

**In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen**

Sermon on Being Disciples of the Lord
Lessons: Psalm 15:1-5
Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 25:31-46
True Christian Religion 791; John 8:31-32; John 13:34-35

Rev. J. Hugh Odhner
Bryn Athyn, PA
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“After this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the universal spiritual world to preach the Gospel that Lord God Jesus Christ reigns.” (TCR 791)

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

It is written in the True Christian Religion that the Lord called together His twelve disciples and sent them out to preach the Gospel that Lord God Jesus Christ reigns. This is said to have taken place on June 19th 1770. All in the New Church now celebrate this day. Some call it New Church Day while others call it the Nineteenth of June.

What is said in the True Christian Religion is more than just a historical note, for what is said is a representation of Spiritual and Celestial truths. These truths can to some degree be seen when we consider what is said elsewhere in the Word about the twelve disciples, about what is said in Daniel 7:13,14; Revelation 11:15 and 19:9; and Matthew 24:31, as well as what is said about the Names of the Lord , His reigning, and the Gospel. In a sermon written by Bishop Odhner over a third of a century ago he wrote of this representation as follows:

“When the Lord had finished the work of His Second Coming He made in the Spiritual World a Divine Representation of the fruits of that work. He made a Representation of the Good and True of His Divine Human now eternally proceeding from Him to draw angels and men to Himself, and to bring them into an eternal conjunction with Himself...”

“The Divine Representation of these things was the sending forth of the twelve disciples into the universal Spiritual World on the Nineteenth of June, 1770, to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ doth reign, whose Kingdom shall be into ages of ages.... Those disciples going forth from the Lord into the universal Spiritual World represent the goods and trues of the Divine Human of the Lord which now proceed to make Heaven and the Church, to make the Kingdom of the Divine Human....In that Kingdom the Divine Good united to the Divine True, and the Divine True united to the Divine Good, the Divine united to the Human, and the Human united to the Divine, is all in all things. This is signified by the full Name of the Lord here given, the Lord God Jesus Christ.” (from *A Sermon on True Christian Religion 791*, by the Rt. Rev. Philip N. Odhner June 14, 1970)

It was said that these truths can be seen in some degree because a study of these things in the Word is an only an introduction to all the Spiritual and Celestial truths that are contained. To come into a deeper and greater understanding comes not just from study and reflection, but primarily from the application of those truths that are seen to our present lives. Greater enlightenment is given only when we put into use what the Lord teaches us in His Word.

There is a great similarity between what the Lord said to His disciples in True Christian Religion 791 and what He said to them when they were still in this world. In Matt 28: 18,19 we are told that Jesus came and spoke to them, saying,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

In Matthew the Lord tells the disciples that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. In True Christian Religion 791, He instructs the disciples to declare that he reigns in His Kingdom. In Matthew the disciples are to go out and make disciples of all nations. In True Christian Religion 791, the Lord sends them out into the whole spiritual world. In Matthew the disciples are told to baptize and teach. In True

Christian Religion 791, they are told to preach. The parallels between what the Lord instructed the disciples to do at the time of His first Advent and at His Second Advent are striking.

But again, this is not mere history. When it is said that the Lord called together His disciples who followed Him in the world, this applies to each of us today. If we are following the Lord by living according to His Word, then we are also His disciples. And if we are not living according to His Word, the Lord calls out to us to do so. Listen to these words of the Lord:

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

If we abide in – if we live according to – the Lord’s Word, we are His disciples indeed. And when we do that, when we live in His Word, He is able to teach us more truths from His Word.

As disciples of the Lord, we also have a part to play in the preaching, teaching, and evangelizing of the world around us. For some this use is self-evident, as in the case of a preacher. But for all of us, it is a present in the lives we live and in the uses we perform. In John 15:8 it is said, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

Conjugal Love 9, in describing what is meant by glorifying God says that,

“It means to bring forth the fruits of love, that is, to perform the work of one's occupation faithfully, honestly, and diligently. For this is the effect of love of God and love of the neighbor, and it is what binds society together and makes its good. It is by this that God is glorified, and afterwards by worship at prescribed times.” (CL 9)

When each of us does our work or use faithfully, honestly, and diligently, out of the loves of God and of the neighbor, we are glorifying God and being disciples of the Lord. By the work that we do, by the fruit that we produce, we are known as to our quality and our love, and by the fruit or works that we do the Lord is glorified. This is clear also from what is said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

The Lord tells us:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Think about that – “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” When others can see that we have love for one another, then they can see that we are followers or disciples of the Lord.

But, on the other hand, when others observe us backbiting, gossiping, not doing the work of our occupations honestly and faithfully, lack of kindness and external charity – well – there is little chance that we will be seen as disciples or followers of the Lord. And if we are not seen as followers of the Lord, then are we not seen as followers of worldly and self-centered loves?

And consider, as we hope and try to grow the Church and our Church Society, what can be more disheartening to a newcomer or new member than to be exposed to anger and gossip about others in the Church. Few things could be more delightful for the hells than to see us continue to bicker and gossip.

As our thoughts turn toward the celebration of the Nineteenth of June, it is almost inevitable that we will also think about the growth of the Church. This is useful especially if we see that the Lord is calling us also to be His disciples and to go out and make other disciples, , teaching them to observe all things that the Lord has commanded us. And it is then a good time to reflect upon the state of the Church, both of the Church within us and the Church organization. As to the Church within us, are we acting as disciples of the Lord? Would anyone recognize that we are? And as to the Church organization, what do we need to do that it may come to truly be that Holy City descending from God out of Heaven? AMEN

And now, to the One Only God, Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen