

Sermon Series: Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Discipleship
Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—3/5/2006

Title: Are you a Berean Christian?

Text: Acts 17: 10-12 (Print and read text)

Intro.: *Ills.: Finding Buried Treasure—go back over where you have been*

Theme: Being a disciple of Jesus, establishing an intentional and personal relationship with Him, involves a passion for learning from God's Word and a day-after-day habit of placing yourself in position to read and hear it.

(Slide with a map of ancient Greece showing how Paul had traveled from Thessalonica to Berea)

A noble-minded believer vs. a religious church goer — a study in contrasts

§ When learning the truth about yourself is too much to bear

1. Paul had been run out of town by Thessalonian Jews who were threatened by the truth
 - a. Paul *“explained and proved that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead . . . is the Christ.”* Act 17:3
 - b. That caused the Jewish audience's *“world to be turned upside down”* Acts 17: 6
 - c. **Ills.: Welcoming the hard truth**
 - d. But more so out of *“jealousy and agendas”* Acts 17: 5 they refused to hear and let others hear the good news
2. Paul in speaking about these self-righteous Jews would say:
 - a. *I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Rom. 9: 2-4*
 - b. Sometimes the *“faith of the fathers”* = ***our worst liability*** because heritages, pedigrees, denomination chest thumping, and religious training becomes our hope and glory rather than the Jesus it was meant to point to

§ What made the Berean Jews so *“noble-minded?”* (Print and read verse 12)

1. More than skin deep believers
 - a. Received the Word of God — not too proud to think that they had it all figured out
 - b. Received the Word of God with passion — *thumos* = bubbled under the skin with the power of God's Spirit
 - c. **Ills.: the thermoroles and geysers of Yellow Stone speak to an active earth just under surface**
 - d. Received the Word of God with *“readiness/wonder”* when they made new discoveries about Jesus
 - e. **Ills.: Dennis Kinlaw — 83 year old giant of the faith who is still learning**
2. Teachable
 - a. ***Investigated*** the Scriptures like a detective/prosecutor to uncover the evidence of Christ there all along
 - b. **Ills.: Story of Lee Stobel of the Chicago Tribune conversion**
 - c. God's word is a living and active Word to this day for those who come at it with a humble, teachable heart
 - d. *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Heb. 4: 12*
 - e. *The holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. . . All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. 2 Tim 3: 15-17*

Jesus call to be his follower is a call to be an intentional learner/disciple

§ ***Be a child of God***

1. *He who belongs to God hears what God says.” John 8:47*
2. Making life's goal to read/hear/see God's Word and so mark yourself as one of God's

§ **Dwell in the truth**

1. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8: 31-32
2. Discipleship is not for posers, it is for people who are dead-on serious about knowing truth about Jesus and self

§ **Seek and find** life in Jesus

1. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me. John 5: 39

§ **Transformed** thinking and doing because you are in the Word

1. Make them holy by the truth; your word is truth. John 17: 17
2. **Ills.: Sign of a Christian**
3. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. Rom 12: 2

Finding Buried Treasure



One of my hobbies is treasure hunting. When I purchased my first metal detector 15 years ago, the salesman, a treasure hunter himself with a huge display of goodies to validate his prowess, gave me two pieces of helpful advice. First, he told me that once I found something buried in the ground, before filling in the hole, I should *always* scan the hole once again. He insisted that oftentimes where there was one coin, there would be others. He was right, and I have proved this time and time again. Secondly, he told me never to believe that a place had been "hunted out," meaning that all the treasure had been taken. "For the patient hunter," he said, "there will likely be another treasure waiting." Once again he was right. On one such occasion I was given permission to hunt the site of a home built in the late 1700s, a property that I was told had been hunted out. I started scanning early that morning, and hunted for six hours without finding a thing. Just when I was ready to give up, I started getting signals—one right after the other. I dug out so many coins they were literally running out of both of my pants pockets. One of the coins I found that day was an 1865 3-cent piece, worth about \$70. In the same way, new

Christians desiring the milk of the Word can sweep over the Scriptures and find a host of marvelous treasures. And veteran students of the Bible can be sure that, no matter how much we dig, it will never be hunted out.

Submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky

Welcoming the Hard Truth

In *Business @ the Speed of Thought*, Bill Gates, former CEO of Microsoft, writes: A good e-mail system ensures that bad news can travel fast, but your people have to be willing to send you the news. You have to be constantly receptive to bad news, and then you have to act on it. Sometimes I think my most important job as CEO is to listen for bad news. If you don't act on it, your people will eventually stop bringing bad news to your attention. And that's the beginning of the end. The willingness to hear hard truth is vital not only for heads of big corporations but also for anyone who loves the truth. Sometimes the truth sounds like bad news, but it is just what we need. **Bill Gates, *Business @ the Speed of Thought* (Warner, 1999); as quoted in *Time* (3-22-99)**

Sign of a Christian

As a result of poor planning, Dennis, from Katy, Texas, needed some same-day dry cleaning before he left on a trip. He remembered one store with a huge sign, "One-Hour Dry Cleaners," on the other side of town, so he drove out of his way to drop off a suit. After filling out the tag, he told the clerk, "I need this in an hour. She said, "I can't get this back to you until Thursday." "I thought you did dry cleaning in an hour?" "No," she replied, "That's just the name of the store." Those of us who carry the name Christian, but fail to act like the one whose name we bear, create confusion and disillusionment for those who have yet to believe."By this, all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). **Ed Rowell, pastor and writer, Franklin, Tenn**

Acts 17:10-12

As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

¹²Many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. [NIV]