

## **Sermon: A Church After God's Own Heart - Is Becoming a Disciple-making Church**

**Scripture: John 15: 5-8; Matthew 28:18-20**

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2018**

### **Introduction**

#### **Thinking about replacement and multiplication.**

What should an apple tree do? Produce another apple tree.

"Endangered species." For these endangered species, more births bring hope and joy.

Dr William Reville, "*Why is Europe losing the will to breed?*" - European civilisation is dying. Birth rates in all 28 EU countries are now below replacement rates and all indigenous populations are in decline.

Damian Thompson, "*2067: the end of British Christianity.*" "It's often said that Britain's church congregations are shrinking... Every ten years the census spells out the situation in detail: between 2001 and 2011 the number of Christians born in Britain fell by 5.3 million — about 10,000 a week. If that rate of decline continues, parish churches everywhere will have been adapted for secular use, demolished or abandoned."

"The church is one generation away from extinction." Where there is no addition and multiplication, the church is moving towards extinction!

Do we hear a wake-up call! TMC PJ must and will rejuvenate! We are moving and want to move in the direction of becoming a disciple-making church. Our vision is, "A Disciple-making Church."

### **I. The Meaning of Disciple**

The Greek word μαθητής (*mathētēs*) refers generally to any "student," "pupil," "apprentice," or "adherent," as opposed to a "teacher." Michael Wilkins, Talbot School of Theology said, "Disciple in the early church refer to followers, believers, Christians, brothers/sisters, those of the way, or saints."

Characteristics of a disciple of Jesus.

1. A disciple submits to a teacher who teaches him how to follow Jesus.
2. A disciple learns Jesus' words.
3. A disciple learns Jesus' way of ministry.
4. A disciple imitates Jesus' life and character.
5. A disciple finds and teaches other disciples who also follow Jesus.

(Bill Hull; The Complete Book of Discipleship)

### **II. John 15:5-8 - The Master-Disciple Relationship: Abiding and Bearing Fruit**

The imagery of the Vine and the branches. The Vine and the branches are one as they share the same nature. There is a Master-disciple relationship. "Come follow me..." "Come abide in me."

In this Master-disciple relationship, the disciple has to pay attention to the instructions of the Master – my words remain in you. He is a doer and a hearer of God's word. He is like the wise man who builds his house upon the rock. He bears fruit – thirty fold, sixty fold and a hundred fold.

In a Master-disciple relationship, in the area of fruit bearing, the disciple first bear the fruit of the "life and character" of Jesus. He bears the "Jesus fruit." Or commonly called the fruit of the Spirit.

The other fruit is the "multiplying fruit" – the bearing of much fruit. Here the disciple is excited about wanting to introduce, to recommend his Master to others.

Testimony of Pr Sarah Aye, the Pastor of the Myanmarese congregation in DUMC. She is passionate about disciple-making amongst her people.

So the disciple whom the Master is pleased, the disciple who can indeed bring glory to the Father (Jn 15:8), is the one who has imitated Jesus in the “being” and the “doing”. In his character and life he is showing Christlikeness. In his life’s mission he is engaged in reaching out to others – calling people to Jesus and teaching them how to live as disciples of Jesus.

Francis Chan in his book, *“Multiply – disciples making disciples”* said, “It’s impossible to be a disciple or a follower of someone and not end up like that person... That’s the whole point of being a disciple of Jesus: we imitate Him, carry on His ministry, and become like Him in the process.”

Jesus said to Peter, “Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19). The Master not only invites people to remain in him; he also wants to send them out to be man-catchers, just like himself. They are to be disciples who will make disciples.

### **III. Disciples Make Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)**

“Therefore go and make disciples...” same as, “Go and be fishers of men.” Jesus is saying to us, “Go and help many people to enter into the Vine-branches relationship with me. Go and multiply. Go and be fruitful!”

Three dimensions that distinguish disciple-making from discipleship:

1. *Deliverance*: The first step in making disciples is evangelism. All disciples should be actively involved in finding others who need Christ and introducing these individuals to the life of following Jesus.

2. *Development*: Once a disciple makes a commitment to Christ, the next step is developing character and capacity. Traditionally refer to this single step as discipleship (or, in more recent times, as spiritual formation.)

3. *Deployment*: Once a disciple is trained, the final step is sending. This means deploying the disciple in mission where he lives, works and plays. (Source: Bill Hull; *The Complete Book of Discipleship*)

Jesus said, “Go”. We struggled to obey. Jesus said to his disciples, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*” (Matt 9:37-38). Where is the harvest? It is out there! The harvesters are to go out to gather the harvest into the store-house. So, “No go, no bring; no bring, no gain.” The disciple is a “fisher of man”, “labourer” and a “harvester”.

The reason disciple-making often fails is that we don’t expect to reproduce. Disciple-making has become optional.

### **IV. Recovering Disciple-making**

Recovering Intentional Disciple-Making – moving from optional to intentional

In 2013, more than 30 pastors and leaders of TRAC attended the Global Discipleship Congress in Manila. The theme was, “Following Jesus – Returning the Church to its Disciple-making Roots.”

Said Francis Chan, “We reduce discipleship to a canned program, and so many in the church end up sidelined in a spectator mentality that delegates disciple making to pastors and professionals, ministers and missionaries. But this is not the way it’s supposed to be.”

Let us be reminded that disciple making is more than a program. It is our mission. We who are disciples of Christ, we are called to become disciple makers. The church of Christ is also to become a disciple-making church. We need to be involved in the process of Deliverance (Win), Development (Build) and Deployment (Send). We must multiply! Remember if we do not make disciples we risk moving towards extinction.