

Luke 9:51-62 “Making Disciples of Christ” (Vision)

This is our vision campaign month, and we are looking together at our new Grace City Church vision. Last week we specified our Grace City identity as a gospel-centered community. Today I'd like to focus on our vision.

Grace City is a gospel-centered community. (Identity)

Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace. (Vision)

Our mission is, through faithful Bible teaching and worship, to see people's lives remade, to help restore our communities, to contribute to the renewal of culture, to respond to the suffering in our society, and to bring an evangelistic gospel movement from Tokyo to the world. (Mission)

We focus today on the line stating the vision, “Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace.” We dream that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace. We want to make disciples of Christ towards that goal. Because Jesus himself, for the coming of God's kingdom, raised and sent out disciples.

[Luke 9:51-62]

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.

⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them.

⁵⁶ And they went on to another village.

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”

⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

From this passage, let's look at the kind of disciple Jesus desires. Because becoming a disciple of Jesus and making disciples is the secret, the key, to living life with something to live for (filled

with purpose, motivation). First, we'll focus on Jesus' mission/evangelism strategy: making disciples. It was the core and focus of Jesus' ministry.

Second, I'd like to make our life priorities clear; to look at the priorities of Jesus' disciples. And third, we'll focus on the merciful, compassionate hearts we see in Jesus' disciples, the gracious attitudes. So our 3 points are Jesus' evangelism strategy, the priorities of a disciple, and mercy.

1. Jesus' evangelism strategy: Disciples

- We're talking today about the Grace City Vision. However, our vision is meaningless if it is not actually Jesus' vision (not our own!), what God himself desires. As we looked at last week, Grace City is a gospel-centered community. And "Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace."
- This vision statement is a paraphrase of the redemption plan God worked through Christ among us. Through the Bible God made his wonderful salvation plan (the Gospel) clear to us. The Gospel is revealed to us through scripture, and we respond. We long for, by making disciples of Christ, Tokyo to be filled with God's grace.
- As we look at Jesus' work, his ministry, he did not bring God's kingdom by writing a book. He didn't build a school. He didn't construct a program or system. To put it very simply, Jesus just proclaimed the Gospel, raised disciples, and sent them out. Jesus' strategy was disciples.
- In other words YOU who believe in Jesus, are Jesus' evangelism strategy. Not some other program or event, study or activity. Your existence, your words, your actions are the front line of missions, of gospel evangelism. Not some wonderful program or ministry.
- And that is why, after making clear who he himself was, Jesus focused on training disciples. In Luke 9:20 Peter, representing the disciples, acknowledges Jesus: you are "The Christ of God." Jesus' identity has been made clear.

Luke 9:20, "Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

And Jesus went on to clearly tell them about his death on the cross and resurrection (Good News of salvation), and calls them to take up their own crosses and follow him.

- And so in Luke 9:51 we see this picture of Jesus heading towards Jerusalem with extraordinary determination. Pointing to the cross, to death... In other words this road Jesus and the disciples are on from Galilee towards Jerusalem, you could even call a discipleship training journey.

2. The Priorities of a Disciple

- They continue their journey, and we come across 3 potential disciples. Let's look first at verse 57:

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."
- This first person seems to have firmly made this big decision to follow Jesus. But Jesus' reply to him may seem a bit out of place to us:

⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."
- Jesus' blunt words actually see right through to the true nature of this person's heart and intentions. He was expecting a life of comfort, peace, and self-satisfaction. He was mentally planning for a full life: "Jesus will become king, I will have an important government position, avoid risks and live in luxury." Or perhaps he was very wealthy and already enjoying an affluent lifestyle.
- What Jesus is saying in his reply is, "Can you set aside your wealth, your affluent lifestyle, and put me first and follow after me?" Jesus' challenge to us is, even if you lost all you have, all you hope to gain in the future, could you still joyfully put me first?
- The second and third person also aim to follow Jesus, but they have reservations; conditions. Before following Jesus, there is something they have to do first, something they need to prioritize over Jesus. The first person says, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father" and the next, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home."
- These sound like reasonable reasons. To be at your father's funeral, to say your goodbyes to your family, are not bad things. Rather, they are required, praiseworthy deeds based on the 10 commandments, "Honor your father and mother".
- However, look very carefully at the Bible. In both cases, they are saying, more than following Jesus, first let me go and do this. More than you Jesus, I am prioritizing this. What these two people have in common is their need, their desire, is "first this other thing" more than Jesus. Which means that in the future as well, if things come along that they feel they need to prioritize over Jesus, they will hold back from following Jesus.
- Jesus responds, ""Leave the dead to bury their own dead" and "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God". It's a little unclear exactly what Jesus means in parts of his responses, but it is very clear that he is urging us to follow Jesus, to prioritize the kingdom of God.
- Let's think about the lifestyle customs and culture of those days. People's happiness, life direction, was from their families. If the father is wealthy and powerful, his children are happy. The first person in our passage today was most likely from this kind of home. We don't know what kind of father or family the next two people came from.

- However, looking at what they said, we see that they thought about life, their life, not in light of the gospel, but from the values of their time's patriarchal system. Joy and happiness in life, success and purpose for living, were gained from their father, their family, the approval of their community. And because of that, we see them saying in this passage that sometimes there could be things they prioritize first above Jesus.
- Jesus contrasts this with "the kingdom of God". Spreading the word about God's kingdom is important, and prioritizing your father or family over that is not fit for the kingdom of God. Is this too strict a demand? No. Only Jesus can give true happiness and life significance. It reminds us that true happiness and meaning can only be found through the Gospel of the kingdom of God.
- These three potential disciples show a double hearted attitude of looking for ultimate happiness in something other than Jesus, something other than the Gospel of the kingdom of God. If you put something other than Jesus as #1 in your life, you will lose your life from the inside. You won't be filled with joy nor thanks. You won't enrich the lives of those around you. To borrow Jesus' words, it ends up a life of "the dead burying the dead."
- However, if your first priority is pleasing Jesus, striving to be more like him, knowing and serving Jesus, then the healing and love of God's kingdom will fill you to overflowing. Being a disciple of Jesus is being a person who always puts Jesus as your top priority.

3. A Merciful Heart

- How can we become disciples of Jesus and walk with him as our top priority as we've just seen in this passage? Jesus' missions/evangelism strategy to bring about ultimate true happiness (God's kingdom), is us: disciples who believe in Jesus. And we learned that walking with Jesus always as our first priority is the key. And that is born out of knowing Jesus' mercy and living in Jesus' love.
- In the paragraph before addressing the priorities of a disciple, Jesus had sent the disciples to a Samaritan village. Likely this was the same as when Jesus sent the 12 disciples out in the first half of chapter 9: in order to spread the word about the kingdom of God. The disciples were able to do many great works at that time. They preached the Gospel, many people were healed. But this time we see the Samaritans did not accept Jesus.

⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. ⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"
- James and John are remembering the famous Old Testament prophet Elijah. When the Samaritan King Ahaziah tried to capture Elijah, fire fell from heaven and 50 soldiers were

consumed by the fire (2 Kings 1:1-16). James and John thought these Samaritans who rejected Jesus deserved to be consumed by fire as in Elijah's time.

- What's more, if you look at Luke 9:28-36, Jesus appeared in glory alongside Moses and Elijah, with shining face and white robe. They heard God's voice from heaven saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" In other words, it was revealed to them that Jesus is far greater than even Elijah or Moses. In which case, if you reject this Jesus you do deserve to be judged, to be consumed by fire.
- But Jesus rebukes them for desiring that, and does not judge the Samaritans who rejected him. Prophets who call down fires of judgement, who display their legitimacy and power, may be popular in this world. But Jesus, who far surpasses Elijah in strength, loved and forgave.
- When it looked like Elijah was about to be arrested, fire fell from heaven and consumed the soldiers. But when Jesus, our Redeemer far greater than Elijah, was arrested, not only did fire from heaven not consume the soldiers, but when the servant was bleeding and in pain from having his ear cut off, Jesus reaches out and heals him!
- After that Jesus is arrested, and what does he do to the soldiers who pierce his hands and feet with thick nails? What did Jesus say to the soldiers who spit on him and cursed at him? Luke 23:34

"And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

- According to the Old Testament, for a long time people offered burnt sacrifices of animals on altars for the atonement, the forgiveness, of their sins. Really they themselves deserved to be burned on the altar, but animals served as substitutes. The fire represented God's judgement. Why were the Samaritans who rejected Jesus not burned with fire? Why were the soldiers not judged with fire? Because Jesus took their place, took on God's judgement because he loved them.
- To agree to Jesus' mission strategy, become a disciple of Christ, determine to put your life top priority in Christ, is wonderful. But it is only when we experience Jesus' love that our life priorities can begin to change. Where you deserved to be rejected, judged, and forsaken, Jesus took your place and was rejected, judged, and forsaken for you. That is love.
- The key to being a disciple of Christ is to accept Jesus' extreme love, to taste God's extraordinary grace. The one secret to living with Jesus as top priority, is Jesus' sacrificial love. When you become Christ's disciple, Tokyo will be filled with God's grace.

Grace City is a gospel-centered community.

Our vision is, by making disciples of Christ, that Tokyo would be filled with God's grace.