

In Holy Baptism, God gives us grace to be disciples of Jesus.

But what does discipleship mean?

Quite literally, a disciple is a master's student

- a learner,
- imitating the master,
- following the master's discipline.

Jesus calls people saying, "Follow me."

We do a lot of following in our world.

- We follow people on twitter and Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat
- We follow our favorite sporting teams and players
- We follow rules and follow directions
- We follow orders
- We follow the person in front of us in the lunch line or grocery store
- We follow the signs to get somewhere

Following Jesus is not so much a physical location as it is **a relationship with him that teaches us how to live the life God intends for us.**

- It is imitating Jesus in relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- Discipleship is relationship with Jesus and with others.
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- And that means living in faith.

Faith is trusting the Master

- trusting the love of God that called us to be Jesus' disciples.

## **Faith is maintaining our relationship with God even when it seems God is not there.**

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Over the past weeks, we have heard Jesus teaching about the dangers of greed, especially when it is desire for material wealth.

But today, we have a different kind of greed that Jesus addresses—**greed for power and control.**

The disciples demanded of Jesus: “Increase our faith!”

Now to increase something, we want

- more,
- bigger,
- better value,
- something added to what we already have.

So in asking Jesus to increase their faith,

the disciples were **treating faith as a thing**

– something they could compare with one another

as if it were money,

or have control over like possessions.

If they only had more of it, they could do great things

– become renowned – make a name for themselves.

In asking this question, the disciples have **focused attention on themselves**

– their perceived lack, their perceived impotence.

They have exposed themselves as prideful and greedy for power and control.

It is the wrong question to ask. In fact, it is absurd.

And Jesus' response lets them know this in no uncertain terms.

*If you had the tiniest bit of faith in God, you could control the created world – uprooting trees and throwing them into the sea.*

That is – if faith is a thing that can be measured and possessed and controlled by humans.

But it isn't.

The impossibility of such a thing turns the disciples' thinking upside down.

The Master has cut down their pride and overturned their understanding of faith.

Faith is not a thing – not a substance to be measured and kept and controlled by humans.

### **Faith is of God.**

Faith does not focus attention on the self, but on God.

### **Faith is a relationship with the living God**

- a relationship of trust
- a relationship rooted in God's unshakeable love for you,

**demonstrated by His Son Jesus who gave his life on the cross as the fullest expression of God's love for you.**

**And whom the Father raised from the dead as the first of humanity to share God's life beyond the grave.**

Faith secures our lives on this loving God who alone has power over death and life.

- Only God can uproot the mulberry tree and throw it into the sea.
- And only God can raise the dead.

Faith turns away from ourselves and our weakness

and clings to the power of the living God

who loves us and calls us to be Jesus' disciples.

Discipleship does not insist that God serve us,

as though we were the center of the universe

– but rather, disciples serve God.

So then, as Jesus says, when all is said and done, we do not say “I deserve to go to heaven”, but rather *“I am a worthless slave and have only done what I ought to have done.”*

**As disciples, we serve our Lord with our**

- worship and adoration,
- our prayers and thanksgiving,
- and our love for others.

Because we trust in his saving love for us.

...

And now we get to the heart of this message.

Faith cannot increase or diminish – either we trust God or we don't.

But **the fruit of faith** – the results of trusting God

**can and does increase or decrease.**

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We know that peach trees bear peaches and apple trees bear apples.

**Similarly, Christian discipleship bears particular fruit.**

There are many good atheists and unbelievers in the world.

- They are kind
- They are generous
- They help people and support charitable efforts to make the world better
- But they are not disciples of Jesus

**So faith in Jesus bears distinctive fruit.**

Goodness and kindness alone do not distinguish a Christian.

Christian disciples are different from all other people because **we serve Jesus, risen from the dead.**

When we trust the love of God for us

and follow our Master, we do what the Master says to do.

So what does Jesus ask of those who follow him?

**1. Share the life of God's people –**

- be present in worship,
- read and study the Scriptures,
- pray,
- learn the story of God's love in Jesus and put it into action –
- let nothing keep you away from the family into which God placed you in Holy Baptism.
- **The fruit of faith is known by how we practice our faith, and whom we worship and obey.**

**2. Tell the story** – *“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. (Mk. 16:15)*

- The good news of Jesus risen from the dead to give people a new present and future is wonderful to spread
- We have no trouble talking to others about the big game Friday night, or the movie we saw or what we got shopping
- So let’s not be shy about telling others the good news that Jesus is risen from the dead and therefore no evil in our world can destroy what God has brought into being.
- We have a story of hope and life to tell in a world filled with despair and violent forces of evil and death.
- Jesus suffered those violent forces in his body on the cross and lives to destroy death forever.
- Faith trusts this even when it seems otherwise.
- **The fruit of faith is known by the story Christians tell.**

**3. Recruit others for discipleship**

- *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.*
- Nobody else but Christians can recruit new disciples.
- When we know the great love of God for us, we want others to share that love, too.
- This is not the job of religious professionals, but of every Christian disciple. There are people all around us who need to hear the Gospel.
- **The fruit of faith is known by our eagerness to make disciples of Jesus.**

Now I know what you are saying to yourselves – no way!

- I am not exposing my faith to others –
- I am too shy to talk to people about my faith.

I know this, because I say it too.

I am not a natural go up to people and talk about Jesus kind of person.

Honestly, right now I feel like saying to Jesus –

Hey Lord, if you want me to do this, you will have to give me more faith!

And now we've come full circle – falling into the trap of thinking any of this is under our control.

The fruit of faith

- sharing the life of God's people,
  - telling the story and recruiting disciples –
  - **is what the Holy Spirit produces in us when we are in a relationship of faith in Jesus.**

**Faith in God's love opens us to anything our Lord and Master asks of us, for there is nothing to fear and everything to gain.**

Christian disciples live to serve the Master through worship of God and service to others in Jesus' name.

And as we serve,

the Spirit of the Master makes us aware of opportunities to tell the story and recruit disciples and gives us the courage to do it.

By faith, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of discipleship in our lives:

- **worship** and being part of the spiritual life of God's people
- **telling the story** of Jesus
- **recruiting new disciples** – inviting people to share our faith

And what wonderful fruit it is!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen