

SERMON AT ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2024

MATTHEW 4: 18-23

“THE EXAMPLE OF THE 12 DISCIPLES”

I am not known as a preacher of short sermons, but today's will be short. This is because we happen to have several important and beautiful ceremonies at the end of today's service. Just today, though---this is not the start of a trend!

Today's gospel lesson from Matthew 4 is about when Jesus began to call the 12 Disciples to be His closest followers and helpers. In the reading today, He called the first 4. The rest were called a bit later.

We, as Christians, are also called to be His disciples. And we are called to follow the example of those first disciples-----to spread the good news of Jesus Christ like they did. We will glance today at 2 ways we should do that----First, by inviting people to Christ. Second, by showing Christ's light to others, so that they will be attracted by His light.

**Number one**---inviting people to Jesus Christ. And commonly the best specific way to do that is to invite them to the liturgy at church. For right here, what we are doing right now---this is their best introduction to the reality of God. Just a few weeks ago I preached a sermon all about inviting people to church, so no details on that today. But just to reiterate---invite people to church. It's true most won't come! But if you invite lots and lots over a period of time, every once in a while perhaps one will come. And perhaps that person's soul will be saved! And that is a very big thing, indeed. So don't take it lightly---invite people to the liturgy.

**Number two**—Show the light of Christ to other people. None of us are hermits. There are hermits, but not us. We are all around people at least some---some of us not too much, some of us almost continually. When you are with other people, is the light of Christ shining brightly through you? Or we do tend to be rather mediocre disciples and shine very little of Christ's light on people in the dark? If the light we allow to shine through us is small and pitiful, it's not likely many will be attracted to the Light of the world, Jesus Christ.

But if all your actions, all your words, all your behavior is full of God's light---people will be attracted to God because of you. And jumping back to number one above, that makes it more likely that they might show up when you invite them to church!

If your life shines with the light of Christ, it will draw people to the Lord. Once there was a young boy cheerfully walking down a sidewalk early on a Sunday morning, obviously in a bit of a hurry. A man walking by said to him, “Sonny, where are you going so fast early on a Sunday?”

The little fellow said---“I’m going to Sunday School!” The man next asked, “Why do you go to Sunday School?”. “To learn more about God!”, said the boy. Now the man asked him in a serious tone---“But how do you know there is a God?”. The child replied, “Because my Sunday School teacher is very good friends with Him and she tells me about him.” The man’s last question was---“And so you believe your teacher?”. The boy happily said, “Oh, yes! My Sunday School teacher is so nice and so good that I know anything she says is true!” (“Pulpit Helps”, March, 1980, p. 4)

If you are like that Sunday School teacher, if you live a life full of Christ’s light.....then like that little boy, people will be drawn, because of you, to the light of God. And they just might come to church when you invite them!

So, as I said at the start, this is an unusual sermon today---short. You know that usually I would just be getting warmed up at this point, but I’m done! To briefly summarize-----We should be like the 12 Disciples. We should be drawing people in the direction of the Lord. Two ways we focused on today-----Invite them to church. And live a life full of the light of Christ that will attract them to God. May the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, bless we modern disciples as we strive to bring people to Him!