

The content of the gospel of Luke is an orderly account of the life of Jesus. The purpose of his gospel is to faithfully transfer the faith from one person to another. We are calling that “succession.” Last week we learned that “Participation in God’s succession plan begins with believing what Jesus says about Himself.” But passing the faith from one generation to the next is not just a matter of doctrine. It is also a matter of development. What are the key elements to spiritual growth that result in a faith that is contagious? Today I want to highlight a process that is repeated over and over in the life of a growing, disciple-making Christian. This process happened in Peter’s life, the question this morning is simple - is it happening in your life?

The development of a disciple begins with the recognition of the authority of Jesus. Starbucks Manager who did not recognize the Chairman of the Board. Not recognizing the Chairman of the Board can jeopardize your career. Not recognizing the Chairman of the Universe can jeopardize your eternity. Ch. 5...

Early in His ministry, Jesus was teaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As the crowd grew, Jesus stepped into Peter’s boat which served as a floating stage. When He finished His message, Jesus told Peter to take the boat farther out into the Sea. Let’s pick up the story in v. 4...

What happened to Peter will happen to every follower of Jesus – He will take you farther out and deeper down. You will be led farther away from the shore, away from the safe and predictable. Once you lose sight of the shore, Jesus will take you deeper down – deeper in your appreciation for His power, deeper in your awareness of your sin, deeper in your understanding of what life is all about.

I want you to notice three seismic shifts that took place in Peter’s mind. These shifts are essential in the disciple-making process:

1. A shift in understanding who Jesus is. (Christology)
2. A shift in understanding who I am. (Anthropology)
3. A shift in understanding the purpose of life. (Teleology)

Peter knows Jesus but he still has a lot to learn about Him. Jesus has already healed Peter’s mother-in-law among others. So, Peter knows that Jesus is a righteous man whose prayers are effective but what does He know about fishing? He’s just a carpenter. Peter hasn’t made the transition of seeing Jesus as teacher/healer to the Lord of the Sea.

The Sea is Peter's domain and Jesus "has gone to meddlin." But Peter will soon learn that "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (Jn. 1:3) "For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth." (Col. 1:16) As the great Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper once said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'"

Peter's understanding of Jesus takes a giant leap forward. You can even see that in the different words he uses for Jesus in vv. 5 and 8. In v. 5, Jesus is Master (epistates) – which means commander or boss. In v. 8 he calls him Lord (kurios). Discipleship requires a growing understanding of the person and work of Jesus. Do you know who Jesus is? How would you answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

I once led worship in a prison. After the service, one of the inmates asked me, "Who is this Jesus?" I stumbled and bumbled my way through a pitiful explanation of who Jesus is. Who is He? God or Man? Son of God or God? There is a lot of confusion about the person and work of Jesus. In a recent survey conducted by Lifeway, 52% of the general population of the U.S. agree with the statement, "Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God." Among those who describe themselves as evangelical Christians, fully 30% agreed with that statement.

How we answer that question may be the difference between life and death. If Jesus is only a great teacher but not God then he has no authority to forgive sin. His blood was not all-sufficient to cover our sin and his death nothing more than a tragic tale about the injustice of man. Succession begins with an accurate understanding of Jesus. That understanding grows over time.

Once Peter sees Jesus differently, he sees himself differently. He recognizes that Jesus is more than a good guy and he also recognizes his own lack of faith. Stunned by the realization of the power Jesus displays, Peter says, "Depart from me. You are going to see all my flaws and failures. Don't waste your time on me." Jesus responds to this fearful response, "Don't be afraid. From now on you will be catching men." Peter's life would never be the same.

This is the developmental cycle of discipleship – to see Jesus for who He is, to see ourselves for who we are, to grow in our understanding of our God-given purpose which is to transfer this good news about the lifesaving mission of Jesus Christ.

We will never recognize the purpose of life until we recognize Jesus for who He is and recognize ourselves for who we are. When you see Jesus differently you see yourself differently and ultimately see life differently.

But that's not the end of the story. Peter's awakening doesn't end here. John 21:1-13 recounts the third time Jesus has appeared to His disciples after the resurrection. vv. 4-8. They don't recognize Him standing on the shore. They do recognize Him once their nets are full of fish. They've seen this movie before. This time Peter is so happy to see Jesus he puts his clothes on and dives in and swims to shore. The first time this happened, Peter said, "Get away from me Lord." This time he is so eager to get next to Jesus he jumps in fully clothed. What changed? Peter's understanding of Jesus changed.

Peter eventually got the message. Near the end of his life Peter's benediction to his readers was, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Pe. 3:18. After his miraculous catch of fish, Peter continued to make mistakes, but he also continued to follow Jesus. His doubt ultimately led to a momentary denial that drove a wedge between him and Jesus. But that's not how his story ended.

Jesus is God in human form. He came to earth as the Word of God full of grace and truth. When we grow in the truth of who Jesus is, we also grow in grace. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Jn. 3:17. That's good news! "The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God. There it is. The gospel." John Piper

God does His best work farther out and deeper down. Pay attention to the disruptive moments in your life. Often, it is during the unplanned, unexpected moments that we meet Jesus in a deeper way. I have said it many times, we have not all been exposed TO the Coronavirus but we have all been exposed BY the Coronavirus. Has this plague led to a deepening dependence on the Lord or to fear, despair and discouragement? Either Jesus is Lord of all or He is not Lord at all. He was Lord in Lk. 5. He was Lord in John 21. He will be Lord on November 4. That will be a big day in this country. "Don't you mean on Nov. 3 when we vote?" No, that is the day of the election. On November 4, half of this country will be exceedingly happy and the other half inconsolably sad. But here's the Good News – no matter who will occupy the White House, Jesus will still be on the throne.