

requirements to be Disciples of Christ. God loved us so much that He sacrificed the very best that He had, that which He loved more than anything to save us. (John 3:16) Jesus loved us so much that He did what only He could do. He became sin, that which was repugnant and an abomination to God and shed His blood to save us. Now God requires that we demonstrate our love for Him by being obedient to His Word. What greater way can we demonstrate our love for God other than being obedient?

Is it by our worship of Him? Some hypocritically claim that we demonstrate our love for God by worshipping Him. This is not only hypocrisy, it is also a lie because we cannot worship what we do not love; and we prove our love by being obedient. To worship God while being disobedient to His Word is to dishonor and mock God. God in His word makes it clear that He requires true worshippers. (John 4:23)

God wants us to love Him. Love Him because He first loved us. Our love is a response to what God has done for us, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) By sacrificing His son for us while we were still sinners God demonstrated that He loved us. He did not require us to love Him before He sacrificed His son, He just loved us.

Our disobedience demonstrates not only that we don't love God, but also that we are in disagreement with God. Disobedience is not accidental. It means we decided to do things our way. Disobedience is sin. We can rationalize it any way we want but the bottom line is that it is sin and sin is an affront to God. God hates sin. By sinning we are in cooperation with what God hates. We are enabling the enemy to have his way in God's world. In a word we are at war with God.

The great danger we face is that we risk the wrath of God. "We" does not refer to those in the world, but those in the church. Notice how often it seem that those who suffer the most or who seem the most burdened are not those in the world but those in the church. We wonder why? It is because those in the world have incited the wrath of God. They have not hypocritically presented themselves as being on the Lord's side or loving God. They have made no secret of their rejection of God. But those who claim to love God, who go through the motions of worshipping Him while disobeying Him incite God's wrath against them.

Jesus says, "he who does not love Me does not keep my words." (John 14:24) In other words whoever does not obey His words, does not love Jesus. And if we are disobedient we cannot be His disciple. The question before each of us is are we willing to be obedient to God? The answer to the question will determine if we are able to become a disciple of Christ.

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church
Bible Study
Monday, September 29, 2008

St. John 14:15,23,24

Over the last few weeks we have been focused on "Making Disciples." And in our study last week we said that the crisis facing the Christian Church is not that the church is not growing or that the church is not making disciples but that the church can't make disciples. We are unable to fulfill the "great commission" which the Lord left His church, "go therefore and make disciples." (St. Matthew 28:19) And the reason we are unable to make disciples is because many in the church are not disciples themselves. In a word, we cannot make others what we ourselves are not.

So then the question comes why aren't we disciples? Is it because we choose not to be disciples or is it because we want to but don't know how to become disciples. The answer is twofold. There are some, I pray not many or most who choose not to become disciples and there are some, I pray many or most who want to but don't know how. In other words there are some in the church who have made a decision to join the church, to become members of the church, but who have deliberately not chosen to become Disciples of Christ. As surprising as it may seem there are many reasons why people join the church. Everybody in the church does not believe, has not accepted Christ, or are about the work of the church.

In tonight's study of God's Word we want to begin to take a look at the reasons why we are not Disciples of Christ. The goal is that from our study we will make a genuine decision to become Disciples of Christ. Tonight we want to look at the issue of obedience. If we are going to be Disciples of Christ then we have to be obedient. Let us take a look again at who Disciples of Christ are. Disciples of Christ are those who "love and obey God, bear fruit, live with joy and glorify God."

Disciples of Christ are those who first "love and obey God." Jesus says, "if you love me keep my commandments." (John 14:15) Notice in Jesus words how He couples love and obedience together. It makes clear that we cannot love Him if we don't obey His Word. Most of us do not associate love and obedience as being required for each to occur. In our minds obedience is not required to love God. Which is why many disobey God's Word and still say we love God. But we are lying to ourselves and to others. Jesus goes on to say, "he who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me." (John 14:21)

Those who believe that they can love God and not have to keep His commandments are numerous in the church and promote what is called "antinomianism." This is a word that is unfamiliar to most people but it is not hard to understand. It is the view that the commandments of the Word of God have no proper place in Christianity. That because of the death and resurrection of Christ we are no longer under the law but under grace. Those who believe this take out of context the scriptures and use grace to justify their failure to be obedient to the Word of God. (Romans 7:1-12) This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book "The Cost of Discipleship" calls "cheap grace." It is church membership without church discipline, communion without confession, the cross without the crown, the rationalization that we can live however we want because "God's grace is sufficient for us."

Obedience is absolutely required for discipleship. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross in no way absolves us from being obedient to His Word. To do so would trivialize the death of Christ and have no