

Jan. 20: 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Message: Disciples Make ... #2: ... Jesus #1

Text: Luke 9:23 “Then Jesus said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.’”

Scripture: Luke 14:25-33

Memory Verse: “But Jesus emptied Himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings.” Philippians 2:7a

Blurb: When we choose to follow Jesus, this begins a glorious adventure, greater than we could ever get on our own. Yet, choosing Jesus also means saying “No!” to other things. Staying focused on Jesus requires sacrifice. This Sunday we’ll discover how Disciples...Make Jesus #1.

Opening Song: Hymn Sing - Andrew & Carol Humphrey

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse:

“But Jesus emptied Himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings.” -Philippians 2:7

Greeting Time:

Greet each other, and share...if you would rather work late at night or early in the morning.

Worship Music Set:

All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name

The Way

Sue L. takes kids into lobby - Yoga

More Like Jesus

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Offering: *Come, Follow Me* -Sanctify

Serve Moment: UMCOR kits -David

Grow Moment: Grow Groups -David

Prayers: -David

- Three-part prayer. 1. Choose something from your own personal life to pray about.
2. Choose something from the bulletin prayer list - your church family.
3. A headline in the news - ask your neighbor to supply a concern.

Kid’s Moment - Sue L.

Bumper Video

PP#1: Disciples Make . . . Disciples!

“Then Jesus said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.’” - Luke 9:23

Disciples of Jesus make ... Jesus #1. Luke 9:23, “Then He said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

PP#2: *Image conveying having to make choices.*

[Bottles of Root Beer, Snapple, Water]

Okay, you’re thirsty, you’ve got \$2, and you go into a convenience store. You can 1) buy this bottle of root beer (or your favorite soda), or 2) this tea, or 3) a plain bottle of water. You know, it kinda bothers me that water costs the same as the other ones...that is made up of water plus other things. I mean, why isn’t water cheaper? Well, let’s not go there.

So, which one do you choose? Perhaps you have a default, you always grab a soda if you can. Or, perhaps it depends on what you are in the mood for. “Ooo, cranberry-kiwi-pomegranate sounds good!” Or, perhaps you are need to be hydrated, and water hits the spot.

PP#3: Making Choices

1. Choosing one means not choosing the others.

Well, notice you’ve got a choice to make. What will you buy? You see, choosing to buy one also means choosing to not buy the others. This is the reality of choices. We can’t have all three. We don’t have enough money. Or even if we did, you don’t *need* all three, and being they are 20 ounces, you can’t physically drink all three.

Having to chose is a common occurrence. It happens over and over again each day. Wear this or that? Toast or cereal? Leave now or wait a bit? Text while driving or not? Get irritated or let it go? Hundreds of choices each day.

Now, in our “I want it all” culture, we try to defy the reality of choices. “I choose all three!” But that annoying little proverb—that makes absolutely no sense to me—reminds us, “You can’t have your cake and eat it, too.” I mean, where did that come from? Perhaps a better one is, “You can’t be in two places at once.” You can spend the money only once, and the same with time. It’s the reality of choices.

Okay, stay with me now, all this has a purpose.

[Remote, Duster, Laptop]

You have tickets for a concert Sunday night. But late on Friday, just before you leave, your boss—or your teacher—tells you about a project that must be done by early Monday morning. Saturday you’re gone all day, and Sunday, of course, you have church and a birthday party. Now, how do you spend your Friday night? It’s been a long week, and you were so looking forward to vegging that night. You’ve got a choice to make. Well, I guess there are the crazy options of skipping the concert, or one of the other activities—but certainly not worship!—or you could work through Sunday night to get the project done. But let’s think about Friday night. How would you spend the evening? Will you 1) watch Netflixes like you really, really want to? Or will you 2) clean the house which desperately needs it, or 3) will you work?

PP#4: Making Choices

1. Choosing one means not choosing the others.
2. Choosing means we make sacrifices.

Choices often make us weigh our priorities, make us think what we want most, and call us to make sacrifices in order to get what we want.

[Keys, Hammer, Shopping bag]

You make plans to go to Paris next summer, and you are so looking forward to going to the Louvre. All those masterpieces of art! You love it, but you don't know nearly enough about them. You would get so much more out of your experience, if you "brushed up" on your art appreciation. Now, there's just so much to learn. So, how do you spend your days off between now and summer, those precious few days when you don't have to be doing other things? Do you, 1) research art on line and go to the MiA and library, or do you 2) work on home projects you want to get done, or do you 3) go shopping to get new outfits to wear when you travel?

PP#5: Making Choices

1. Choosing one means not choosing the others.
2. Choosing means we make sacrifices.
3. Choosing often predetermines other choices.

You see, when you make one choice, it usually makes you choose a certain way on other choices.

All right, one more. Don't check out on me here!

[Deck of cards, Planner, Rose]

You value a deep and important relationship with someone, like your spouse or best friend. That relationship is special, and life-giving. That person brings you joy and grounding: you can be your best self. But that relationship also requires maintenance. It requires you to give of yourself, to make sacrifices, to make choices that will foster a deep and meaningful relationship. And, it's ongoing. It's not just one decision, because with that kind of relationship, you can mess up, make a bad choice, and still keep your relationship. But you can't make lots of bad decisions, or consistently choose against that person. Over time, you have to invest in that relationship, make choices that prioritize that person in your life. So, on a regular basis—most of the time—are you going to 1) go out with the boys—these are for playing wist!, 2) make that person do what you're doing—your schedule takes precedence, or 3) do what it takes to make that person feel special?

PP#6: Making Choices

1. Choosing one means not choosing the others.
2. Choosing means we make sacrifices.
3. Choosing often predetermines other choices.
4. Often the most important choices are ongoing.

Often, your most important decisions aren't ones that you make just once. They require you to make that decision over and over again. Prioritizing someone important in your life is an ongoing choice. It affects what you do, where you go, how you spend your time. But you're so glad to do it, because when that relationship is good, there's nothing better! It's worth it all, and more! You're so glad to make those choices: like giving up your evening to watch your kid lose his match. You get more than you give. Your heart soars, and life is good.

PP#7: *Funny image of declaring Jesus #1, like Jesus holding a stadium foam hand with #1.*

Okay, now we're ready pull this together. For the next few weeks we're talking about being a disciple of Jesus. Last week, we learned that disciples of Jesus make ... more disciples. This week, it's Disciples Make ... Jesus #1.

You see, being a disciple of Jesus is a choice. It's something you choose for yourself, *to be*. Each of us has this choice to make: what will you do with Jesus?

Now, Jesus brings a lot of rewards. You get forgiveness for sins. You get a new start. You get hope, and peace, and joy, and love. You get abundant life. And you get heaven, you get life eternal. And this is all amazing and so worth it. But we don't choose Jesus for the benefits. We're not just accepting a rewards package. Jesus says that disciples choose to follow *Him*. That means it's about a personal relationship with Him.

PP#8: "Then Jesus said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'" - Luke 9:23

And prioritizing like that means that there are costs, and sacrifices. When you choose Jesus, that means you choose against other things. Jesus made it very clear! Right from the beginning Jesus said, "'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'" (Luke 9:23) Deny yourself. Die to yourself. Take up your cross. Come on, choose Jesus!

So, often, being a disciples sounds like a major downer! You can't have any fun! You have to behave all the time. You have to go around being nicey-nice. Turn the other cheek, give away all your money, don't do a bunch of things, follow a bunch of rules. Sounds stifling! Jesus is one of those needy partners who suffocates you in the relationship!

And when we start thinking about all the sacrifices it requires to be a disciple, we slip into making discipleship easier, and cheaper, and more and more doing what I want. We do this, you and I. And this is why I spent so much time on the choices bit: because sometimes we start treating our discipleship irrationally. We want to violate the common sense wisdom about choices.

We don't like the costs, the restrictions that staying on the path of life require. We want the benefits of Jesus without the cost. But remember, choosing one means not choosing others. We can't be a disciple of Jesus and a disciple of the world or selfishness. There can only be one #1...hence the name...number ONE.

We want to choose Jesus but not have to make sacrifices. But you can't watch TV all night and still get your project done, not train but still be able to perform on the field, or know how to fix a problem without putting in the time to learn about it.

We want to choose Jesus and still make all the other choices the way we want. But choosing predetermines other choices. We can't choose Jesus and still keep on doing what we've always done. Our lives need to change, too. Christians don't use hate speech. Christians don't take revenge. Christians do go to worship regularly. These choices are already made for us.

Or, we want Jesus and still keep all the other important relationships #1, too. But if we do, we really won't have Jesus. The most important choices are ongoing. We choose to make Jesus #1 every day, above ourselves, above our spouses, above our kids, above our work, above everything else. It's an ongoing choice!

PP#9: *Image for making a major goal in life and needing to stick to it.*

Being a disciple of Jesus is a choice, and that means it takes sacrifice. But at the same time—and don't miss *this—being a disciple of Jesus is a choice*, and that means we get what we choose! If you want root beer, you're not sad to not get tea. When you choose to leave your former life behind, you're so relieved to get a new life to start over and live differently. When you choose Jesus, you get to have Jesus, yes, Jesus, as your best friend, and sole mate, and your completion. When you choose Jesus, above all the rewards He gives, and all the cost it requires, you get that special, life-giving relationship that completes you! You get what you choose!

So, disciples, this morning, I want you to know, that when you make Jesus #1, you get to have Jesus! And that alone is worth it all! It makes all the other choices easy! Yes, we struggle day by day to make good choices. We slip into selfishness and instant gratification. But when we live well, we make those choices willfully and eagerly, because our end goal is clear: we want to walk closely with Jesus! There is nothing better in life! We want the best, so we let go of the second-rate.

One time Jesus famously told His disciples to count the cost of being His disciples. He said it means everything. Turn to Luke 14. Now, normally when we read this, we're taken back and resist. At best we think it's a downer and burdensome. But today, disciples, I want you to hear it from the perspective of *getting Jesus*. Rather than focusing on what you give up, think about the life-fulfilling relationship with Jesus that you get...and can't get from anything else.

PP#10: Luke 14:25-33 (CEB)

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. Turning to them, He said, 26 “Whoever comes to me and doesn't hate father and mother, spouse and children, and brothers and sisters—yes, even one's own life—cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever doesn't carry their own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

We turn to Luke 14, starting with verse 25. “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. [Ah, see, He was popular.] Turning to them, He said, ‘Whoever comes to me and doesn't hate father and mother, spouse and children, and brothers and sisters—yes, even one's own life—cannot be my disciple. Whoever doesn't carry their own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’”

Now, remember, rather than being shocked, consider your goal. You want Jesus. He is your help and hope. You need to make Him #1. That means you must make every other relationship #2. And that's what Jesus is saying here. He doesn't mean that you must literally hate your parents, spouse, kids, even yourself! Remember, Jesus also said do not hate! He's using the technique of hyperbole to really make His point. You see, often, we try to choose Jesus and still keep all those other relationships just the same. But if we do, we really won't have Jesus. We'll just think we do. So, when we put Jesus #1, that means our spouse comes in #2. Our kids come in #3. And this affects our choices. Don't be fooled by the conventional wisdom that says we must put our kids first. The best gift you can give your kids is a first allegiance to Jesus, and a second allegiance to your spouse.

PP#11: Luke 14:25-33 (CEB)

28 “If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when you have laid the foundation but couldn’t finish the tower, all who see it will begin to belittle you. 30 They will say, ‘Here’s the person who began construction and couldn’t complete it!’”

Jesus continues, verse 28. “‘If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it? Otherwise, when you have laid the foundation but couldn’t finish the tower, all who see it will begin to belittle you. They will say, ‘Here’s the person who began construction and couldn’t complete it!’””

Get honest about the cost of choosing Jesus. Don’t just brush it off and just try to add a little Jesus to your life. Consider what it means to make Him #1. If He’s not, then you really don’t have Him.

PP#12: Luke 14:25-33 (CEB)

31 Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand soldiers could go up against the twenty thousand coming against him? 32 And if he didn’t think he could win, he would send a representative to discuss terms of peace while his enemy was still a long way off.

33 In the same way, none of you who are unwilling to give up all of your possessions can be my disciple.

Verse 31, “‘Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand soldiers could go up against the twenty thousand coming against him? And if he didn’t think he could win, he would send a representative to discuss terms of peace while his enemy was still a long way off.’” See, the common sense of choices.

If all you are interested in are the benefits of Jesus, and don’t really consider the cost of making Him #1, then you’re like the person who wants a house or victory but isn’t willing to pay the price. If you try and start, you’ll end up in failure.

And now, we get to verse 33, “In the same way, none of you who are unwilling to give up all of your possessions can be my disciple.”

In order to have the project done come Monday, you need to give up your Friday night. In order to get the most out of your trip to the Louvre, you must do the research. In order to have that special relationship, you must change your life to make that special person feel special. Disciples who make Jesus #1, get Jesus!

Living as a disciple is making choices based on a goal we really want, a yearning desire, a purpose we keep in mind, a singular focus. For us, that choice is Jesus. If we want to have the life-giving and life-changing relationship with Jesus that makes us into mature Christians, then we willingly and happily make all those sacrifices.

Sacrifice for us means choosing against the lesser prize because we have made the bigger goal our purpose. We don’t live lives grieving the stuff we give up. We live our lives celebrating the joy and victory we daily enjoy by having Jesus. No one misses frozen strawberries when hand-picked, fresh strawberries are on the table!

PP#13: Disciples Make . . . Jesus #1

Daily: Pray, devotions, holy conversations

Weekly: Worship, study, serve

Monthly: Service project, talk to new people, study a book

Yearly: Nurture deeper Christian friendships, have a spiritual mountaintop experience, tithe

So, disciples, count the cost. Assess your daily choices. Don't instant gratification away your long-term goal. It's a daily choosing.

So, take your bulletin handouts, and on the space for your notes, write down this four-by-four plan to keep on track with Jesus. Here is a pattern that I have found will help you keep Jesus #1. Make a grid, four deep and four wide.

Every day, make a point to pray, do devotions, and at least once talk about God with someone. Usually that is the person closest to you. Recount blessings, notice something good. Say "God" or "Jesus" at least once a day in your routine conversations.

Every week, when you can, attend worship, attend a study or group, and do something to help someone. Our grow groups are starting in February. Sign up for one today before you leave.

Every month, do a service project of some sort (like Community Care!), start talking to someone you didn't know before, and study...a book or follow a Christian blog, or watch a video series. Something each month.

And sometime during the year, nurture a Christian friendship so it grows deeper, go to a spiritual mountaintop experience (like Bible Camp, Walk to Emmaus, or Joyful Noise), and give one percent more of your earned income to God's work each year until you are tithing.

This pattern of daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, will help you keep Jesus, and keep Him #1. It's a way for you to count the cost. It's a way to help you make your daily choices.

So, root beer, tea, or water . . . which will it be?

Amen.

Closing Song: *Only King Forever*

Memory Verse:

"But Jesus emptied Himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings." -Philippians 2:7

Announcements: -Pastor David

Benediction: -Pastor David