

vision for us as a church?

Why do, what are we doing? Why do we exist? And this morning and, and for the next six weeks, we're going to kind of start to unpack this phrase that the team kind of came up with towards the middle of this year.

And the phrase is coming on the screen. It is the phrase that says, every person developing a living faith in Christ. Like, that's what we want to, to do.

[4 : 48] And it's the, the admission that we aren't there yet. We're not doing that. It's the admission that we want to do that better. And so this morning, and again, for the next six weeks, but actually, after six weeks, you know, we're going to go back into Mark for three weeks.

And then we're going to continue kind of asking this question, what would happen if the word of God and the spirit of God collided in the hearts of the people of God? How do we, how do we build a, a, a church community where we see every person?

And that's every person, whether you are a toddler all the way through to Bill's age, right? 35, exactly.

See, I didn't say what age, did I? So what would happen? So every person developing, growing in a living faith in Christ.

And so, again, essentially, what does it mean to have the word of God and the spirit of God collide in our lives? And so today, we're just going to read about four fishermen who could not have known at the time, but Jesus would take them and a handful of other just ordinary people and do something quite extraordinary.

[6 : 05] And you know the story. We talk about this quite often about God uses ordinary people. And we go, well, I'm an ordinary person. And then we ask the question, is God using me?

How is God using me? And so we're going to start to unpack all of that stuff. And look, I'm saying all of this because I still believe that God is doing this. And I still believe that God wants to do that here. He wants us to respond to the gracious invitation that we're going to read about this morning to follow me. And so soon after Jesus began his public ministry, he called his first disciples.

And I want us to get a hold of that word disciples this morning. And Mark 4, excuse me, Matthew 4, verse 18 describes it this way. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Now, this isn't the first time that they had encountered Jesus. This isn't the first time they'd met Jesus. John 1 was probably the first time, if you have a look at that later on.

[7 : 19] And probably there was a couple of other times that they probably came into contact with Jesus. But Jesus gives them this one command, two words.

Verse 19, he said to them, follow me. And in those two words, we begin to unpack what it means to be a disciple. Before we get into too far into the text, let me tell you that the New Testament word for disciple is mentioned over 260 times in one form or another.

But it might surprise you that the word Christian is used three times. It also might surprise you to know that the word for disciple is not a specific word. It's not reserved for, you know, hardcore Christians like the ones who get up early and stay up late.

It's not reserved for the so-called loyal followers of Jesus. And the New Testament actually uses the phrase to highlight three different groups of people that may or may not be Christians at all.

And so this can sometimes confuse us into thinking, actually, that there are kind of three versions of Christianity or there's a hierarchy of Christian, right? Which I don't believe there is.

[8 : 35] But I think you'll see that in a moment. But the New Testament does speak of disciples in three ways. And they're coming on the screen, hopefully, if I put up there. There you go.

Three types of disciple. And disciple, take that loosely. Don't attach what you already think that you know about a disciple to it, right? So it describes seekers as disciples.

So think about the crowds that were following Jesus when Jesus was here. Tens of thousands of them. Listening from a distance. If you think how many people were fed from the five loaves and fishes, right?

There was tens of thousands. And some of them even came back the next day for more, right? Think of how many followed Jesus on foot. They filled hillsides and fields.

So that sometimes it says that Jesus got into a boat and cast out into the water because there wasn't room enough on the shore for him to teach everyone. So these were the seekers.

[9 : 41] They kind of showed up for the miracles. They showed up for the loaves. They showed up to hear the teaching. But they followed from a distance. And then we might call them the believers. There were some who had some buy-in. They were embracing some of what Jesus was saying. Maybe they were growing in understanding. They maybe traveled around with Jesus. Maybe if you want to, if this is helpful, maybe they were serving on a Sunday at church. And as helpful as that is, and it is, it didn't require them really to put in a huge great thought or planning into it. I guess these were the guys who came and church was important, but it wasn't that important.

And I just want to say, actually, you know, if you're a seeker this morning, if you would consider yourself in the top group, or if you're a believer, like in the middle group, like God bless you. Like, I don't think that there is anything wrong with being in one of those two groups if you find yourself there, so long as we understand that true Christianity is moving beyond those two groups. [10 : 55] Like, if we really want to see every person developing a living faith in Christ, there's going to be groups of seekers and there's going to be groups of believers, if you like.

Like, and I think these two brothers at one time found themselves to be seekers. You can see that in the gospel. They probably heard Jesus speak on occasion when, you know what, I can, I can believe that.

But now Jesus calls them into something different. And look, there's going to be amongst us, hopefully regularly, hopefully all the time, right?

There are going to be people looking in from a distance. Like, one of the reasons we record all of our sermons and video all of our sermons is to allow people to do that. Like, for us, for most of us, it's not a strange thing to go to a school on a Sunday morning and call it church, right?

Most of us, like, we don't think twice about that. There's lots of people are like, you do what now? Well, I'm going to go, I'm going to check you out online where I can turn you off if need be.

[12 : 05] Like, you can't, you lot can't do that right now. Or you could just get up and walk out. But we want people to be able to do that, don't we?

We want people to go online, find out, you know, what we believe, find out sermons, interact online. All of that is good. There's going to be people who come in and stay for a while and then leave. And I want to say that's okay, too. So long as people are actually moving and developing a faith that is alive and active.

And that is the group I'm calling transformers. Now, look, take auto box transform and roll out of your minds, right? It's not transformers as in transformers.

And I don't actually think that Christianity is a hierarchy of different versions of disciple. I think we should kind of try and dispel that myth straight away, right? I don't think that what we see in the New Testament is like, oh, we have seekers, their disciples.

[13 : 15] And, you know, but a better version of those are believers. And you can get an upgrade as a, like a hardcore kind of, oh, just the real disciples are the ones who meet in a school on a Sunday morning.

Right? That's not what we're saying. We're saying that true Christians are true disciples. And those true Christians, those true disciples are what I've just called transformers.

This is the follower of Jesus who is not only being actively shaped by Jesus and his teachings, but they are also inviting others along to meet Jesus, too.

And I think that the distinction that some people make between Christians and disciples is simply not sustainable. I don't think there is a Christian and a disciple as two different things.

And I think the Bible backs up this claim. Just look with me in Acts chapter 11, verse 26. It says right at the end of that verse that in Antioch, and this isn't just a piece of like, you know, information.

[14 : 25] This is helpful. It says, and in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. What does that mean?

Well, simply, look, the word Christians was probably a name given to this group of disciples as a nickname by the opponents of Christ. It was probably more of a slur word.

Oh, they belong to Christ. That's what it means. Right? And later it became used by Christians themselves. And Luke's comment is helpful because where he says the first called Christians shows that the term stuck.

But here's the point. Disciples and Christians are the same people. Isn't that what that's saying? Christian was just simply another way to refer to the disciple of Jesus.

Disciples are not a second class version of disciples. People who have believed in Jesus in some way, but had yet to take a step up to discipleship.

[15 : 26] All discipleship. All disciples of Jesus are Christians and all Christians are disciples. And the question is not whether you are a seeker, a believer or a transformer.

The question is, are you living like a Christian? That's the issue. Are you living being driven by the desire to know Jesus and make him known?

And are you placing this at the center and as a priority of your life? Now, pause there and ask this question of yourselves. Which one of these three groups is the most common in our day?

Well, I think we'd probably agree that most fall into the top two, right? When we think about are we pursuing to know Jesus and make him known?

And look, it was the same in Jesus's day. I mean, it shouldn't surprise us that the masses belong probably to the top two categories, right? There were tens of thousands of people that came to listen to Jesus.

[16 : 34] There were fewer that followed him around. And by the time Jesus had died and resurrected, Acts chapter 115 tells us that there were about 120 people left.

120 people doing what Jesus had told them to do to wait for him and the power of the Holy Spirit to come on them. So maybe a more challenging question rather than to try and say, well, how many people do we see in each group?

More challenging question is, are you a disciple? Are you a Christian? And here is where I think much of Western Christianity falls short.

We've somehow made it possible to be comfortable and content thinking that we are Christian because we go to church, sing the songs and pay our tithe.

Like I've done my bit. We've somehow made it possible to be okay with having a room full of believers where the need for transformation. Dallas Willard, who I would not recommend in most circumstances, but he gives a great quote that I wanted to share.

[17 : 53] He wrote a book called The Great Omission, Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teaching on Discipleship. Don't bother reading it. I've got one good quote from the whole book. Here it is. He says this, It's much more provocative for me to say, think about this question.

Are you a disciple or are you a Christian? Because most of us are going, I'm a Christian. And that's not, it's not an issue. We would, we would, we would, we would say, well, yeah, maybe I'm not a disciple and I'd be okay with that.

And that's the problem. that's the very problem we get annoyed when someone goes are you a christian are you sure you're a christian you'd be like how dare you are you a disciple well you know i'm working on it much more controversial to ask the question are you a christian if christian and disciple are the same thing we should be troubled by both shouldn't we so i want us to think very deeply about and challenge us about whether we who are identified as christian if you identify as a christian today whether you're actually a christian and with it let me say whether you're a disciple let me put it this way if you came into our church for the first time which is none of you so this is going to be a challenge just to think about that if you came into our church for the first time what would tell you that this is a church of disciples think about that because i'm going to come back to that question at the end what is that about maybe what is it about you that people would go huh he's a disciple she's a disciple or he's a christian she's a christian whichever term you want to use look and i'll go first jesus said you'll know my disciples because they love one another thank you always like to get cheered along as i go uh i think we'd see i think we'd see people showing up early in anticipation to meet with god and his people i think we'd see people bringing their bibles and eagerness to hear from god and making notes so they don't forget unless you've got an amazing memory which is possibly the case i think we'd see people worshiping with hands aloft maybe on our knees and it would be a beautiful din because no one would care if they sang in tune or not amen nobody would want to go home unless they'd invited all of the seekers back to their house for lunch so they could talk to them more about jesus that's the kind of church i want to be part of but it's got to start with love that's what jesus said and we'll get there in about four weeks well we'll talk about it in four weeks see here's the point when jesus said to these brothers in verse 19 follow me there was no way that they could just agree and say yes good sermon pastor and then carry on fishing jesus is calling them to action and actually the phrase follow me is most often translated come just simply come rather than follow like matthew 11 verse 28 come to me all who labor and heavy laden i will give you rest come there's this idea that i'm going with jesus i'm not being sent out

without him and we'll get to this when we talk about being on mission i'm not being sent out without him i'm going with him it's this this idea of come follow me and actually in in the jewish setting jesus was officially calling these brothers to become his disciples and even in the phrase come to me all who labor and heavy laden you know the method of learning um from a rabbi was known as the yoke and jesus is saying look my way is not easy but it's not burdensome either and so with a desire to challenge us all towards discipleship and being disciples let me tell you two essential ingredients that will start us on our way and actually i'm only going to tell you one because i'm going to save one for next week and i'm and before you ask i'm intentionally making our sunday morning sermons shorter now i know none of you believe me the proof will be in the hearing but that's the intention why so that we have less to digest but more to think about does that make sense good so let me give you um two essentials to start us on our way they're both in a text one this week one next week the first essential uh write this down um leaving what is behind what is what is an essential to being a disciple you've got to leave what's behind so notice at the end of verse 20 jesus said follow me i will make you fishes of men and immediately what did they do they left their nets and followed him and look i want to say that in a more let's let's let's combine some theological language in a theological language this is an example of what we'd call repentance like repentance isn't like a theologically lofty difficult word to understand right um this is what repentance looks like it looks like leaving what is behind and let me again package that in terms of um what we understand of the gospel right so to in order to kind of like a more vividly paint this picture look at the preceding verses just go back to um verse 12 so matthew says there in verse 12 now when he heard that john had been arrested he jesus withdrew into galilee and leaving nazareth where he grew up he went and lived in capernium by the sea in the territory of zebulun and naphtili now like you you read that and you go great so what it's like who cares where he lived right and he even gives us a quote right um from the prophet right so um that as he as he moved so he moved there so that verse 14 what was spoken by the prophet isaiah might be fulfilled the land of zebulun and the land of natali the way of the sea beyond the jordan galilee of gentiles the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light and those who are dwelling in the region a shadow of death on them a light has dawned and you're like brilliant it's very poetic is it just about jesus fulfilling the old testament no because verse 17 completes the question of why it was important for jesus to move to capernum from that time jesus began to preach saying repent the kingdom of heaven is our hand and so what is going on well what's going on is that the the gospel is the good news about what about the king coming and what he will do when he comes we've explored this haven't we before the kingdom of heaven there in that context is is talking about the rule and the reign and authority and dominion of god and so so jesus has moved to capernaum because that's where the king is going to come from as testified by isaiah and that means that when jesus goes out and he says repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand it makes complete sense why because the king has arrived he calls people to respond to the fact that the king has come so that's how that all kind of joins up there and the response that jesus is looking for is repentance he's saying look the king has come the kingdom is at hand like it's present like to to two hand you might say the kingdom of heaven is two hand the king has come how are you going to respond to that and the response that jesus is looking for is this idea of repentance to leave to leave the customs and ways and behaviors a way of thinking that were dominated by the old way to leave their loyalty if you like to the old king to abandon their devotion to the old rules jesus is calling people to change their allegiance from one king to another king that's what he's doing in this passage and so it's no surprise that this idea of leaving things behind becomes in the new testament a really important theme as as jesus is calling people to respond to that good news so in matthew chapter 5 as he starts to paint the picture of what the kingdom of heaven would look like he says blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven so if you want to come under the rule and the reign and authority and dominion of god you've got to be poor in spirit what does that mean it means that there's no room for egos in the kingdom of heaven matthew 13 verse 44 the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which is a man found and covered up then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of uh fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he has and bought it you see the picture the kingdom is worth selling everything that you have in order to gain it leaving everything behind matthew chapter 19 peter said see we have left everything and followed you so this is sometime later right so we get right at the beginning jesus says follow me hey peter follow me he said i'm going to follow you then he says in chapter 19c we have left everything and followed you

what will we have i.e what are we going to get in return and jesus said to them truly i say to you in the new world when the son of man was stood on his glorious throne now that kind of sounds like kingdom language doesn't it like that sounds like he is ruling and reigning those who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of israel and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mother or children or lands for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will receive and will inherit eternal life you see there's a leaving that's involved in coming under the lordship of christ there's a leaving involved luke chapter 9 he said to all if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me and whoever would save save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it for what is it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose him and loses or forfeits himself again in chapter 9 as they were going along the road someone said i will follow you wherever you go jesus i'm going to be a disciple and jesus said there's no hilton hotel along this road foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head and to another he said follow me but he said lord let me first go and bury my father and jesus said to him leave the dead isn't that crazy so jesus is saying look you're going to have possessions leave them uh you're going to have family members leave them you're going to have you're going to have career aspirations leave it uh you're going to even have things that seem the most important thing for you right now leave it and so jesus is calling these men to live a radical life of leaving behind and think about what he's asking them to do

[31 : 15] he's asking them to leave behind their comfort he's asking them to leave behind all that was familiar to them leaving their careers in dad's fishing empire leaving their possessions their boats leaving their family their dad now look really important not once does jesus call them to abandon these things but he is asking them to reorientate those things like he doesn't call the disciples to leave their families and never see them again like and i think that's important to state i think we know that but i think it's important to mention that um he's not asking them to renounce their marriage or forsake their parental duties he's not saying that he's calling them to reorder their lives in such a way that career possessions and family are now not the driving force of their life he was calling them to bring family to bring relationships to bring career possessions under the rule and reign and authority dominion of god now of course like the big problem with that is often these things only exist because of self don't they like we wrap ourselves often in these things even in the good things um because they help self which is why jesus said if anyone wants to come after me let him deny what himself there's a denial of self and this is the bit we don't like right the denial of self this is the shocker and it's the shocker because culture is built on self isn't it promoting self protecting self advancing self preserving self and jesus comes along and says slay yourself which is why paul could later write in galatians it's no longer i who live you know what that word i is in the greek ego it's no longer ego who lives but christ who lives in me i wonder what that would look like for you to leave all that you know including the homage to self simply because jesus said follow me come be my disciple it's radical isn't it it's a radical question to ask and and this is why disciples are hard to find this is why christians are hard to find jesus says they're so hard to find you got to pray for them you can't just go out and find them you can't even make them you got to pray for them jesus said in matthew chapter 9 the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few therefore pray earnestly to the lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest jesus says the the amount of men and women that we need to bring in the harvest is outstripped by the amount of men and women that there are to harvest and so really the first essential component of biblical discipleship is the call to leave self behind c.s lewis put it like this and as far as i'm concerned you can read as much c.s lewis as you like repentance means unlearning all the self conceit and self will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years

repentance it's the slaying of self so let me leave you with this question i said we're going to come back to this question some of you can't believe that actually we're going to finish we are because i want to give us time to really talk about and think about this question together i like i love the fact that we have tea and coffee and good things after church and i love the fact that we can talk about how our week has been and things like that but let's talk about this question if someone came into our church for the first time and sat next to you what would it be about you what could they see and observe about you that would tell them that this is a church of christians of disciples i think it's an incredibly difficult question to ask it's an incredibly difficult question to answer honestly because as i think about that question as i think about answering that question myself about myself all of a

sudden it exposes some things doesn't it and so let's be exposed i don't think that's bad i think we can follow that up with prayer and i would love to do that and so again let me state the question and then we're going to pray we're going to sing one or two songs and then maybe we'll put the question up at the end if you've forgotten it this is the question if someone came into our church for the first time and sat next to you what would it be about you what could they see and observe about you that would tell them that this is a church of christians let's pray together father we want to come lord and firstly confess lord that we have often relegated the idea of christian from what it means to be a disciple and lord we have barely been living as christians on the basis that we think well could never be a disciple way too lofty way too hard lord so we pray this morning lord that you would help us to rethink what it means just to be a christian and to be a christian is to be as as lofty as we think that being a disciple is and so lord the the i guess the outcome in our thinking the the danger in our thinking and the most prevalent question in our thinking is whether we're christian at all and so lord as we contemplate this question as we think about this lord we we want to grasp hold of what your word says about your people that you've saved us you've delivered us you've forgiven us our sins and if that's true and if we we are repenting we are turning away and leaving everything that we have to follow you lord this becomes less a question of identity and more a question of obedience and that's even more difficult because then we have to confess lord that we haven't been obedient and we haven't lived up to the high expectation and the higher ideals that you've set out for us and so lord we not only want to say that we're sorry for that lord but we also want to say lord help us lord would you breathe your spirit on us lord not that we would become you know more outwardly different necessarily lord would you transform our hearts to start with lord would you start there lord would you would you create us in us lord this just this acknowledgement that we are perhaps not where we think we are and we are not where you want us to be and then give us a desire to be that to get there lord with your help lord by grace in the power of your spirit and so lord as we as we sing lord our singing may be a beautiful din lord we don't care lord we want to sing of you and what you've done for us lord and we want to respond lord in having all of the things in our lives come under your domain and your authority lord help us in that lord we're not gonna maybe you know change right now lord but we do sense the spirit just working on our hearts lord to give us the the appetite to change the appetite to follow after you lord to help us with that we pray this morning in jesus name amen amen