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The Disciple's Treasury

by Dan Trygg

“Jesus said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasury things new and old.’”

Matthew 13: 52

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus had just finished delivering His parables about the Kingdom of God to the crowd gathered on the beach. He had likened the Kingdom to (1.) a farmer sowing his seed on four different kinds of soil, looking for a good crop; (2.) a wheatfield where “impostor wheat” is sown by an enemy among the good wheat seeds, so that the weeds must grow up together with the wheat, and be sorted out at the harvest (again, fruitfulness is the goal); (3.) a mustard seed, which starts out very small, but grows to become as large as a tree and offers refuge to the birds; (4.) leaven, which when a small portion is put into a large batch of dough, spreads, permeates and expands throughout, until the whole batch has been leavened; (5.) a treasure hidden in a field which was so valuable that a man discovering it eagerly sells all that he has to buy the field so he can rightfully obtain the treasure; (6.) an incredibly rare and valuable pearl which a pearl merchant on his travels discovers and eagerly goes home to sell everything he possesses in order to secure this once in a lifetime opportunity; and, (7.) a dragnet, which indiscriminately captures all the fish and sea creatures in an area, so that the fishermen must sort out the “keepers” from those which are useless.

The first two parables illustrate God’s desire and expectation that the people of His Kingdom will produce “good fruit” in abundance. The second couplet is about the expansive, permeating growth of the Kingdom. It may start small, but it spreads out rapidly in every direction. The third parallel set of word pictures communicates how precious it is to be a part of God’s rule and reign on the earth. Those who really grasp what it is God is offering to them would gladly give up any and everything else to join with Him. Finally, the last parable illustrates that all are accountable to God, whether they want to join His Kingdom or not. There *will be* a great sorting out at the end of the age. Jesus revisits this theme from the second parable. God is telling us that this is the way things *will be*. **We do not have a choice about the fact that there will be a future judgment. We do, however, have choices in the “here and now” that will affect the future “there and then” outcome.** Our choices have to do with where we will end up when our hearts and lives are evaluated. You will either be among those who are “keepers”, those who have been responsive to Him and righteous toward others, or you will be consigned to the “furnace of fire”, with those who have been rebellious toward God and have not lived their lives to help others.

The good news is that God is willing to offer you amnesty, if you will choose to make Him your King and live for Him. The invitation Jesus offered to the crowds was that *they were to “repent”*, that is, change their worldview and orientation, *and trust in the good news* that God was willing to forgive their sins, and allow them to start fresh, if they will follow Him as their King. The key phrase here is to “follow Him as King”. God is not just in the business of handing out amnesty to those who wish to stubbornly continue to live lives of rebellion and selfishness. We can’t undo our past choices, or their consequences. **Even God, in His righteousness and justice, could not simply “let us off the hook”. Our sins require redress. Each sin is an offense that requires recompense and rectification. It is like a debt that must be repaid. Unfortunately, the cost of sin is death.** That is what God told Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 2:17), and it is still true today. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). **Have you ever heard the phrase, “I would die a thousand deaths”?** If we were to rack up our debt load of sin, ...every time we lied, every time we ever stole anything, every time we ever wanted what belonged to someone else, every time we ever entertained a lustful thought in our minds, or had a sexual relationship with someone we were not married to, or every time we said a hurtful word to someone else, or called them a name, every time we sought after anyone or anything more than we seek after God, etc. ..., **if we were to total these offenses up and see that each one requires a death sentence, then we can begin to imagine how hopeless our status before God would be if we stood on our own merit. What is to be done? Well, the love of God toward you and me is so great that He was willing to come and die in our place for each and every offense ever committed, ...past, present and future.** Moreover, He took our warped and twisted *selves* into Himself in such a way that we ourselves were put to death with Him and raised with Him to a new, unwarped, untwisted existence. **He offers forgiveness and a new life to those who are willing to lay down**

their old selves and past lives to start living fresh for God. That is the key, however. Are you willing to follow Him as your King? That is what a disciple is, one who actively follows someone. **God is not looking for “decisions”, or church memberships. He is looking for those who are willing to live for Him and bear much fruit by the power of His Spirit living within them.**

Jesus told us what was involved in making a disciple. He said that as we were going about we ought to “disciple-ize” all nations. How? By baptizing them and teaching them to do all that He said. **The “baptizing” part stands for the repenting and starting fresh beginning of the Christian life.** Baptism was a symbolic laying down into death to one’s former life, as one laid down and was buried in the water, ...and a rising to new life, as the person comes up from the water. It was at once both a break with one’s old life, as well as a consecration of one’s future life as a person dedicated to God. **The second part, the “teaching them to do all that I said” aspect, covers three main ideas.** The first is that **a disciple is a learner.** He or she must see that *one of their primary responsibilities is to learn.* It is impossible to be a growing, faithful disciple and not be applying yourself to learning more about God and what He expects from you. A second idea of Jesus’ admonition is that **a disciple is a doer.** Being a disciple is not primarily an intellectual process. The mind must be instructed so that the will can be engaged and the person put into action. *What Jesus wants is obedience, not simply intellectual agreement.* What good is it to know the truth, if you do not live by it? Are you a faithful servant for correctly *understanding* what God wants done, if you do not *do it*? Of course not. The third idea involved in the “teaching them to do all that I said” injunction is that **a disciple cannot be selective. He or she must be obedient in all things.** Jesus is not OK with compartmentalized lives. Those who have a “religious compartment”, where they go to church and keep religious rituals and disciplines, but are still living in contradiction with what the Bible clearly teaches are *not* faithful disciples. Jesus would call them “hypocrites”, or pretenders. The Lord is not pleased with those who want to “play church”. In fact, they make Him sick to His stomach (Rev. 3:16). He told us clearly that **He wants followers who are active learners, people who will obey Him in all His will.**

Finally, one inescapable conclusion of Matt. 28:18-20 is that **obedient followers who are carrying out all that Jesus said will also be teacher/trainers of other disciples.** Part of what He said was to “disciple-ize” all nations. So, we need to begin to see ourselves not only as learners, ready to do His will, but also as disciplers of others. **We need to prepare ourselves to teach others, ...and begin to do it.** Now, some will object, “My spiritual gift is not teaching.” We are not talking about an unusual gifting and empowering by the Holy Spirit to teach. **We are talking about the everyday responsibility of speaking truth in love to those around us, so that they learn to follow Jesus. This is clearly taught as a function that we all are to participate in** (Deut. 6:4-9; Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; II Tim. 2:2; Eph. 4:15).

That brings us back to the verse from Matt. 13:52, “...every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasury things new and old”. What is Jesus saying? A scribe was someone who had devoted his life to learning the OT scriptures. Usually they were teachers and interpreters of the Law. When such a person became a follower of Jesus, they still needed to be “disciple-ized”. As they became more competent in their understanding, and more mature in their walk, they would also begin to teach and train others. Jesus’ observation was that when such a former expert in OT teachings also became trained and ready as a believer, he would be especially skilled in being able to teach effectively from both his former studies and experience, as well as from what he had incorporated into his life as a Christian. **I want to zero in on this concept of the disciple’s “treasury”. The word for “treasury” means “storehouse” or “storeroom”.** This is the second time in Matthew’s gospel where Jesus had referred to the storehouse in a person’s life, **those stored up experiences, thoughts and beliefs that comprise not only our worldview, but also are the source of what we say and do.** In chapter 12, Jesus said that “the mouth speaks out of what fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil” (vss. 34,35). So, **we all have a “treasury” from which we respond to the world around us.** The idea of a “treasury” or “storehouse” implies that **we all have the opportunity to invest in or “lay up” teachings, attitudes, experiences, etc. which then become available for us to “bring forth” to speak to others.** A scribe already had a “lot of valuable things “stored up”, knowing the OT Scriptures. *He still needed to be taught accurately the things concerning Jesus* (cf. Acts 18:24-28), and then he could utilize both the new insights and understandings along with the fruits of his former studies to be an effective teacher/trainer to others. Here, however, is the point for you and me. **God expects us to “lay up” things in our “treasury”, or “tool shed” so that we can become effective disciple-makers.** If you knew you were going to do this, that God was going to give you that assignment, wouldn’t you want to be prepared? Well, **start getting ready, because it is God’s will for you to be teaching others to do all that Jesus said, too.** So, start studying with that in mind. Take note of those teachings or illustrations that really are effective in helping you, and prepare for when you will be teaching others.