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Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
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The Thirteenth Disciple: Paul, and You?

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The Book of Acts is an ongoing account of the Disciples of Christ. The Lord chose twelve, but one deceived and died (Judas Iscariot, by suicide). The disciples wanted to fill the vacancy by lots between two men (from the pool of one hundred twenty disciples) to fulfill the scriptures written in Psalms, “May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,” and “May another take his place of leadership,” (Psalms 69:25, 109:8). The disciples put forward two names, Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. They prayed and chose Matthias.

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

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²⁰ “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“‘May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,’
and,

“‘May another take his place of leadership.’

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

Not much is known about Matthias. Then we read in Acts that the Lord called Saul who later became Paul and commissioned him to be an apostle, and he was the right and ideal choice for the twelfth, (see Acts 9).

Acts 9

³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

...

²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

I came across the book *All the Master’s Men* by Kendrick Strong, who talks about Paul as the “Thirteenth Disciple.” The number thirteen is usually not considered good for people. But Kendrick said he should be the thirteenth disciple, or anyone

who is willing to take up the cross and deny himself and follow the Lord Jesus. That includes you and me.

Kendrick further says that, we question how we can become disciples when we are not perfect. But neither were the chosen ones. They were close-minded, self-centered, familiar with self-distrust, skepticism and fear, and so are we.

What is common between the twelve and us is the presence of our Master. They had the physical presence of Christ, and we have the spiritual presence of His Spirit, according to his promise that “my presence shall go with you,”

Exodus 33:12-14

¹² Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”

¹⁴ The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

What are people in the world looking for in us, and in Christianity, and in the church?

Maybe they are happy with the state of the church and Christianity, but the disciples are not living out what they preach.

The world is looking for:

1. **Change and transformation in the lives of the disciples.** What is that change they experience and see in our lives that impacts them to follow Christ?

Saul, who was the persecutor of the church, when he met the Lord, completely changed and became a propagator of the gospel. He could challenge people,

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ,” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

He explains to the people at Corinth about the transformation he has experienced.

Read it.

2 Corinthians 11:16-29

¹⁶ I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. ¹⁷ In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. ¹⁸ Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. ¹⁹ You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! ²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. ²¹ To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

He was not ashamed of the of the Gospel.

Romans 1:16-17

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to the last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith,’ (Habakkuk 2:4)”

2. Life lived by faith

Especially when the time and circumstances are different than usual. Paul again writes, “Let the lives you lead be worthy of this good news of Christ.” Can people see Jesus through us?

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

I am again quoting from Kendrick Strong:

Philotheos Zikas relates that during his evangelizing years in Muslim-dominated Thrace, a villager once said to him, “We have read the Christian Bible, we have enjoyed the Gospels, we recognize Jesus as the world’s greatest man. But it puzzles us that Christians in our village don’t really live any differently from us. It makes us feel that there is not a good reason for us to leave Islam to become Christian. If these Christians would live the beliefs of the Bible, more of us would become Christian. Pg. 211

How do we live by faith? We need to live out our faith. It is not a private or internal matter. Faith is seen:

In the sacrifice of Abraham offering his son (see Genesis 22),

in the courage of Joshua (see Joshua 1),

in the widow giving her mite, who gave all she had and trusted the Lord (see Luke 21),

in modern days saints like Dr. Billy Graham and Dr. Ravi Zacharias.

It is not prosperity we should show, but humility in our possession.

3. The truth demonstrated in our living

We have many characters listed in in the book of Hebrews chapter 11 as examples (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and more).

Mahatma Gandhi, freedom fighter in India, was impressed with Brother C. F. Andrews, a missionary to India. Ghandi liked Christ's Sermon on the Mount. He failed to understand apartheid practiced in then South Africa, and he was asked to get down from a train coach which was meant for white people only.

Especially in the situation we live in today, turmoil and volatile, hatred and anger and also to face Covid-19, which has deprived people of health and jobs, how are we behaving as the disciples of Christ? What are we offering to them through our comments and reactions instead of giving them HOPE?

- a. In our conversation.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

- b. In our attitude.

Philippians 2:1-5

Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³ *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

⁹ But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. ¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? ¹¹ And because of your knowledge shall

the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹² But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

c. In our behavior, showing grace to each other.

Matthew 5:41

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

²² Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

d. Forgiveness-

Ephesians 4:32

³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Luke 23:33-34

³³ And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

Many times people observe our attitude and behavior (practice) more than our peaching.

We need to re-enact the miracle of the Early Church.

Strong writes these beautiful words:

The twelve disciples long are dead,
And faithful Saint Matthias too;
The souls of Paul and Mark are sped -
so Christ must turn to me and you.

His haunting voice now calls again
As once it spoke in Galilee;
“I need your help in catching men,
so come at once and follow me!”