

The Master Disciple Maker

The Master Disciple Maker – Part I

Matthew 4:18-22

Introduction

It is always a delight to hear someone tell me that something in a sermon has been applied to their lives throughout the week. I was talking with one family this past week, and their young son was listening, evidently intently, and applied something that I said in my sermon last Sunday. Unfortunately, however, it was not a salient, spiritual truth. I talked a lot about the need to wear the right kind of shoes. Well, Air Jordans, which cost about one hundred twenty dollars, are the right kind of shoes to wear – if you are playing basketball. So this young boy applied it in that way, which I thought was rather delightful. I do not think Dad appreciated that application! At least his son was listening.

Please turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 4, as we begin a new series entitled, “The Master Disciple Maker”. We will look at the work of Jesus Christ in the lives of individual believers and in the lives of the first group of men that He called to Himself.

I recently read of an Italian recluse who was found dead in his home. He had lived a frugal life and had hoarded what he had. When a few close friends and family came to take care of matters inside his house, they discovered, stored in the attic, two hundred forty six violins. They also discovered, as they searched through the home, violins stored underneath the bed and in bureau drawers and in closets. Throughout that entire home, they discovered hundreds of violins.

This recluse had a rather misdirected passion. In fact, it could be considered that he had robbed the world of beautiful music.

I am afraid that most believers treat their faith like this man treated his violins. We have it, but we store it; we hide it; we keep it.

I read one research result that reported that 95% of the evangelical world has never once led a person to Jesus Christ. If that is true, then 95% of the world’s spiritual violins have never played their music.

In our study today, we are going to discover the first and foremost passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. As He calls disciples, He will call them, not only to Himself, but to make them “fishers of men”. He will call upon them to play the music that He has given to their souls.

We will begin by reading Matthew 4:18-22.

Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

We will center our attention today, on Matthew 4:19, where Jesus says, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” We are going to divide this verse into three sections.

The Master’s Priority

The first section, which we will call “The Master’s Priority,” is found in the first two words that Jesus speaks in Matthew 4:19. He says,

... “Follow Me, ...”

This is the priority of the Master Disciple Maker.

Now the Greek philosophers of Christ’s day, were known for calling their students to follow them throughout their lives. The best learning does not necessarily take place in the classroom, but in life. These philosophers would gather their students about them, so their students could see, as they walked through life, the way they applied the truths that they

were endeavoring to teach in the classroom. They wanted their students to see the difference their teachings made in life.

So Jesus seemed to be following the custom of calling about Himself those men who would follow Him through life. In fact, this little phrase, “Follow Me,” could be translated several different ways. These include:

- “Stick with Me.”
- “Walk the same road with Me.”
- “Accompany Me.”

This was the priority of Jesus Christ as He called these first few disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John.

Now Jesus is calling men who have marked differences. We will study these men in more detail in further discussions, but let us take a brief look at two of them. We will look at, for instance, Simon, the Zealot, and Matthew, the Publican.

Simon was associated with a group known as the Zealots. We know from history that the Zealots were the red hot patriot band that hated the Roman government. They would do anything possible to overthrow it. They were constantly attacking the Roman garrisons and the towns that housed the Roman soldier forces. They hated Rome. They were Jews and they wanted the Judaistic kingdom to come – and they wanted it *now*.

Matthew, the Publican, was a man who had sold his national birthright to the Roman government so that he could, as an occupation, tax his fellow Jewish men.

Now put Simon and Matthew – a man who hated Rome and a man who had compromised to Rome – in the same group. I can just imagine the first time they shook hands. It probably took a week or two before they could stand the sight of each other.

What was the unifying force? What was the glue that caused men who were so different, to follow and accompany Jesus?

It was the first priority. Jesus did not say, “Get along and I will make you fishers of men.” He did not say, “Change yourselves immediately and I will make you fishers of men.” The first priority was, “Follow Me.” In following Jesus, there would be unity, while at the same time, diversity.

Look at our church. The differences in this body are amazing. There are differences economically and

socially, in tastes and personalities. There are people in this church who love music with a twang and people who love the Bach or the Beethoven style, and people who do not like music at all and would rather read. There are people in this church who are always saying, “Go,” and others who are always saying, “No,” and there are those who say nothing at all – they just “go” or “no,” according to whoever seems to shout the loudest. There are people in this church who vote for Republicans and people who vote for Democrats. What is the unifying force? How in the world can we get along when we are so different? I will tell you how – it is the first priority – “Follow Me,” Christ said.

The Master’s Promise

Jesus continues, in Matthew 4:19, to give what I will call, “The Master’s Promise”. He says,

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you . . .

Let us stop at this point and focus our thoughts on this second phrase in Jesus’ words, “and I will make you”. There are two things we need to understand about this promise of the Master Disciple Maker.

1. First, Jesus Christ is not calling disciples on the basis of their achievements.

The disciples really do not have much. They are uneducated and ill-equipped. They are probably startled to consider the cause that Jesus is calling them to. However, He is not calling them on the basis of what they are now, He is calling them on the basis of what He can make them to become.

When the accuser comes into your life, do you know what he does most often? He gets you to focus on what you are right now and that always leads to discouragement. When Jesus invades your life, He causes you to focus on what He can make you to become and that always leads to hope.

2. Secondly, Jesus is not calling disciples on the basis of their performance.

Jesus is calling disciples on the basis of their potential. He saw qualities in these men, which we will look at in a moment, whereby they were willing to allow Him to make them.

Do you know what discipleship is? It is saying, “Yes, God, You have the right and the privilege of making me into whatever You want me to be.”

Jesus saw great potential in these men who would have been the leaders of His day.

In light of this thought, let me share this story that is based on the supposition that Christ is living today and taking a look at the people He has chosen. This is written from the Jordan Management Consultant Firm.

Thank you for submitting the resumés of the twelve men you have selected for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests and the results have been run through our computer. It is our staff's opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of work you are now undertaking. They do not demonstrate a team concept. We would recommend that you search for persons of experience, managerial ability, and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to an offensive temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership and he will remain anonymous. Brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Frankly, they are mama's boys. Thomas demonstrates a questioning, doubting attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by our greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus have definite leanings toward the radical scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, has a keen business mind, is good with finances, and is highly motivated and ambitious. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right hand man.

There is no doubt, should Jesus be living today, this would have been our response at the choices that He made. The disciples were unlearned men, who were raw, rough, flawed. We can say, "Hallelujah!" for that because you and I fit well into that category, do we not?

Jesus does not choose people on the basis of what they are now, He chooses willing people on the basis of what they will allow Him to make them to become

– and that is the promise. Jesus made a personal promise,

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you . . .

The Master's Product

The third section, we will call, "The Master's Product". Look at the next phrase that Jesus speaks in Matthew 4:19,

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Now the Sea of Galilee was about eight miles wide and thirteen miles long. Luke, in his gospel, will most often refer to this as a lake, and properly so.

Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, reports that during the time of Christ, about two hundred fifty vessels fished regularly on the waters of the Sea of Galilee. Not only was there fishing on the waters, but there was fishing from the shore as well.

Traditional fishing methods

Fishing was done by three predominant methods.

- The first method was fishing with a single line and a hook, like many do today.
- The second method was fishing by using a dragnet strung between two or more fishing vessels. As the vessels were rowed toward the shore, the net caught everything along the way.
- The third method was fishing from shore using a net. The person stood on land and cast the net over the shallow water and pulled in the small fish. It is from this Greek adjective that we get our word "amphibious," which describes something related to both land and water.

It is the third fishing method that the disciples are using. They are standing on the shore, casting a net over the shallow water, when Jesus comes by and, as a Master Teacher, uses words they understand,

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

They probably looked at their nets and His meaning immediately clicked, "Oh, I understand."

The text tells us that they left everything and followed Jesus.

It is interesting, men and women, before we go any further, that you and I have the same methods of

fishing today, spiritually. Some will have a great influence.

- There are those in the church who have one line and one simple hook and they patiently wait for one at a time.
- There are also evangelistic teams that link arms with two or three others and with great dragnets, seem to draw thousands of people into the nets for the cause of Christ.
- There are those who stand on the shore of their arena and cast a net with which they seem to pull in dozens.

All are used of God. Do not be discouraged if you pull in one, while some pull in dozens. The key is that we are all fishing.

Qualities that make a good fisherman

Now I am the wrong person to imagine things about fishing because I am not a fisherman and do not have a bank of experience to draw from. However, I leaned back in my chair this week and let my imagination run with the thought, “What does it take to fish well? What are the qualities that make a good fisherman?”

I have fished, I think, once in my life, so again, I am limited in my understanding. I do not think I have cast a line more than once – and that was last year at my brother’s home. He is a pastor in Virginia Beach and recently moved into a new home that has an inlet of water running right into the back yard. My younger brother, who is an avid fisherman, was also there and had all his gear. He brought his rod and reel and had a weight attached to the end of the fishing line so he could practice casting. He went out to the back yard inlet and let that thing go and it just sailed out into the water. I watched and thought, “There’s nothing to that. I can do that.”

I asked if I could try and my brother said, “Go ahead.”

Now those of you who are fishermen, bear with me because I am not very good at this. My brother said, “Now you take the fishing pole and there is a little button that you push that acts like a release. You sling it over your shoulder, while you have the button pressed down, and then, you throw the rod forward. At the right moment, you let go of the button and it releases the line. Hopefully, it will sale forward.”

I said, “No sweat. Quit the lecture. Let me have that rod and reel.”

So I took the fishing pole and pressed the button and slung it over my shoulder. I then, flung it forward and let go of that thing at what I thought was the right time. I started looking for it – and there it was – behind me. Of course, my brother was enjoying this immensely.

Another time, I sent it straight up in the air. My brother ran for cover from the weight.

This experience taught me some obvious lessons about being a good fisherman.

1. First, a good fisherman must fish; must practice.

It takes time to learn how to fish and it is not learned in a classroom. Someone can draw a fishing pole and fish and say, “Here’s the little button you push and this is the line. Do you see this? This is what a fish looks like and you go get the fish.”

This, however, will not teach anyone how to fish. Fishing is learned by practicing; by simply going out and doing it.

I have talked to people who say, “I just can’t win anyone to the Lord.”

I ask them, “Have you tried?”

“Well, I really haven’t.”

Fishing takes practice.

2. Secondly, fishing not only takes practice, it takes patience.

Now some of you are laughing at me, but I would like to see you hit a golf ball. I will say this in defense of fishermen, there is little patience seen on a golf course. I do not know what it is about golf, but it attracts all the impatient people.

I was playing about a year ago, behind a foursome. The guy ahead of me was swinging and was doing some serious damage to the golf course. Finally, he got so mad that he took his golf club and just let it fly. Those things can really sail, by the way, at least as I have observed, but not experienced. He let the thing go and it went flying across the fairway and landed in the woods.

Now I have never seen a fisherman get so angry about not catching a fish that he threw his fishing pole into the water, kicked his tackle box off the pier, and walked away. Have you?

Have you ever heard a fisherman say, “Honey, I’ll be home in thirty minutes and I’ll have six fish.”? They do not say this because they do not know.

It takes a lot of patience as they sit on the end of the pier, drop their line, and cast it here and there. It takes patience.

3. Thirdly, I have also observed that to be a good fisherman takes perseverance.

Have you ever been around a fisherman? They do not just wait. They are “antsy” people. They do not just throw the fishing line out there and then sit and watch the little whatever-you-call-it bobble up and down. They continually reel that thing in and cast it in another direction. They constantly move and look for the best spots. They continually learn and could tell how fish act and give insights into where they might be. Patience does not mean just sitting – a fisherman will never just sit. They are constantly looking, constantly persevering until they finally land a fish.

When Jesus told the disciples, “You’ll be a fishermen of men,” they knew exactly what He meant.

The truth is though, to be a good fisherman, you need a good teacher. Look again at Matthew 4:19 and notice something interesting.

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Did Jesus ever command the disciples to catch fish? No, He did not. Jesus commanded the disciples to follow Him and He would teach them how to catch fish.

In other words, Jesus said, “I will take rough, raw material and I will fashion it in such a way that as a result of My teaching, the divine product, the master design will eventually be that you will be made into a fisherman.”

So Jesus began the process of years of teaching the disciples – and they followed Him.

Imagine for a moment, that you are in the sandals of Jesus Himself. You know that you have about three and a half years to plant the seeds that will result in the church of your own name. For this to happen, you must find people and convince them. What would you do?

I know what I would do. I would not rest for a moment. I would go from person to person, winning converts, and I would constantly be advertising this new concept.

What does Jesus Christ do? Interestingly enough, He pours His life, as we will see in the future, into the lives of twelve men and teaches them how to fish for other men and women. The disciples, in turn, go and teach others.

Paul picks up this thought,

The things which you have heard from me . . . entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2)

What a masterful idea! It does not seem like it would work, but the process of multiplication far outweighs the process of simple addition.

So Jesus pours His life into the raw material of the disciples. He gives them the promise that,

. . . I will make you . . .

He gives them the product of,

. . . I will make you fishers of men.

Now in this passage, where are the motivational gimmicks? Jesus says,

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

So what? In other words, Jesus is saying, “Follow Me, and I will not necessarily do something for you, but I will do something in you so that you can do something for someone else.”

This is not the best marketing strategy, especially in our country today. I read a survey which showed that our past generation evaluated things in light of the question, “Is there value in it?” Our generation today, evaluates things in light of the question, “What can I get out of it?”

Jesus Christ is telling them, “You won’t necessarily get anything out of this discipleship other than learning to help other people.”

However, let us read between the lines because there is a tremendous incentive to those who want to be disciples. Jesus said,

. . . Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

It is the disciples’ privilege, in their following, to get to know Jesus; to become intimately involved in His life, in His will, and in His passion. One mark of maturity in the life of a disciple is to quit asking God for things from Him other than for God Himself.

Is this incentive enough? Jesus never told the disciples, “Follow Me, and you will be loved by all. Follow Me, and you will live happy lives. Follow Me,

and you will enjoy health and wealth. Follow Me, and you will coast into heaven.”

No, Jesus said, in effect, “Follow Me, and you may suffer persecution. Follow Me, and you will be the laughing stock of Judaism. Follow Me, and you may face the lions.”

However, in that following, Jesus says, “You will come to know Me, and it will be worth it all. Follow Me, and I will turn your eyes toward the sea of humanity and you will see people drowning. Follow Me, and you will become fishers of men.”

In other words, by following Jesus, you will live with the constant awareness of those that need to be won. This is the reason perhaps, that evangelism has been called “the sob of God” – so much so that God sent His Son to die so that we might have life.

Words today, like “save,” or “getting saved,” or “being lost,” or “salvation” are no longer in vogue. These are considered to be primitive words for the unlearned. However, it does not matter what is in vogue – if it is biblical, it is contemporary. In the scriptures:

- Solomon writes,
. . . he who is wise wins souls. (Proverbs 11:30)
- Yahweh told Daniel,
. . . those who lead the many to righteousness, [will shine] like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)
- In the early church,
. . . having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus Himself, gave the theme of His life, when He said,
. . . the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)

Jesus said then, in effect, “Follow Me, and I will fill you with a passion and a longing to see others joined in following Me.”

We might come to the point where we are so burdened for this town and for this country that we will cry out like the Scottish reformer John Knox, and say, “Oh God, give me Scotland or I die.”

That is passion.

Have we ever spent a moment praying for our community and our country? Has it ever burdened us so that we have lost sleep?

When we follow Christ, we will be given such a passion to be fishers of men that we will never be the same.

Application

What is the place of the church today? It usually fits with the parable that I will close with. I read this and it has marked me.

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks were frequent, a crude little lifesaving station was built. The building was small and there was only one boat, but the few devoted crewmen kept a constant watch over the sea. Many lives were saved by their devoted efforts.

After a while, the station became rather famous. Some of those who were saved, as well as others in the surrounding area, wanted to become a part of the work. They gave time and money for its support. New boats were bought, additional crews were trained, and the station grew.

The station became a popular gathering place for its members to discuss the work of saving, of fishing, and to visit. They continued to remodel and redecorate until the station more and more, took on the character of a club. Fewer members were interested in going on lifesaving missions because they were having too much fun inside the club. So they hired professional crews to do the work on their behalf.

One day, a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in many boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, bruised, and sick. The club was a terrible mess. So a committee was formed and had a shower house built outside where the shipwrecked victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club’s lifesaving activities altogether. Some members insisted on keeping lifesaving as their primary purpose. However, these members were voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives, they

could begin their own station down by the coast. So they did.

As the years went by, the new station gradually faced the same problems the other one had experienced. It too, became an exclusive club and its lifesaving work became less and less of a priority.

History continued to repeat itself. If you visit that coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

Let me ask two questions:

- Are you following?
- Are you fishing?