

Order of Service Arklow Presbyterian 10.00 a.m.

WELCOME:

CALL to WORSHIP:

PRAYER (Adoration and Invitation):

PRAISE: 16 All my hope in God is founded

PRAYER (Confession and thanks):

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

CHILDREN'S TALK: 'Learning to be like Jesus'

PRAISE: My Jesus, my Saviour, Lord there is none like you

(Announce that children leave for Sunday School after this hymn)

PRAYER (Intercession):

PRAISE: 133 Father I place into your hands

SERMON: 'Discipleship-Learning to be like Jesus'

OFFERING AND DEDICATION:

PRAISE: 32 An army of ordinary people

BENEDICTION: The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; be with us all evermore.

Children's Talk: 'Learning to be like Jesus.'

Intro:

Life is full of new things to learn. Today I want to show you how to make a paper plane....

Development:

Jesus had 12 special friends. He called them His disciples. The word disciple means 'Learner'. What do you think Jesus' friends were learning from Him?

Jesus was teaching his friends how to live the way God would want us to. What our attitudes should be, how we should think and act, how we should treat other people.

You are disciples of Jesus too. You are learners- Learning to be more like Jesus. But Jesus isn't here with us today to teach us. He is in heaven. So how can we learn to be like Jesus?

Prayer

Read bible

Come to church and Bible Club

Watching other people in church

Holy Spirit

By practicing what God wants us to do

By using the talents God has given us

Prayer:

Thank you God for being our teacher. Thank you for choosing us to be your friends, your disciples. Help us to learn every day how to be more like Jesus. Help us to live more like Him every day. And just like Jesus, may our lives be a help to other people. Amen.

Discipleship- 'Learning.'

Intro:

Who taught you to knit or to feed your newborn baby? Do you remember where you first learned to drive a car or ride a bicycle? Who first showed you how to do a T-Joint or to sew a row of potatoes?

Life is full of learning experiences. It's great to learn how to do new things. It's what makes life interesting and keeps us motivated. That's why when we're in the doldrums one of the best things we can do is to go out and try something different.

We're privileged that in the 21st Century there are so many different avenues of learning available to us. We can pick up a book at the library, we can scan the internet for articles, we can listen to audio CDS or watch DVDs.

We also learn in so many different ways, by watching someone we know who is an expert or by asking them to teach us the new skills that we need. Ultimately most of our learning will be through trial and error and personal experience. As the old saying goes '*Practice makes perfect.*'

In Jesus' day, the main way of learning new things was by signing up as an apprentice. As an apprentice you would be assigned to a guru who would teach you the skills and arts of a trade or a philosophy. As you listened to their teaching, as you watched them in action and as you practiced what you had learned, you would eventually become like your Master. The Greek word used in the New Testament for such an apprentice is the word 'mathetes' which is translated in the bible as the word 'disciple'. Literally it means, 'a learner'. The Pharisees, the Rabbis, John the Baptist and even Jesus himself had their own disciples -apprentices to whom they would pass on vital information and whom they would mould to think and act like themselves.

Usually when someone is dying and is about to leave this world, their last few words are of utmost importance. Before Jesus left this world and ascended into heaven He said these words to His disciples

"...Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you..."

So Jesus says that His followers are to make more disciples. If we are Christians, if we have turned from sin and trusted in Christ we are 'disciples'. We are enrolled in the school of God. Our purpose is to learn more and more day by day how to be and act and think more like Jesus! As Christians we are learners! That's why as a church our second priority after worship is discipleship or learning. As a group of people who love the Lord Jesus Christ one of our reasons for existence is that together we may learn how to become more and more like Jesus.

But how do we do this? How practically as a congregation can we make this goal of discipleship a reality in the life of our congregation?

Well, it's too much to unpack this subject on one Sunday morning. But let me give you a few things to think about:

1 Learning to be like Jesus isn't easy:

Firstly I want to be honest with you. Discipleship, Learning to be more like Jesus is difficult. It requires commitment and effort. In Mark's gospel Jesus' frankness is recorded when He turns to His would-be followers and says, *"If anyone would come after me they must deny themselves, takes up their cross and follow me. For whoever loses His life for my sake and the gospel will find it."*

Here Jesus uses the image of the cross to teach His apprentices that to follow Him will not be easy. It will require sacrifice, it will involve being willing to put Christ first before their own ambitions and even their own popularity.

Don't get me wrong, following Christ, being a Christian, being a disciple is one of the greatest joys on earth. But at times it is also one of the hardest things we'll ever do. Trust me, Christianity isn't just about having God as a crutch- it's about having the guts to live the way God wants even on occasions when everyone around you thinks differently.

PLAY FILM CLIP OF KARATE KID or explain as below:

Do you remember the film Karate Kid? A young Italian American moves into a new area and gets bullied by a gang of youths because he fancies the ex-girlfriend of the gang leader. In order to protect himself he enlists an elderly Japanese man, Mr Myagi to teach him Karate. In His wisdom the old man gets Daniel to sand his decking, paint his house and fence and to wash and wax his collection of vintage cars. Half way through, when his arms are so painful he can hardly hold a sponge, Daniel flies into a fit of rage shouting, *"You aren't teaching me Karate! You're just using me as a slave!"* Only later does he realise that the practical work that Mr Myagi has given him is the means by which he learns the hand coordination and movements which are essential for all aspects of Karate....The *"wax on, wax off, brush up brush down and side to side."*(Demonstrate)

Learning to be like Christ at times is equally difficult and at times frustrating. Often God will ask us to do things that are painful or allow experiences in our lives that we just cannot understand. At times like Daniel we may even feel like screaming at God- What are you doing? This is too hard! Until we realise that through it all God is teaching us in our attitudes, actions and reactions how to be more like Christ.

The first thing I want to say about discipleship is that it isn't easy and will require us to be fully committed.

The second thing I want to say is that-

2 Learning to be like Jesus involves many processes:

In life we learn things in many different ways. Through reading and observing, talking and listening, making and doing, successes and failures. It's the same in the Christian life. We learn to be more like Jesus in a multitude of ways.

Obviously to be an apprentice of the Master we need to sit at His feet and listen to His teaching. That's why committing ourselves to regular bible reading and study are so essential. *"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."* (1 Peter 2: 2)

Then of course our relationship with our teacher is so important. We need to talk to them, we need to be confident enough in their care for us in order to approach them and ask them questions or for assistance. That's why prayer is so important. Even as we study the bible we need to be asking God to help us to understand its meaning.

Another important fact to remember is that the goal of an apprentice is not to just to learn facts and increase in head knowledge. The goal is to become like your teacher. As learners of Jesus our purpose is to become more like Him. What we discover about His teaching in the bible needs to work its way out into our daily lives. We need to practice what we discover. *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."* (James 1: 22-24)

This practicing of our faith covers every aspect of life including our thoughts and attitudes our actions and reactions. It will also include discovering the gifts and abilities that God has given us and using them within our local church. Learning to be like Christ will mean helping each other and caring for our families and our community. *"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."* (Romans 12: 4-8)

And of course most importantly of all this learning experience of reading, praying, listening and doing will involve each other. Any teacher worth their salt will understand the importance of group work. We cannot be an effective disciple of Jesus and fly solo or float about from place to place. That's why it's important as a Christian to commit ourselves to joining one local church. It's only as we become a committed part of a team that we really begin to learn the most important lessons about following Jesus. We learn these lessons from each other as we knuckle down in the nitty-gritty of living and working together for Christ. It's in this environment that we learn from the examples of each other. It's in this arena that we learn what it means to love and to serve. It's in this environment that we learn how to share and

compromise. It's in this committed relationship that we learn how to forgive and sacrifice.

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2: 4-6)

Discipleship, learning to be like Jesus is multi-faceted. It involves reading and listening, praying and doing not just as individuals but as part of the Body of Christ joined and committed to working together and for one another.

3 Learning to be like Jesus lasts a lifetime:

The last thing I want to say is a word of encouragement. As a disciple of Jesus, you never get your L plates down! Learning to be like Jesus is at times a painfully slow process. What's more, God uses every part of our lives to teach us how to be more Christ-like. This includes both positive and negative experiences, boom and bust, rejoicing and recession, success and failure. Nothing is wasted in the purposes of God to conform us into the image of His Son. ."*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him for those who have been called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8: 28).

At times our life experience seems like a ball of tangled threads and we think Lord what on earth are you doing or I've really messed up this time there's no way my relationship with God can be restored. If only we'll take time to turn the frame we'll discover that through it all, God has been creating us into something wonderful- Into the image of His Son. So that one-day our lives will be hung up for display and people will say "Isn't it amazing what God has done!"

"For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2: 10)

So let me say this whatever stage you're at in the school of Christ. However difficult the lessons God is trying to teach you in the harsh realities of life, Never give up. Never, never give up. Never, never, never give up!

Conclusion:

We're all disciples. Apprentices of the Master. Learning to be like Jesus isn't easy, it requires commitment. Learning to be like Jesus is multi-faceted and corporate. Learning to be like Jesus takes a lifetime. But one day we'll be like Him and to God be all the glory!