



Pastor Kyle Mercer
The Community of Discipleship

May 4, 2025
Series: Disciple
Mark 3:6-22, 31-34

**BIG IDEA – JESUS DEFINES AND REDEFINES EVERY
RELATIONSHIP IN OUR LIVES**

Two Cities Church, whether you are here in Winston or down in Lexington, good morning. If you're new, it's a great time to be new, and it's because we're in a brand-new series, so we're going to kind of all be new together. I tell you this all the time. I don't think in terms of Sundays or sermons but in terms of series.

Type or turn to Mark, chapter 3. I'm going to meet you there in a few minutes. We're in a series called *Disciple*. I gave you a definition last week, and hopefully you can memorize it and meditate on it. It's this idea that what it means to be a disciple is to follow Jesus and help others find and follow Jesus.

Here's what we're going to talk about today. Today, we're going to talk about discipleship in community. Here's the big idea: You can't follow Jesus by yourself. You can't follow Jesus alone. Now, I like golf. I love golf, but Christianity isn't golf. Golf you can do by yourself. Golf you're playing against yourself. Golf is about course management.

Christianity is more like baseball. As soon as you say you play baseball, what's the next question someone is going to ask you? "What team do you play for?" If you're like, "I don't play for a team," it's like, "This is awkward. You're not a baseball player." Who do you play catch with? Who do you do batting practice with? You can't play baseball by yourself.

It takes a church to raise a Christian. Okay? So, I want to give you a really practical application. If you have been around our church for a while... You've been kind of orbiting, but it's time for you to land here. That's the case for some of you. I want to tell

you really quickly about our Weekender. Our last Weekender before the summer is May 16 and 17. So, before you start going on vacation and Memorial Day and all that crazy stuff happens, I want to encourage you to consider coming to our Weekender.

Really quickly, what it is not. It is not a membership class. You can pursue membership afterward. The whole idea is we want to get Two Cities in you before you get in Two Cities. We say this all the time. I really believe this. We're the church for anybody, but we're not the church for everybody. We're totally fine with that. The Weekender is your chance to figure out if this is the right church for you and for us to figure out if you are the right person for us.

Secondly, it's not a theology class, although we will tell you what we believe and how we behave. This is my philosophy of ministry: you should know everything about the church up front. You're not going to find something out eight months from now and be like, "What? You guys believe that?" No, we're just going to tell you all of the main things and the plain things we believe at the Weekender so you can decide.

And it's not a connection class, but it *is* the only way to get connected. There are not two ways or ten ways to get connected. If you want to get in a Community Group or on a serving team, you have to go through our Weekender. If you go to this Weekender, we're going to have a Group Connect the next day, that Sunday. So, if you go through the Weekender, you'll be able to get into one of our brand-new Community Groups. With that said, let's pray, and then we're going to look at Mark 3, Jesus in community. Let's pray.

Lord, I want to pray right now for people who are in this building but are not really in this church who you're calling to. They're believers, and they need to be connected to a local church, whether it's our church or another church. I pray that every Christian would realize a Christian needs a church like a human needs a home and you would give them the brothers and sisters in Christ that they're going to need. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

All right. Just like, I'm guessing, most of you, I'm really into podcasts. I mean, how many podcasts are we all listening to nowadays? It's everywhere. So, I'm listening to this podcast, and there are these two guys talking. These guys are not Christians, but that's okay. I believe in common grace. All truth is God's truth.

These two guys were talking, and they were diagnosing modern people. You and I are modern people, so this will be helpful. They said modern people (so, *you*) expect way too much from two relationships. Get ready for it. Don't act like this isn't true. You expect way too much from a romantic relationship and your career.

People think, "If I could just find the one...the one...the one..." "If I could find some woman..." or "If I could find some man..." "If I did *that*, and then if I could find the right career... I just have to get into the best schools I can get into. I have to get educated. I have to work hard. Then, if I've found the right career and the right person, I'm going to be happy."

It's interesting that even the secular world is critiquing that. By the way, whenever you finally get your career, all you're going to find over time is your career is interfering with everything else you want to do in life. You're like, "It's interfering with my kids and my spouse and my life and my hobbies."

Today, we're going to talk about relationships, and here's why. You need a lot of relationships if you're going to walk with Christ. Your marriage is going to get better if you're not turning your spouse into a god. She or he is not omniscient and can't meet all of your needs. You're designed to have many relationships.

Guys, the big idea today is discipleship happens in relationships. I'm going to give you a second definition, but don't worry; it's super easy. Remember last week: following Jesus and helping others find and follow Jesus. I'm going to say that every week. This week, I'm going to give you a second definition. I only write my sermons one at a time, so I don't know if next week there will be another definition.

Here it is. This one is super simple. What do you do when you meet with another Christian? Like, "Okay. I'm meeting with a Christian in the church. What should I do?" *Open Bible, open life*. Come on. It doesn't get any easier. It's four words, and two of the words are the same. Our definition is three different words. That's it. *Open Bible, open life*.

Guys, I want you to understand that's at the heart of our church. That's at the heart of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' discipleship was life on life. If you've ever wondered what I'm doing up here, I'm opening my Bible and opening up our lives together. That's what I'm doing. I'm like, "Hey, guys, do you see what it says? Isn't that true in your life?" Or "Guys, look at what the culture is doing. It's crazy, but look. It says they would do that right here."

Let me tell you this. The quality of your experience at Two Cities Church, or *any* church, is going to be contingent on your willingness and ability to open up your Bible and open up your life. You need to open your Bible and open your life, and then you need to find a few people who will also open up their Bibles and open up their life.

Okay. Here's what we're going to do with the rest of our time together. We're going to look at five relationships Jesus had. I think this is fascinating. I think you're going to find

it fascinating too. Five relationships. I'll just give them to you, and then we'll hit them. It's going to be Jesus' relationship with *critics*, Jesus' relationship with the *crowds*, Jesus' relationship with the *demonic*, Jesus' relationship with his *disciples*, and finally, Jesus' relationship with his *family*. All five of these relationships show up in one short chapter. We'll get started.

Look at verse 6 of chapter 3. "***The Pharisees...***" If you grew up in church and you hear about the Pharisees, you're like, "Ugh! They're terrible." We'll get to them. Here they are again, following Jesus around, but not really following Jesus. "***The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians...***" Now, we don't ever hear about them, but don't worry; we'll talk about them. "***...against him, how to destroy him.***"

Let me give you the background. You know, grab your parachute again. Here we go. We're parachuting into a passage of Scripture. Here's what just happened. I want you to know what just happened. You can read it for yourself. In verses 1-5, Jesus goes to church when it's time to go to church. Not a bad idea. So, he's at church. They call it *synagogue*, but he's at church, and at church he heals somebody.

Now, isn't that what we pray for? Isn't that at the top of our list? It's like, "All right. We're here. Let's pray for some people to get healed." Here's the background. Jesus heals somebody, and the Pharisees get angry. Welcome to the critics. I want to introduce you to the critics in the church.

Some of you... And I love you. Hear me say this with warmth. Some of you are critical. By the way, the reason people love to be critical is they can keep things at a distance. Some of you are critical about the songs. Some of you are critical about the sermons. Some of you come here and act like it's an airport, and you people watch and are critical of others.

I want to invite you in. There are three types of critics. I want to show you this. I had never seen this before. I'm going to show you three critics. I was reading this, and I was like, "I cannot believe it. I know this is the Word of God, but I cannot believe how relevant this is."

The first critic is a religious critic. That's the Pharisee. The religious critic doesn't understand grace. I've said this many times. We want to be a church where a person's life can fall apart. We do not *want* your life to fall apart. We hope your life *doesn't* fall apart. Your life can't fall apart in a religious church. Here's what happens in a religious church. Think of these synonyms when I say the word *religion*.

By the way, when I say *religion*... I know Christianity is a world religion. I get that. I'm using it in the narrow, wooden sense of legalistic, moralistic thinking. In a religious

church or in a religious home (some of you have religious homes), everybody is pretending and performing all the time, and no one can be honest about the struggles, temptations, and sins in their life.

Have you ever seen this at a religious church? I've seen this. Someone finally has the courage to share something real, not just "I wish I prayed more" but "I'm really struggling with something that's dark." In a religious church, when that goes public, they don't know what to do with it because there's no grace, so they just condemn the person.

Then, guess what happens to everybody in the church? They have this conversation with themselves: "Whatever I'm struggling with is now going to go submarine, because if that's how they treated *that* person, I could never bring something up." The religious people don't understand the grace of God.

The Pharisees didn't like Jesus because... There are three reasons on this. They didn't like Jesus because of who he associated himself with. (I'm summarizing the Gospels.) They also didn't like Jesus because he was growing in his influence, but they mostly didn't like Jesus because he critiqued them. Good teaching and good preaching must always constantly critique the religious, critical spirit.

The second type of person is the Herodians. Now, this is interesting. What's the root word of *Herodian*? When I was in college, we asked this one guy... He wasn't the smartest guy. We asked, "What's the root word of *momentum*?" He said, "*Mom*." We were like, "No. *Moment*." What is the root word of *Herodians*? It's not *hero*; it's *Herod*.

This is interesting. This is where I was having a party in my mind and heart as I was studying. I'm like, "Wait a second. So, the first people who are critical of Christians and Jesus are going to be Pharisees, religious people. I knew that. I knew that, Jesus. The second people are going to be political leaders. I didn't know that." I mean, I knew that. I just saw it in the text for the first time.

Here's the interesting thing about this. By the way, the Herodians hated the Pharisees and the Pharisees hated the Herodians because the Pharisees didn't like Roman influence and the Herodians were all about the Roman government. They came together because they both saw Jesus as a threat.

Why did the Herodians see Jesus as a threat? We have such wrong ideas about how the church and state interact. We all need a theology of this, and we're going to get it. Basically, here's the thing. Every totalitarian government on earth has heard the statement "Jesus is Lord" as a political statement. That is the most foundational political statement. Well, it certainly has political implications. "Jesus Christ is Lord, which means you're not, king."

Think about it, guys. What happens in a totalitarian dictator state? It's not a coincidence. There's never allowed to be a church or, if there's a church, it's a goofy state church that doesn't teach the Bible, because to say, "Jesus is Lord" means there's somebody over me.

Listen. This is important. The Pharisees don't understand grace, and the Herodians don't understand kingdom. These are key ideas, that Christ has a kingdom that is greater and broader, and to come to faith in Christ you have to understand the grace of God and the lordship of Christ.

There's a third group. Drop down to verse 22. We're going to come back. It all comes together. You have to see this. This is where I was like, "This is amazing." Verse 22: ***"And the scribes..."*** They're the third critics. ***"...who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul...'"*** Which is the incarnation of Satan. They're basically not just saying, "He's demon possessed"; they're saying, "He's so bad he's Devil possessed." ***"...and 'by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.'"***

Religious people attack Christ and the church. Sometimes political leaders attack Christ and the church. We see this. The third group is academic elites. I was like, "I can't believe it. It's right there." The Bible is not what happened; it's what happens. I'm like, "This is what's happening today."

This is the Harvard tenured professors of the day. That's who the scribes are. They are the best of the best of the best. They went to the best schools. If you look at the text, the verse I just read, you'll see something... It takes a second to see it. How do the academic elites criticize Jesus? Answer: by trying to tell us who he is. I was like, "Whoa!" I'm like, "This is exactly what happened to me in college."

I'm 2 years old in the Lord. I'm a brand-new believer. I wanted to go to Bible college, but...it's a long story...I ended up going to Elon University. I have my "WWJD?" bracelet on, and I love the Lord, and I'm new in the Lord. I had some electives I could take, and I'm like, "That's it. I'm going to take New Testament 1." Massive mistake.

I go in there as a brand-new believer, and my professor (who I'm actually friends with on Facebook still...true story) spent the entire semester telling me Jesus wasn't who I thought he was and Jesus wasn't really who he said he was, but *these* words were really what he said. "He was really a Galilean peasant, and he was really an example." You get what I'm saying.

If the religious people don't understand grace and the political Herodian people don't understand kingdom, the academic intellectuals don't understand truth. They're over-educated above their intelligence; they have more degrees than Fahrenheit...all that kind of stuff.

So, here's the thing. Jesus speaks to the critics, but I want to move to the largest group that followed him. Let's look at the crowds. We're going to go back to verse 7. **"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from..."** In verse 7, we are told of seven different places great crowds followed Jesus from. Notice it doesn't just say *crowd*; it says *great crowd*. In fact, the word *crowd* is going to be used three times in this passage. *Great crowd* (or *mega crowd*) is used twice.

Have you ever wondered...? I think we've all had this thought before. Maybe not all of you, but I think a lot of us. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be famous? Jesus has a short period of time where he gets to be famous. He goes from obscurity to popularity.

Maybe this is a younger person thing, but I just find... You know, there are 12-year-olds who are hoping to go viral on YouTube. There's something in us, and we wonder, "What would it be like to be famous?" Well, we're going to see what Jesus... Partly, being famous comes with a lot of critics. We already talked about that. But I want to talk about the crowds.

Let me read one more verse on this. Verse 8: **"When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him..."** So, you get this image. Seven different areas. Massive crowds coming. **"...for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him."**

This is interesting. I think it's very interesting. So, the crowds come around him. Here's what *I'm* thinking. What do you do when the crowd shows up? I mean, the crowd was just here at Easter, if you didn't know that. In one sense, the crowd is here every week. There are so many people. It's like, "Who's really a believer?" I just can't tell. I'm like, "Who's in the crowd? Who's really a believer? I don't know."

Let me tell you how Jesus responds to the crowds. It has been helpful for me as I think about this. The first thing he does is he recognizes that the crowds were following him, but not for spiritual reasons. Think about it this way. The Pharisees didn't really know who he was, and they hated him. Then you get to the crowds. The crowds don't really know who he is, but they love him.

They like the free health care. They like the free meals. They like the free entertainment. "Let's follow this guy. He heals people, and we might get a kid's meal or something out of this. You know, our kids get fed tonight." So they came. But here's what's interesting. Jesus did three things with the crowds that I want you to know we're committed to doing *here*.

The first thing is he taught in parables. Let me explain what that means. This will mess with you. I took a couple of classes at Duke Divinity when I was there, and I had a professor there who said he decided to get his PhD and go into teaching the Bible for a living because of what Jesus says about parables.

Here's what Jesus says about parables. I think it's in Matthew 13. His disciples at one point go, "Why do you teach in parables?" and he goes, "So no one will understand me." You're like, "What? Isn't that the opposite of teaching?" There's a lot of deep stuff with that, but let me tell you this.

Jesus said he taught in parables so the crowds by themselves wouldn't be able to understand, because he wanted to see if they wanted more. "Do they want to talk about this any more? Do they want to read the Bible for themselves? Are they interested?" That's what you're doing.

Here's the second thing: the larger the crowds got, the harder his teaching got. You can follow this. He's not popular for very long because of what he's teaching. When he's talking about a New Testament sexual ethic, divorce and remarriage, there's a huge crowd. When he's talking about the dangers of wealth, there's a massive crowd.

Then in John, chapter 6... From what we can tell, it's kind of the climax of his ministry in the sense of popularity. That's where he says, "I am the Bread of Life." (And all the gluten-free people go, "Uh-oh.") He says, "I am the Bread of Life," and that kind of makes you feel warm and fuzzy.

Then he says, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood or you have no part in me." It says at that point, many walked away. Remember, that's when the disciples come up to him and say... He's like, "Are you leaving too?" and Peter says, "Where else would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

The third thing he did with the crowds... So, he taught them to see if they'd want more. He taught harder the bigger the crowd got. I'm just telling you, the temptation... As soon as something gets big, it's like, "We need to hire a brand manager immediately to make sure we don't offend anyone. Everyone needs to come back next week." He doesn't do that.

The third thing is he draws lines, not circles. We tend to want to draw a big circle. "We're all the same. Let's sing 'Kumbaya' for a few minutes together at the end of the service." What he does... The bigger the crowd, he goes, "Some of you are going to heaven; some of you are going to hell. Some of you are sheep, and some of you are goats. Some of you have repented; others of you are going to die in your sin."

So, the critics don't really know who he is and don't like him. The crowds love him but don't really know who he is. Then we're going to be introduced to the demons or, if you want to keep it all C's, the cursed. Let me show you this. Verse 11: ***"And whenever the unclean spirits [demons] saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.' And he strictly ordered them not to make him known."***

If you're new to Christianity, welcome. We believe in the supernatural. We do. There's no way to explain our faith apart from the supernatural. We don't believe that all you see is all there is. We believe there is a seen realm and an unseen realm. What we see right now is the seen realm. What we don't see is the unseen realm...heaven and hell, angels and demons...all that.

Now, here's what's interesting. We're not going to spend a lot of time on the demons, but I want to tell you this. The demons are the only people in the gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), except for Jesus, who know who Jesus is. Isn't that interesting? Here's what I want to encourage you with. Remember what I said. If the critics don't know who he is and don't like him and the crowds don't know who he is but love him, the demons know who he is and hate him.

Here's the interesting thing. Every demon has better theology than you and I. Every demon has perfect, airtight, biblical, and systematic theology. The problem is they don't love what they know about Christ. So, what's interesting here is... This is what has perplexed scholars. Jesus looks at the demons, who are supernatural beings, proclaiming that he's the Son of God, which is correct, and he tells them to be quiet.

If you want a big phrase for your Sunday morning, it's what's called the *messianic secret motif*. It's the whole idea that Jesus wants to tell everybody in the right time who he is, but I also think the whole idea is the demons don't love him, and he doesn't want people talking about him and telling others about him who don't love what they're saying.

So, we talked about the cursed. We talked about the critics. We talked about the crowd. Now we're going to talk about the disciples or, if you want another C, the core. This is who he spent almost all his time with. It says, ***"And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him."***

Here's a good way to think about Jesus' ministry and, by extension, *your* ministry: Jesus loved the world, helped many, and disciplined a few. Think about his whole ministry. He goes and weeps over Jerusalem. He loves the world. He dies for the world. He helps many. Pass by, help this guy, teach this crowd. He spends the majority of his time discipling a few people.

Now, it says he goes up to the mountain. If you want the longer account of this, you can read Luke, chapter 6. Luke 6 tells us he went up to the mountain, and he prayed all night. We assume he's praying for his disciples because he's about to pick them. He goes up to the mountain. Mountains are a big deal in the Bible. Basically, you go up to the mountain to meet with God and gain new perspective. That's what you do.

You get up to the top of Pilot Mountain and you're like, "Oh, I can see farther than I've ever seen." That's the whole idea. So, he goes up there, and he's praying for his disciples. We know that because of Luke, chapter 6. Let me read this to you one more time. **"And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him."** So, Jesus picks his disciples.

I don't do this a lot, but just one minute on it, because I do think it's important at the heart level to understand this. At the end of the day, why are you a Christian? Are you a Christian because you're smarter than your non-Christian friends? You're going to be like, "God, at the end of the day, that's why I'm in heaven." If everybody was like you, they'd all be Christian, I guess. Right? No, I don't think so.

You know, you're more spiritually sensitive. You wish everyone was like you. If everyone was like you, then they'd all be Christians, because they'd be as spiritually sensitive as you. Maybe you're just more interested. That's what it is. You're more interested in the things of God. No, no, no. Ultimately, God picks us. I know you go, "Well, I picked him." Yeah, he picks you, then you pick him. That's how that works. He draws you to his side...all that.

All I'm saying is we get this beautiful picture of Jesus deciding... By the way, you get to pick who you disciple. Look. I believe in suffering, I believe in sacrifice, and I believe in service, but if you've never, ever disciplined someone before, why don't you just pick somebody you actually like, who you don't have a terrible nickname for, and all that kind of stuff. You're like, "No, I would actually be excited about discipling this young lady or this young man."

Let me show you what he does here. This is important. Verse 14: **"And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles)..."** Why 12? Well, think about this with me. If you just think about numbers, 12 is kind of a random number. I guess it's a dozen, but it's not 10. Right? It's not even a more biblical number, like 40. You know, 40 days on the ark and 40 days in the wilderness with Jesus. It's 12.

Well, if you know your numbers, what is 12? Just follow this for a second. There's a guy named Abraham, and he has a son named Isaac who has a son named Jacob who has 12

sons. Those 12 sons become 12 tribes. Those 12 tribes become the nation of Israel. That's basically the books of Genesis and Exodus.

Jesus is regathering the people of God, symbolically, in the twelve disciples. He's now gathering the people of God around him. Now, let me show you why he's doing this. It says, ***"And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons."***

I believe this moment right now for Jesus is the second most important thing he does. Think about it. We know the most important. We sing about it. We celebrate it. No question. Sinless life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection. We know his cross work is the most significant thing he did. I think most would agree the second most significant thing Jesus did was pick 12 men to invest three years of his life in.

Humanly speaking, we don't have any churches today if Jesus doesn't invest in these 12 men. So, I want to talk about it. It says he calls them in to send them out. The church is both... Hear this word charitably. We want to collect Christians but to commission them out. We want to gather them to scatter them. That's what Jesus does.

Here's something to think about. Jesus calls the disciples to relationship and responsibility. "I'm calling you that you might come in and be with me, that I then might send you out." Now, here's the problem with you and me. Tell me if I'm wrong. Just think about this for a second. Think about your Christianity, whatever that means for you...your Christian walk, your Christian faith.

Here's my guess. You may not say it like this, but you tend to think about it in regard to time and place, not relationship and responsibility. You're like, "All right. I've got my devotion. It's at 7:30. I sit in this chair for 30 minutes." Or you think, "I go to the 9:00 service" or "I go to the 11:00 service" or "I go to the 5:00 service, and I've got my hour and a half. I serve every other week, so then it's three hours. I go to Community Group. It's Tuesday from 6:00 to 8:00."

Okay. I get all that, but what if you just thought, with the people in your Community Group (and hopefully you're in a Community Group), "I'm committed to these relationships. I am committed to the biblical responsibilities of 'one anothering' in these relationships, and that happens outside of just simply two hours on a Tuesday or Wednesday night."

Let me give you another principle of discipleship, because I want to get really practical for a second. I said in the first week discipleship hasn't been defined, and that's a

problem, so we defined it, but maybe the bigger problem, for some of us, is it has never been displayed. Most of the things you really need to learn in life are caught, not taught.

This happens all the time in our church. There's a young couple, and they get married. They're both new in the Lord. They're brand-new believers. They became believers in the last couple of years. They get married, and then they end up having a conversation with one of our pastors or one of our staff. It's very similar all the time. It's like, "We don't know how to be a Christian couple."

This is how it always works. "Part of the reason is I never saw it." Then the husband goes, "Yeah, and I never saw it." Then what happens is they have kids, and they're like, "How do you do a devotional with a 4-year-old?" They're like, "I don't know." They're both like, "My dad never did this." "Mine either." It's like, "Okay, I've never seen it." This is why hospitality is such a way of discipleship, because you invite people into your life.

By the way, let me encourage you. Minister and disciple out of your life stage and your lifestyle. You'll enjoy it way more. I want to talk to the young moms for a second who are overwhelmed, and you're so grateful that someone else is watching your kids right now. By the way, show up to our kids' ministry with hugs and gift cards and just thank the people who are doing that. I'm serious.

I want to talk to young moms for a second. Basically, that's a life stage. You know what? The best thing to do, as a young mom, is to invite a bunch of young single ladies over to spend time with you as you're a mom. First, because they're going to get to see what it's like to be a young mom, and secondly, they're going to be a lot of help. Genuinely, they're going to enjoy it, because they're going to get to leave. They're like, "It's over." "Go ahead. I'm here for two hours. I'll help you. Then I go home to my life."

Some of you like to go to the gym or you have hobbies. You like to hunt or fish or golf. How can you do what you're doing but do it with gospel intentionality? I want to encourage you. I know sometimes I come, and I'm like, "*This* needs to change and *that* needs to change." I think, for some of you, you don't need to change your whole life; you need to begin to invite more people into your life.

It can be, "Hey, I'm going grocery shopping, and I have an hour." Do you know how many young people have never...? Like, "How do you think about grocery shopping? How do you think about meals? What do you feed your kids? How much do groceries cost?" Guys, we know this. The one place discipleship (I'm using that word elastically) still happens today is the medical profession. I say that because a lot of you are in medicine.

Think about it. Things are taught, but things have to be caught. It's like, you have to do good on organic chemistry, but you also have to spend eight years in a hospital, and you

have to follow people around who know what they're doing. You do medical school, you do residency, and you do fellowship. You know what I'm saying? So, I just want to encourage us. Now, let me show you the disciples really quickly. We'll get to them. They're actually mentioned here.

"He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him."

I'll tell you something interesting. My initial plan... I had it in my mind. I was like, "Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to preach a message on community and discipleship, and the whole message is going to be the names of the disciples." I was like, "And I'm going to talk about this Judas." I had this whole idea in my mind.

I sat down to start studying it, and here's what I found out: we don't know anything about seven of the disciples. I was like, "This is going to be a horrible message." "How much time is he going to spend on Judas?" So, here's what's interesting. I say that to encourage you. Think about this. The twelve men Jesus Christ spent three years of his life with... We don't know anything about seven of them. You couldn't even name them. Right? I mean, I just read them, and you're like, "I already forgot."

Here's what's interesting: Peter is always mentioned first; Judas is always mentioned last, because Judas is the betrayer and Peter is the leader. They're named in two pairs. We think that, potentially, those are the "two by two" Jesus sent out. That's kind of neat.

Other than that, we don't know anything about the... Think about it. You're like, "Okay, Doubting Thomas." Yeah, that's all you know about him. We know a little bit about James and John, mostly Peter and Judas. He has a little interaction with Nathanael in John's gospel. We don't know anything about these guys.

Here's why I'm telling you that. Some of you feel like you are completely unknown. You're like, "I don't go on Instagram, and I'm not going to be on the stage, and I'm not going to be a Community Group leader. I'm trying, but I don't feel like anyone knows me." I want to encourage you.

Andy Davis said this when he was here last summer. He said he thinks heaven... And he'll forget more Bible than I'll ever know. I mean, this guy knows his stuff. He basically said, "I think in heaven we will be celebrating the advancement of the mission of God by celebrating the lives of every individual in heaven, and I think we might spend the most

time on the people we know the least about." So, there will be a time where we'll hear the story of those seven and we'll hear *your* stories.

Here's another interesting thing. You can tell, even in the description there, he renames several of them. Simon gets to be called *Peter*. He calls the other guys *Sons of Thunder*. Basically, this is a very diverse group. Here's what we know. We only know for sure that Peter was married, because his mother-in-law is mentioned in another place.

So, Peter is married, but there are also single guys. So, there are married and single guys, and they're doing life together somehow, figuring that out. Peter is probably more blue-collar, the sons of Zebedee more white-collar fishing. Dad owns a business...all that kind of stuff. So, you have different socioeconomic things going on. You have Simon the Zealot, who we know nothing about except he's a zealot, which hated the government, and then you have Matthew the tax collector.

All I'm trying to say is Jesus brings together people who otherwise would never hang out with one another. I love it when two guys who are Christians find out they have three hobbies. Guys get really excited about that. "You like to hunt too?" You know, that kind of thing. I think that's great. That happens all the time.

I think it's even more beautiful when you see two guys or two girls or some friends hanging out, and you're like, "You're like the Odd Couple." You're like, "The only reason these two guys hang out...they're so different...is Jesus is what has brought them together." It's really, really powerful.

Let's continue on. We need to look at the last group mentioned. Verses 20-21. Here's his family. ***"Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"***

Remember, we talked about the critics. The critics didn't know him and didn't love him. We talked about the crowds. The crowds didn't really understand him, but they loved him. The demons knew about him, but they didn't love him. We saw the disciples. They were learning to love him. Now we have his family.

What's interesting is this is the first mention of his family in the gospel of Mark, because in the gospel of Mark there is no birth narrative, like we get in Matthew and Luke. It's like, "All right. First time Jesus' family is mentioned. What are they going to think?" "He's crazy."

By the way, I want to encourage you. Maybe you're a seeker. Maybe you're a skeptic. I think one of the endearing parts of the Bible is its honesty. If you were going to make up

a story about some guy being the Son of God, you wouldn't say, "And his family thought he was insane." You'd be like, "He did miracles at home, and everyone thought he was cool." It's very honest.

Now, I want you to watch... We have to drop down to see this. I want you to watch Jesus' interaction with his family. Verse 20 again. **"Then he went home, and the crowd gathered..."** You have the different groups again. **"...the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"**

Now, they were most likely concerned for his safety because they saw the critics and the crowds. Also, I think they were very worried about their own reputation. It's hard for me to even explain to us how important the family was back then. I know the family is important to us, but we view ourselves much more individually.

When was the last time you introduced yourself and used your last name? If you did, you're probably over 50. We live in a first-name culture. I tend to think of myself as "Kyle" not as a Mercer. In that culture, you were a Mercer way before you were a Kyle. The family is of the utmost importance.

So, they're worried about his safety. They're worried about his sanity, probably because... It's the old C.S. Lewis "liar, lunatic, or Lord." Either Jesus was lying and knew he wasn't the Son of God; he was a lunatic and thought he was the Son of God, but he wasn't; or he's Lord. That's what it's saying.

Now I need to get to his interaction with his family. Verse 31: **"And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd..."** There's the crowd again. **"...was sitting around him, and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.'"**

Look at this. **"And he answered them..."** This is Jesus speaking for the first time about his family. **"'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.'"**

I want to tell you something. This is really the big idea. I've given you a couple of big ideas, but this is the big idea: *Jesus defines and redefines every relationship in our lives.* He just redefined family. Here's why this is so powerful. There is probably not a more basic relationship and a more fundamental question you can ask somebody than "Who is your mom, who is your dad, and who is your brother?"

Literally, afterward, we could go down to the kids' ministry area, and we could grab a bunch of 3-year-olds and go, "Hey, guys. You're 3 and you just learned how to talk, but even though you're 3, and even though you just learned how to talk, who's your mom?" and they would know their mom's name. "And who's your brother?" "This is my brother. This is my sister."

What I'm trying to tell you is when Jesus comes into your life, he changes everything about your life. He basically defines the church as the family as well. See, when you are born, you're born into a family, and when you're born again you're born into a new family. If you're a Christian, you have a family of birth and you get a family of new birth.

I want you to think about this for a second. What is your relationship with Jesus Christ like? American evangelicals are famous for talking about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And I've used that language. "Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?" Here's the truth: Jesus has a personal relationship with every person. He is the Lord of every person.

So, here's what I want to ask you. Does something in your relationship with Jesus need to change? Some of you need to stop being critical, and you need to come to Christ. Let me give you a person in the Bible: Nicodemus. He comes out from the Pharisees and begins to ask questions and says, "What does it mean to be born again?"

Some of you need to come out from the crowd, and you need to come to Christ. You need to move from being a fan to being a true follower. You need to be like Zacchaeus. He's up, and he's watching, and then he comes down and says, "I've got to do this."

I'll tell you the encouraging thing. You read the story I just read at the end, and you go, "Oh man. His family doesn't understand. His brothers don't believe." We're later told in Acts that his brothers believe. So, wherever you are, whatever you currently believe about Jesus, through repentance and faith, that can change. Let's pray.

Lord, we talked about a lot of relationships today, all of the different relationships you're in. We need relationships. I pray that we would be a church where we open up our Bibles and open up our lives. Jesus, we pray that we would follow you, because you are the risen Lord, and we would help others find and follow you. Lord, would you call us more deeply to both relationship and responsibility in your church? We pray this in your name, amen.