

## “The Discipleship Question”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden  
for First UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, Oct. 18, 2020

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ

website: [www.fumcgj.org/sermons-2/](http://www.fumcgj.org/sermons-2/)

*Scripture Text:*

- Matthew 22:37-40; John 13:34-35;  
Luke 14:25b-27 [NLT]
- Other key source:
  1. Jim Wallis, *Christ in Crisis? Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins/Harper One, 2019)

### OPENING

- This is the second-to-the-last sermon in this series on *Jesus' FAQ's on the Kingdom of Heaven*. Judging from the comments I received in cards from many of you this past week, this has been a meaningful journey, helpful to you in your reflections on Jesus' priorities and values for us as followers – as disciples – of His. And I'm grateful to know that.

We've considered eight penetrating questions in this survey, all of them foundational to our authentic living out of (1) our love for Jesus and (2) our Christian faith in the world.

And in some ways, they all tie together today as we consider the last of the questions, this one concerning that illusive term: “discipleship”.

But before exploring that term, I want to look at the Scripture texts this morning, so you know what I was thinking in choosing them.

### TO THE SCRIPTURES

The themes of the Scriptures: Divine Love (1 & 2) and Putting **Jesus** First (3) and nothing or no one else.

#### Divine Love

- Matthew 22:37-40. The greatest commandments:
  1. Deut. 6:4-5
  2. Lev. 19:18
- John 13:34-35. Jesus' “new” commandment. What's new about it? He just raised the bar of Lev. 19:18. We are to love others not merely as we love ourselves, but as He loves us!

#### Putting Jesus First

- Luke 14:25b-27. Jesus **FIRST!** in all things

### SERMON THOUGHTS

#### **Describing “Discipleship”**

(\*From my doc on the marks of discipleship: Xtn Disc at FUMCGJ [Rev1].docx\*)

So, what does the word “**discipleship**” mean – in tangible, do-able, measurable, ways? I mean,

- If we're going to take Jesus' ominous words seriously, shouldn't we know what it is we're *taking up our cross for*?
- What actions and ways of being do we pursue as disciples of Jesus Christ?

- How do we know if we're making progress in our discipleship?

From a study of several passages of Scripture – those we've just looked at and others, primarily from the early part of Acts of the Apostles – I see 5 “marks” of discipleship as being critical to answering these questions. Let's consider each one in turn. I've tried to impose an order or a hierarchy on them – you know, an order of importance – but I don't think they give themselves to such structure. They are all equally important to describing what discipleship is all about.

### 1. **Worship and Study**

→ Difficult in these days of the coronavirus pandemic, but we are doing everything we can to accommodate the dual needs for safety and for worship & study.

### 2. **The practice of spiritual disciplines – like prayer and Scripture reading, meditation and contemplation, or other things like music and art, walking or other activities – that help you cultivate a close, personal relationship with Christ**

→ The pandemic doesn't interfere with this one. In fact, the isolation the pandemic has imposed on us makes this mark of discipleship easier to work on.  
 → The trouble is, if we're strong extroverts, needing interaction with other people, we have probably had just about as much of this one as we can stand!

### 3. **Stewardship of our resources for the betterment of the Body – financial to be sure – but also our time, talents, skills, and passions**

→ While the pandemic has complicated this one, many have found creative ways around it, especially through technology that helps to make virtual interaction possible.  
 → (\*Speak to the ministry of giving\*)

### 4. **Meaningful, caring connection with others in the Body of Christ**

→ This, too, has been complicated by the pandemic, but calls, cards, txt's and e-mails, social media, etc. are all means whereby we can cultivate meaningful, caring connections with others in the Body of Christ.

### 5. **Service to the church, the community, and the world**

→ Connection points with Anna's Children's Message and Matthew 25 “Sheep and the Goats” parable.  
 ✓ The prince-in-disguise and treating everyone as if they were Jesus-in-disguise.  
 ✓ Jim Wallis' story of Mary Glover [p. 214]

### CONCLUSION

Wrap this up with a look to next week: Salt & Light



Salt & Light

Let us pray...(with Lord's Prayer)

