about. We are, in fact, learners. A huge important part of our journey with Jesus is learning. However, the way Jesus sees it, is we are never meant to stop there. It's meant to be practiced. It's meant to be put into action. We are not just learners, we are practitioners. We are called to practice the way of Jesus.

Just look at Matthew 5:19. Jesus does a little throat clearing and he does a little preamble. Then as he begins to get into the meat of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says,

Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. v. 19

He says that if you want to develop and grow and progress into that, you must practice it. Put it into action. Flip over to Matthew 7:26. From the modern view, Jesus ends the sermon with this horrible ending for all intents and purposes. He just lays this intense saying of these two

houses. One collapses because the storm comes, and then he just walks off stage. That's terrible. But listen to what he says right in the midst of it in chapter 7:26, *"But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand."*

Jesus warnings are quite strong that unless you put them into practice, you're like a man who builds his house on the sand, and when the storm comes, it just collapses. We are not called to just be learners, but also practitioners.

We're called to practice, not perfection. Jesus is fully aware of our flaws. He's fully aware that we will not do this perfectly. In fact, right in the middle, there's always this really troubling line in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The word *telos* means maturity. This is a better translation, in my opinion, because of the way we've morphed our understanding of the word perfect. So it would read to be mature as your heavenly Father is mature. Jesus does not expect perfection, but he does expect us to practice them. What Jesus is after in the Sermon on the Mount is for people who learn from him and slowly, over time, try to work these things out into our daily lives. It's the way in which character is formed.

Last night, I watched a Tom Hanks movie from a few years ago about Fred Rogers. What a beautiful film. There's this moment in the film that contrasts Fred Rogers, who's this utterly kind person, and this reporter who's doing this exposé on him. He is convinced Fred Rogers is a fraud. He can't imagine someone being this kind. There's a scene, about three quarters of the way through, where the reporter is talking to Mr. Roger's wife, Joanna. He asks, "What's it like being married to a living saint?"

Paraphrasing Joanna's response, she says, "You know, I don't like that term because that term would mean that the life Fred espouses is not accessible to anyone. Fred practices it. He works on it." Then she goes on to say, "He does things like read scripture every morning, swim laps to ground himself, and prays for those who hate him and those who love him."

It's this beautiful moment in which you realize this figure, this seemingly living saint was not one who was naturally kind but practiced it. Jesus is after practitioners. When we get to texts like, "Do not worry for tomorrow has enough worries of itself." Jesus actually believes and will lay out a clear path as to how you can live with less anxiety if you begin to practice these things.

It will not happen overnight and not perfectly. It will take time. It will take a lifetime, and thankfully, we are not stuck on our own accord but are empowered by the Holy Spirit, who is our helper in all of this. We do not have to try to do this on our own, but the Holy Spirit comes alongside us in the presence of Jesus. The more we become present to our rabbi, practicing what he is preaching to us, the more slowly, over time, we develop in maturity and Christlikeness, where eventually loving our enemy is the natural thing to do. It will be harder to hate our enemies than to love them.

Now, I haven't attained to this yet. I've got a whole heck of a long time before I get there. Jesus presents a body of knowledge and it's accessible

and available to us. There's this terrible way of looking at the Sermon on the Mount that historically has been one that stemmed from the reformation, and it just got it wrong.

I don't quite know how else to say it, but it was said that the Sermon on the Mount was taught to prove we're sinners and, therefore, need the grace of God. You will find as we go through the Sermon on the Mount that you are an incredible sinner because that's what I have found as I've been studying this. So that is not inherently wrong, but that assumes then that Jesus doesn't actually want us to believe it and live it out.

Read the way Rich Villodas, a pastor in New York, says about this. "The Sermon on the Mount was not given to show our inability to live it out and trust God. It was given so we could trust God and live it out" (Villodas). That's a pretty good word. We will realize how difficult and hard and almost impossible it is. But what if that drove us to trust in God and the Holy Spirit could then work within us to help us practice this out? The posture of a follower of Jesus is one who's a learner and one who is then a practitioner.

We are Followers

The posture is that we are followers. You see this all the way back in Matthew 4:19. "Come follow me." This posture of a follower is exactly what Jesus' invitation had always been. Not to be a Christian, not to be a convert, not to pass some theological test, not to get a certificate on your wall, nothing like that. It's simply to follow Jesus.

If you put this learner and practitioner together, what you will find is you are trying to just ride Jesus' coattails. You are following him as he is learning and teaching a way of living this out, to learn what it is to be human. We've talked a good amount about this. You learn how to live from somebody. It's unavoidable.

Think about the ways that you're more like your parents than you'd care to admit. I mean, all those mannerisms that feel like one parent or another is coming out in you right then. You learned how to live from the people in which you lived around. It begins as we're children. The great discipler of our lives when we're young are our parents and caretakers. Eventually, that moves on to our friendships and peers, then likely on to our teachers. Then, as we get older, our professors, musicians, public figures, and artists, they are how we become followers.

You're following someone, don't mistake yourself. You are following someone. To be human is to be a follower. You are not a rogue individual, no matter how much our American way of life wants to tell you that you are. You are a follower of someone, but where is that person leading you? Is that person leading you to life and life to the fullest as Jesus offers in John 10:10? Are they leading you to a life of joy and peace? There's a cost to following Jesus. Like those disciples, they had to lay everything down.

Willard states something really good in his book *Divine Conspiracy*. To paraphrase, he says that there's also a cost to not following Jesus. If Jesus offers peace, love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, the fruit of the Spirit, if that's the trajectory of the life that Jesus offers, to not disciple under Jesus is actually going to cost yourself

those things. You are leaving on the table love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness. There's a cost to not following Jesus. Of course, there are eternal consequences to that question as well. Jesus is inviting us to be followers. The question is not who are you going to follow. It's would you come to Jesus? Would you follow him?

Here's the hard part with this. The temptation will be for all of us to say, Jesus, I'd rather not follow. Can I just come along beside you, and maybe I'll call a few shots. You can call a few, but then I'm going to call this one over here. Or even worse yet, we often want to get out ahead of Jesus and ask Jesus to follow us.

You see the disciples do this. There is the scene in Luke 9, in which James and John, those ones that were named earlier, were going into the Samaritan Village? The Samaritans were bitter rivals to the Jews, and so there was hate with all sorts of enmity between those two groups. Jesus walks in, and James and John pipe up and say, "Hey Jesus, do you want us to call down fire from heaven?" Jesus just looks at them and wonders if they remember the Sermon on the Mount. Love your enemies. They are trying to get out ahead of Jesus and say, Jesus, I know that you talk about love, but these are the Samaritans we're talking about. What if we call down fire on them?

Jesus turns and rebukes them. Which that word rebuke, by the way, is the same one that's used throughout the New Testament for when Jesus casts out demons. He rebukes them. He says that their posture is of a follower. We are not to get to the side or in front of Jesus. We are to follow behind, allowing him to call the shots.

There will be times over the next three months when you'll hear Jesus talk about money, and you'll be tempted to think you know better than Jesus. You'll want to get out in front of him. We live in a capitalist society; we have a bunch of money, and it's fine. You tell Jesus that you'll take this one. Jesus doesn't understand how the modern world works.

You'll hear Jesus talk about anger, but that guy really did cut you off. It was pretty bad. And you'll want to get out in front of Jesus. You'll hear Jesus talk about sexuality. You'll be tempted to think you know better than Jesus because we're modern Westerners. We know better. You'll hear Jesus talk about revenge or relationships or desires or enemies, and we will all be tempted to say, "Jesus, what if I just led the way here?" But remember, our posture is to be a follower. So all of this together: learner, practitioner, and follower is the invitation of a disciple.

What the Greek word for disciple means, or maybe the concept for us to understand this idea of disciple, is that of an apprentice. It's to take on a life of Jesus as an apprentice. It revolves around two particular goals. You are to be present to your teacher, so do everything you can. If you're an apprentice to an electrician, you want to spend time with that master electrician so you can learn, through osmosis, their way of life, such as how they view a house, all those sorts of things.

Then don't forget that it's not just being present to them. The goal of an apprentice to an electrician is also to wire a house one day. It's to do the things, to live it out. So, our two goals as apprentices of Jesus are to be present to Jesus and participate in what he's doing in the world. The

invitation to Jesus is not to become a convert but to become his apprentice. John Mark Comer, in his book *Practicing The Way*, says:

To follow Jesus, then, meant to walk alongside him in a posture of listening, learning, observation, obedience, and imitation. For Jesus' first apprentices, the goal wasn't to pass a test, get a degree, or receive a certificate to frame on your office wall; it was to master the art of living in God's good world by learning from Jesus on how to make steady progress into the kingdom of God. It was less like learning chemistry and more like learning jiu-jitsu. Comer

I like that it's a different way of learning in which we are present to him, participating with him. The goal is not to pass a doctrinal test; it's to grow in patience and love. It's to become a person of love who loves God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength and loves our neighbor as ourselves. One more quote from Dallas Willard. In his beautiful book, *Divine Conspiracy*.

As the disciple of Jesus, I am with him, by choice and by grace, learning from him how to live in the kingdom of God. This is the crucial idea. That means, we recall, how to live within the range of God's effective will, his life flowing through mine. Another important way of putting this is to say that I am learning from Jesus how to live my life as he would live my life if he were me. I am not necessarily learning to do everything he did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner that he did all that he did. For a disciple of Jesus is not necessarily one devoted to doing specifically religious things as that is usually understood. To repeat, I am learning from Jesus how to lead my life, my whole life, my real life. Note, please, I am not learning from him how to lead his life. His life on earth was a transcendentally wonderful one. But it has now been led. Neither I nor anyone else, even himself, will ever lead it again. And he is, in any case, interested in my life, that very existence that is me. Willard, Divine Conspiracy

A really good question is, what would Jesus do? But a far better question is, what would Jesus do if he were me? With my social position, my standing, my vocation, my talents, my kids, my living circumstances, and everything that makes me, me. The question as an apprentice of Jesus is how would Jesus live my life if he were me?

What Jesus is after is what we call character formation. It's what the New Testament talks about as being in union with Christ, allowing Christ to be formed within us. So then as we live our lives in the world, we would maybe look a little bit like Jesus. Never perfect, of course, but what would it look like to have the formation, a Christlikeness built within us?

This is what Jesus is after. We are followers, learners, and practitioners sitting under Jesus for the next three months, and hopefully far beyond that, to try to understand how Jesus would live our lives if he were us. That's the invitation.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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Catalog No. 1492-FC