

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Reflections on The Seven Churches, Pt 2

Revelation 2 - 3

Keywords: Revelation, prophecy, End Times, Jesus Christ, Seven Churches

PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb: The seven churches addressed by Jesus give every other church lessons on what to press onward toward, push away from, hold close and guard, and either hate or love. In this sermon we learn some basic practices that are often forgotten that actually are the key to staying faithful as a church both before our Lord and to a dying world.

I. Introduction.

A. Last week we saw six things about Jesus and His relationship with His Church.

1. Jesus cares for the spiritual health of His Church.
2. Jesus knows our situation.
3. Jesus honors faithfulness to His name.
4. Jesus exalts love as the supreme act of Christian obedience.
5. Jesus hates false teaching and expects us too as well.
6. Jesus calls us to persevere in faith.

B. I then briefly spoke on how this impacts Missio.

1. We need to remember these truths and we need to consistently remind one another of them.
2. Some inter-related thoughts in no particular order.
 - a. Not allow comfort and tradition to dull our senses as we gather together in both corporate and more relaxed gatherings. Intentionality is a key.
 - b. We are to be always ready to repent both individually and corporately.
 - c. We must be about disciple-making.
 - d. We need to reform our individual and home cultures to promote godliness. In other words, we need to make sure our lives and homes truly reflect biblical/Christ faithfulness and love.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- e. Finally we need to sharpen our convictions regarding what we believe and reject.
- C. When I think about those five points the one that jumps out to me the most is the need for disciple-making.
 - 1. If you are active in discipling one another the other points will naturally take place as well.
 - 2. Today I want to help clarify what is meant by discipling one another and hopefully help you to see how you can either begin to do so or improve on how you do it.
 - 3. In other words, I want us to consider how we might be a church that reflects those aspects that Jesus praised in the seven churches and how we can actively resist those aspects which received Jesus' rebuke.
 - 4. After a lot of thought on this the conclusion was to establish and encourage a culture of disciple-making.

II. Preparing Missio for The Long Haul.

- A. We start with the mother of all discipleship passages, Matthew 28:18-20.
 - 1. In this passage we see the purpose of the church
 - a. To be true worshipers; to be evangelistic and missions-minded; to be bible-centered; to be focused on body-life, all are found in this passage.
 - b. So I want to use Matthew 28 as the foundation from which to speak today of the great task of the church—that of making disciples of Christ.
 - c. But I also want to help encourage each of you in the subtleties of what it looks like to disciple others for I think some of you are not realizing how much you actually are doing in that capacity.
- B. Quick points about the text:
 - 1. Only one command in this passage. The command is to make disciples. All the other things in this passage either explain why we are to make disciples, or explain how we make them.
 - 2. Therefore, there are four things that must be understood in disciple-making.

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

3. This is the vision that should drive missions—make disciples/followers of Jesus Christ.
4. This is the visions that should drive our music—that which promotes Jesus, speaks of the Gospel and teaches/reminds the people.
5. This is the vision that should drive any and everything this church and the individuals of this church does. It is at the core of what Missional means.

C. How To Make Disciples.

1. First you must grasp Christ's authority.
 - a. Verse 18 has the key point that must be understood to make proper sense of verses 19-20.
 - (1) All authority is possessed by our Lord.
 - (2) This speaks of the complete and utter Lordship of Jesus. This must be grasped and it must be believed, or failure is surely to follow.
 - b. The word “authority” speaks of the right of control and command.
 - (1) What Jesus is doing here is nothing less than commissioning them to go and make disciples in all the world. A commissioning is the act of giving out orders, sending a person on a mission. It involves delegated authority.
 - (2) So our Lord is giving an earth-shattering, massive command and He backs it up with the assurance that He has utter and complete authority to accomplish this mission.
2. Second, you must go with the gospel of the Lord.
 - a. Literally this is rendered, “having gone, make disciples.” It is said in such a way that it is assumed that they will be going.
 - b. With what is it that they are going?
 - (1) They must be going with the gospel. For it is the very thing that they have been preaching since Christ had chosen them as His own disciples.
 - (2) The gospel is the message that Jesus is the King! The one true Lord over all people and nations. That He is the Son of God, sent by His Father in Heaven to suffer on the Cross for

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

our sin, die, rise again on the third day. And in doing so He has destroyed our true enemies.

- (3) The Gospel is the message that God is truly faithful to His promises in the Old Testament.
 - (4) And the promise built into this gospel is that if you do follow Jesus, you shall be saved from God's wrath, and your sins shall be all forgiven you. You shall be made anew and shall be adopted by God the Father as His child. You shall pass out of eternal judgment in hell and into the good pleasure and joy of the new heavens and earth.
- c. The gospel is the first step of truly becoming a disciple of Christ.
- (1) You go and tell others of the Lord and what He has done.
 - (2) But you don't merely ask them to agree with it. You call the person to embrace it. To truly believe it....and Him.
 - (3) And if you truly believe the message of the gospel there you will also understand that you must obey what the gospel calls you to do.
3. Third, you must baptize those who profess faith in the gospel.
- a. Can you be saved and not be baptized? Sure, there is no reason to think that a person who truly believes in the Lord on his deathbed is not in heaven.
 - b. But can you openly reject baptism when you are told that it is required by the Lord and remain in that rebellion and rightly consider yourself safe in the eyes of the Lord? No.
4. Fourth, you must teach those who believe.
- a. This is what will capture the bulk of one's time in discipling for it requires us to learn all that Jesus Christ commands.
 - b. And it is here that I find so many are reluctant to take up this command of disciple-making. To often intimidated.
 - c. So I want to help us think through this idea of teaching and discipling so as to encourage more of you to be involved in it and also to show many of you how you already are discipling.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- D. Why make disciples?
1. We could just look at Matthew 28:18-20 and say that this is what Jesus commanded us to do and be done with it. But there is much more to this than a bare command.
 2. There is the reason, the secret even, behind the command. Paul talks about a mystery of God's work that is now being revealed. It is something hidden and obscured in the Old Testament.
 3. The revelation of this mystery is established upon the person of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).
 - a. Jesus is the culmination of God's redeeming work of resolving and defeating our great enemies.
 - b. In other words, Jesus and His work is the plan of God and He is at the core what discipleship means.
- E. The plan.
1. Revelation 5:9 and 7:9, 13-17.
 - a. We see our Lord reigning there.
 - b. Along with the angelic beings we see the redeemed who come from all nations and peoples.
 - c. And the destructive power of sin and death can no longer touch them.
 2. Titus 2:11-14.
 - a. We have two appearances of Jesus Christ, one that has happened and one we wait for.
 - b. Again we see the work of redeeming a people for His name's sake.
 3. Romans 8:28-30.
 - a. This is the grand plan of God in a nutshell.
 - b. What you need to note is what all Christians are predestined to become in vs 29.
 4. This is the plan, God the Father redeeming people out of the enslavement to sin, forgiving their sin, recreating them in Jesus Christ. And every

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

person seen in those visions of heaven came because someone else made them disciples of Jesus Christ.

5. This story is needing to be repeated over and over again. The people of this world are in desperate need to be rescued from this age of sin, suffering, evil and darkness.
 6. That is what is going on behind the command to make disciples. God's plan is to save people and transfer them from death to life and from this kingdom of darkness to His Son's eternal kingdom.
 7. That must first grab your attention and your heart or discipleship will mean little to you.
- F. What is a disciple?
1. It simply means to be a follower. To follow someone and be identified by him.
 2. Another way to put it though is that you are to be a learner.
 - a. Luke 5:33—the point here is that the disciples model the behavior and life of the teacher.
 - b. Luke 6:40—the core of discipleship is learning to be like your master.
 - c. But it is not merely the acquisition of information. It is a life-changing, radical redirection. Luke 14:33—you have to leave behind all other loyalties or commitments.
 3. As already seen, baptism is the first step in following Jesus.
 4. But from that point on it is a life of learning Jesus and what He calls those who follow Him to do.
 - a. Jesus did not say in Matthew 28 to merely teach those who become Christians.
 - b. Rather they are to be taught until they become those who keep/observe/practice what Jesus commanded.
 - c. And behind all of this is not some bone-grinding rule-keeping that condemns you. Rather it is the learning of the supreme command of loving God and love one another.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- d. In other words, a key indicator of your growth as a learner of Christ is a wise and biblical informed love for others. And this is because your ultimate guide is Jesus, who laid His life down for our sin and suffering.
 5. Discipleship is not an part of the Christian's life. Nor is it a stage for you at some point. Rather, it is the essence of your entire life. It is what it means to be a "Christian."
- G. How do we disciple then?
1. The Word of God is primary.
 - a. The essence of Psalm 19.
 - b. "Sanctify them in Your Word. Your Word is Truth" John 17:17
 - c. This is what is needed for a non-Christian and Christian alike.
 - (1) Which means that we must be a bible-saturated people.
 - (2) But in doing so we also must keep the center of the message of the bible at the core of all our learning— Jesus Christ.
 - d. How this looks however is quite diverse.
 - (1) Formal teaching and preaching. These two are the preeminent ways given in the bible to teach.
 - (2) But it is also done written form. Most certainly this was common in the early church. Books, letters and even a card of encouragement or sympathy can be a form of discipleship.
 - (3) It can be simply the verbal reading of the bible to another.
 - (4) When you sit with your frightened child and encourage them to trust in Jesus you are discipling them. This is assuming, of course, that your words are informed by the bible.
 2. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
 - a. The ultimate teacher will be the Spirit.
 - b. He opens heart's hearts to hear and to believe the Word.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- c. He guides us in truth (John 16:13).
 - d. He strengthens us within so that we can comprehend truth (Ephesians 3:16).
 - e. The Holy Spirit gives us boldness to speak (Acts 2).
3. It is done through us.
- a. The vehicle which God has ordained this discipleship is us.
 - b. The tools are the Word of God and the Holy Spirit but we must grasp that we are the means for which the Spirit strengthens and blesses to use His Word in the lives of those around us.
 - c. If you claim to follow Christ then you are both a disciple and a disciple-maker. It is unavoidable because to follow Christ is to obey Christ and Christ sought those He would save and bring safely into eternity.
4. It is here that I want to encourage you and perhaps help you.
- a. If you are a believer then you should be in the process of discipling others. It is not something you wait to do.
 - b. But you need to understand that there are many areas and ways to disciple.
 - (1) Formal teaching is usually something you do once you have matured somewhat as a Christian. But this is also what too many think is what discipleship is.
 - (2) If I were to tell you to go and evangelize your neighbor who is sick many of you might become quite nervous. But what if you were simply to go and visit them and offer to pray for them? That is disciple-making.
 - (a) 1 Peter 2:9.
 - (b) Romans 1:11-12.
 - (c) Ephesians 4:29.
 - (3) When you go for coffee and speak of your faith with a fellow believer or read the bible together and talk about what the passage said, that is discipleship.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (4) When you gather your grandchild onto your lap and pray with them you are discipling.
- (5) In fact, it is the home where most discipleship occurs even though many of you may not realize that is what you are doing.
 - (a) Confessing sin.
 - (b) Corrections.
 - (c) Praise.
 - (d) Instruction.
 - (e) Reading and praying.

III. Conclusion.

- A. It is my conviction that the more we learn to be faithful in disciple-making we will remain strong and faithful as a church.
- B. It will guard us from false teaching as we grow strong in the Word.
- C. It will correct errors in our thinking and living.
- D. It will eventually color your actions and reactions and words.
- E. It is a key component in loving one another.
- F. So, consider how you are making disciples.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Small Group Questions

- **Summer Break**