

Message Summary

Psalm 148 demonstrates that we are created as worshipping beings. The God of the universe is worthy of the praises of all creation, because he fashioned it. The more we turn ourselves outward to the right worship of God and away from the selfish interests of our hearts, the more we truly live. Truly, “whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt. 10:39). But the Psalmist does not stop with us. He presses on to invite all creation, all creatures, to share in this worship with him, so that at the throneroom every tribe and nation may be gathered in worship. Spreading the gospel means taking its truth to those who have not yet heard – evangelism. But it also means “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20). Through evangelism and discipleship, reaching and teaching, we make disciples of the nations.

Paul adopts this very perspective in his discipleship of Timothy. In his letter, Paul admonishes Timothy to do exactly as Paul himself had done: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to other faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2:2). Paul has in view four generations of disciplinarians: Paul, Timothy, those Timothy disciples, and those who will be disciplined by Timothy’s disciples. This is the ongoing process of discipleship that endures even through today, and which each generation of Christians must adopt responsibility for and carry on.

Holistic discipleship by which we take full responsibility for another’s welfare is hard work. Three images illustrate (vv. 3-7). First, the Roman soldier (vv. 3-4). Soldiers left their homes for years on end to carry heavy armor thousands of miles away. The danger they faced was distraction from their mission into worldly affairs. Paul is warning Timothy that often the most dangerous temptations we face are not obviously wicked things but morally acceptable things that nevertheless distract us from our kingdom discipleship mission. Likewise, the athlete must compete according to the rules of the strict training regimen in order to gain the crown (v. 5). Finally, the hard-working farmer is the one deserving of the crop’s first fruits (v. 6). These images show that discipleship work is hard. But they also specify that it is worth it. Despite the suffering that the hard work of discipleship inevitably brings, we must press on with gospel-empowered hard work until the day when Christ is glorified among the nations once and for all.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Explain the paradox of Mt. 10:39: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” To what end do we lose our lives? How can losing our lives ultimately yield finding them?

Why does Paul begin his command to disciple first with the command to be strengthened by God’s grace (2:1)? What does this show us about our need for the gospel we are preaching to others?

Why does Paul end this section with the admonition to “think over what I say” (v. 7)? How does meditation on the examples of the soldier, athlete, and farmer drive our discipleship?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don’t have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Are you daily being strengthened by God’s grace in the gospel, or do you think you have earned your way and no longer need God’s grace? How can you be more dependent this week?

2. Are you willing to work hard, as a soldier, athlete, or farmer, for the hard work of discipleship? Is laziness a factor keeping you from making disciples?
3. Are you living for the eternal reward of many disciples worshipping the lamb around the throne, or are you satisfied with earthly crowns of glory that rot within days?
4. Do you stop Great Commission obedience at simply reaching, or are you also active in teaching the whole counsel of God to make disciples? Are you pursuing both depth *and* breadth?
5. Does the worship of God bring you the greatest joy and delight in life, or do you curve in on yourself in self worship and lose your very soul?
6. Are you “working yourself out of a job” in your ministry responsibilities, or does a prideful desire to feel needed keep you from intentionally equipping and entrusting gospel work to more around you?
7. Who around you can you intentionally disciple this week by teaching more of the whole counsel of God?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for the gospel, which rescues us from our binding self-worship and frees us to worship and glorify Him
 - Pray that our church would be active in the work of discipleship, particularly to the next generation. Pray that the Lord would grant us hard work and dependent discipline to not stop until our congregation knows the full counsel of God.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that CFC would carry forward the work of ministry through the whole fulfillment of the Great Commission – reaching and teaching.
 - Pray that we would be willing to suffer, through hard work and/or active persecution, for the advancement of the gospel in our lifetime. Pray that the gospel would not stop with us, but carry on to another generation who will be able to teach others also.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the pastors in Sighet, Romania, trained on the recent Training Leaders International trip. Pray that the Lord would use their hard work of studying the Scriptures to yield great harvests, and that these men would train more men who will be able to teach others also.
 - Pray that the Lord would raise up missionaries from our faith family who will teach others the full counsel of God (Acts 20:27), especially in places where evangelism has outpaced discipleship and pastoral training.