



## **Becoming Fully Devoted Followers of Christ**

*October 11, 2009*

*Pastor David Koch*

### **Introduction:**

Today we continue to look at being fully devoted followers of Christ within the context of the family of God. Part of being a devoted follower of Christ is serving. We don't serve to try and earn our salvation, but we do so as a result of His work in our lives. We follow His lead. One of the ways Jesus served was to heal the sick and those who struggled with disease and illness. I guess you could say that Jesus was concerned about health care.

As we look at our text this morning, we see Jesus that Jesus is the great physician and He told His disciples that they would do even greater things than He did, because He was going to His father. Jesus empowers His followers to do what He did by granting them the authority to use His name and by empowering them with the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught and preached but He also healed the sick. Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ includes ministry outside the four walls of the church.

Recently I was reading a book called The Externally Focused Church. The authors of the book describe the manner in which we, as God's people, need to be impacting the culture where we live. What better way to impact the culture than to tell people good news and bring them the healing ministry of Christ? You don't have to be a doctor to care about people who are hurting. You don't have to be a doctor to pray that Christ will heal them. You don't have to be a doctor to encourage someone to have good health habits.

When a team goes to work at City on a Hill and help with their health clinic, we are bringing the healing power of Christ to people. This weekend a free clinic opened here in Mayville. Some of you may wish to volunteer there. But you don't have to go to a clinic to bring healing to people who need it.

Speaking of City on a Hill ó next Sunday, will be our missions weekend and Diane DeLasantos will be our guest speaker. She is the executive director and she will challenge us. We also will be making our faith promises next

Sunday, so turn your faith loose this week and ask God what He would have you do for missions in 2010. We are taking a collection of non-perishable food items to bless their food pantry. We will also be receiving a special offering to bless her work there at COA. Please come prepared to do what you can in this way.

This morning let's look to God's word and see what it speaks to us today in regard to those who are devoted followers of Christ.

**TEXT: MATTHEW 9:35-10:5 Jesus traveled through all the cities and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And wherever he went, he healed people of every sort of disease and illness.**

## **I. DEVOTED FOLLOWERS DO WHAT JESUS DID**

In Matthew 9 we see that Jesus has called his disciples and told them to come follow me. Devoted followers will pattern their lives after the example of their Lord and Master Jesus Christ. In the middle of the chapter we see a dead girl raised to life and a sick woman healed. Then we see Jesus healing the blind and mute. Jesus was accused of healing with Satan's power. He did not let that accusation stop Him from serving the sick and disenfranchised. People, who had no medical treatment available to them, had some hope because of the ministry provided by Jesus. Jesus cared for people. Verse 35 ó Jesus went about preaching and teaching and healing.

I don't know how to say it any better but once we have connected to God and are filled with His love, His passion, His life, then we are to build community through connecting with His people, so we might change the world around us by serving and influencing our community. We tend to categorize people, but Jesus didn't do that. No person was too much of an outcast, too much of a sinner, too sick, or too unclean for Jesus to minister to and serve. Jesus basically is saying, "I want you to do what I do. Don't just sit back and watch me do ministry, you do it with me. Get your hands dirty."

Something that really irritates me is having someone stand by and watch me when I'm doing some grunt work, and not willing to pick up the shovel, or the hammer, or screwdriver and help out! Jesus wants to work through you and I, and He asks us to join Him in serving and ministry. In our text, Jesus looks at the crowd and is moved with compassion because He sees the people roaming about as helpless, defenseless, and harassed like sheep without a shepherd.

Sheep are helpless without a shepherd. They will wander, they are easy prey, they don't have the sense of where to get food and they easily get lost and spooked. That is the condition which Jesus saw in people. Jesus told them they were to ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into His harvest field, but that is not all He told them to do.

In Matthew chapter 10:1 we read, **Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness.** Jesus gave those who followed Him the authority to drive out evil spirits, to heal every disease and sickness. He gave them detailed instruction about who they were to go to, what they were to talk about as they went, and what they were to do in using the authority He gave them. **Matthew 10:7-8 Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!**

This sounds like an action plan for accomplishing great things. This plan sounds like there would be a whole lot of stuff getting done in God's kingdom. But how do we do this? Maybe we understand how we can do the preaching and teaching, but what about the healing?

When Jesus went to the cross He already paid for the cost of healing. "By His wounds we are healed." I believe that the church should be involved in bringing healing to those who are sick to those who are diseased.

## **II. DEVOTED FOLLOWERS LET GOD USE THEM**

When we put ourselves in the position of servants, God provides opportunities for ministry. Sometimes we want to help people without getting too close to those we serve. Serving people means getting our

hands dirty, and even our heart broken. Serving will cost us something. Serving requires humility, willingness, and passion. Mother Theresa said it like this. "I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world."

Jesus invited His followers to be salt and light. Salt and light are really two very common things. A city that is set on a hill can not be hidden. There is no way that light in darkness can be hidden. We have all traveled at night and gone from where there are no city lights to where there are many city lights. In the distance as you approach a city at night, the light can be seen for miles away.

Those who allow God to use them are like the light of a city set on a hill. There is no way to hide the presence and power and person of Christ who works through His people. His presence is perceivable, undeniable and obvious. There is nothing mystical, magical, or intricate about salt or light. Yet without light there would be no life. Without light there would be no growth. Without salt there would be no preservative, nothing to bring out flavor or change what is hard into what is soft.

Those who are devoted followers of Christ are to be people of significance and influence and to make a difference in the environments we are in. To cooperate with God is powerful. God puts us where He wants us. He gives us opportunity, He gives us authority, He gives us the power of His Holy Spirit and we are the ones He uses to touch others. Fully devoted followers of Christ will not only take the message and preach it but they also will allow God

### **Conclusion:**

My challenge to you this morning is to let God use you in whatever way He wants to. He will use us if we allow Him to. He will use us for missions, making a faith promise. He will use us to touch a friend or work associate, or family member with prayer and healing. He will use us to encourage, and bless, and proclaim liberty.

Conclusion: I want to challenge you this morning. Let God use you. What are ways that you will allow God to use you? How is it that you think He can use you? Where does He want to use you? If you look for places where He can use you, places where you can serve, you will be amazed and surprised at what you find. For a devoted follower of Jesus Christ, service is not optional. It comes with the relationship to Christ.

To grow in your faith this week, look for one serving opportunity and surrender your time, talent, and treasure for God to work.

to use them to bring healing to those who need it. When God uses you, He gets the glory. When you pray for someone and they receive healing, God gets the glory. When you speak a word to someone and they are built up or encouraged, God gets the glory. The power associated with the good news and the gospel of Jesus Christ is combining its life-changing message with selfless service.

When the Communists took over Russia in 1917, they vigorously persecuted the church but did not make Christianity illegal. The Constitution of 1918 in fact, guaranteed a freedom of religion. But the Communists did make it illegal for the church to do any good works. No longer could the church fulfill its historic role of feeding the hungry, education the young, housing the orphan, or caring for the sick. The state would handle those duties. What was the result? After seventy years, the church in Russia was largely irrelevant to the communities in which it dwelt. Take away service, and you take away the church's power, influence, and evangelistic effectiveness.

Have we done by default what Lenin did by diabolic design? Have we disengaged from our communities and therefore become irrelevant to them? We can not disengage from the culture around us. We can not hope that the government will bring healing and health care to the people of America. Let us not give over the work of feeding of the hungry, the challenges of education or the housing problems to our government. We have to be the people of God and the church and do what Jesus told us to do if we ever want to truly impact our world.