

Snapchat Discipleship

Preached FCCW on April 29, 2018 (Confirmation Sunday)

John 15:1-8

Have you ever noticed that whenever you are about to part company with someone you really care about, and it's going to be a long while before you see them again, there just doesn't seem to be enough time to say everything you want to tell them? It must have been like that for Jesus and his disciples on the night before he was crucified.

In John's gospel Jesus has a real long and deep conversation with his disciples that night. In the course of that conversation, Jesus uses one word over and over. That word is "abide." He said to them, "Abide in me as I abide in you."

What does that mean?

Well, the word "abide" is related to the word abode. An abode is a home; a place to live. So, Jesus was saying that he wants to make his home with us. But that only happens when we make our home in him. If you look up "abide" in the dictionary the definition you will find is "to remain or to stay." Jesus wanted the disciples to know that even though he couldn't stay with them much longer, he would still be with them forever, as long as they let him. It was a little like that moment in the movie E.T. when, just before he goes back to his world, E.T. touches Elliott and tells him, "I'll be right here."

So, when Jesus tells the disciples, "Abide in me as I abide in you," he's talking about a relationship that is supposed to last and last. And, what he said to them applies to us today. Because these seven confirmands are about to become more than church members; as they abide in Jesus, and he abides in them, they become his disciples. And that is meant to be a permanent arrangement.

It's like the opposite of the kind of relationship you have with someone through Snapchat. For those who never heard of Snapchat, it's a social media platform like messaging or texting. But, what makes Snapchat unique is that pictures and messages are only available for a short time before they go away and you can't see them anymore. What is said or shown through snapchat is the opposite of permanent and abiding. It is purposely temporary.

Discipleship isn't supposed to be like that. But, the truth is... that sometimes *it is just like that*. Snapchat Discipleship is when we say we believe in Jesus and call him Lord and Savior but then the meaning behind those words just kind of disappears. Jesus always abides in us, but we aren't always abiding in him.

Which is kind of crazy because Jesus promises us all these benefits from abiding in him. He says that when we abide in him, the way a branch abides in the vine from which it grew, we will bear much fruit. In other words, life will be full of unimaginable potential. But when we don't abide in him, life is like a dried up old branch, because we miss out on the full life that is ours when we do abide in him.

I know, because when I got confirmed I was a Snapchat Disciple before there was a Snapchat. I said all the words and made all the promises that these confirmands are about to make. Then I walked out of the church and it was like everything I said just... disappeared into cyberspace.

And...I gotta say...life spent not abiding with Jesus was more like a dried up stick than a fruitful branch.

Thankfully, though Jesus kept his word about abiding with me even when I didn't keep my promise to abide with him. And he was waiting when the time finally came around that I decided to keep the vows I made at my confirmation.

John, Russell, Connor, Ben, Rebecca, Deasia, and ElLOWyn, I know *you* don't plan to be Snapchat disciples. In your Confirmation papers you wrote about this day not being an ending but a new beginning, and of looking forward to the ways God is calling you, to participate in the life and ministry of the church.

May those intentions abide and may the church be your abode.

No matter what the future may hold, abide with Jesus.

He's already abiding with you.

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