

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: But Wait, There's More

Scott Dudley

Disclaimer: *This transcript was computer generated and may contain errors.*

Scripture:

2 Timothy 4:1-5

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ²Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Jan 9, 2022

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Transcript:

Well, I want to say hello to those of you in the room. Nice that we can spread out with this Omicron surge and have some space and all that. And I want to say hello to those of you that are joining us online. Thank you for joining us. It's great to have all of you here. Happy new year to everyone.

When I was a kid, there were these TV commercials that try to sell you something. And then the announcer would come on and say, "But wait, there's more. If you act now, you'll get a free pair of Ginsu knives." Yay. Ginsu knives, whatever those are, right? Some of you may remember those. That phrase, "But wait, there's more," I think maybe what Jesus is saying to the American church, because there's so much more to being a Christian than most Americans are experiencing, and the reason is there is a crisis in the American church right now. And also though, with every crisis, every crisis brings with it also an opportunity. And so I want talk about that a little bit this morning, the crisis in the American church, our place in it. So this sermon today is going to be a little different than I normally do, a little bit more of a family chat about this. And I just want to say at the top that a lot of what I'm going to talk about as a church, we do better than average on a lot of what I'm talking about. We're a good church, but we still have a lot of room to grow. There's always room to grow. So there'll be words of challenge and there'll be words of encouragement for all of us in this sermon, including me.

There is a crisis in the American church, and most pastors know it. Let's look at some numbers. And this is from a reputable research firm called Barna. 38% of pastors overall, and 51% of mainline pastors, Presbyterian, Methodists, et cetera, are considering leaving, not just their church, but ministry altogether for a different profession. They don't want to be pastors anymore. Now I want to just say, I am not one of these 51%. So this isn't some little weird message about me. I am one of the 49% who wants to stay. Alexis is happy about that. So thank you, Alexis. I wasn't fishing though. That was nice.

And I know that right now, a lot of people are quitting their jobs. The teachers and healthcare workers and all of that, but those numbers are pretty darn high. And some of the reasons are the vitriolic, harsh, demeaning comments from congregants. I'm not talking about constructive criticism. We need that to grow. I'm talking about character attack stuff,

and churches are just as divided and angry as our country is over everything that everyone else is mad about. And yes, some of that bad behavior is because we're exhausted from this stupid pandemic that won't seem to go away and keeps coming back. Yes, that's part of the bad behavior, but Jesus gives us a way to not be so stressed out, even in a pandemic that we behave very badly.

There are other troubling numbers. The number of Christians in America is declining so rapidly that what used to be called the decline is now being described as a free fall. Numbers of Christians are in free fall. 4,000 new churches open every year, but 7,000 churches close every year. Consumer Christianity is in every church. Survey after survey found the vast majority of people say that they're in their church because it gives them music they like and programs they like and sermons that they agree with. And if they didn't get that, they'd go to a different church. Now there's nothing wrong with music and programs and sermons that we like. There's nothing wrong with that. But we also need to be asking other questions of a church. Like, am I being made uncomfortable here sometimes? Because I hear what I don't want to hear, but maybe what I need to hear? Am I connected and committed to a group of people in community? And I'm willing to go through hard times with them in order for us to grow. Am I becoming more like Jesus here? Nobody's asking those questions. It's all about, do I like this? Do I like that? Do I like the other thing? And finally, there's a study called Move of a thousand churches that showed that a lot of the programs that we have in churches actually, aren't helping people grow spiritually. They're just making us busier.

Now for 50 years, most churches, including this one and pastors like me, we've pursued an attractional model. If we build it, they will come. If we give you the program and the sermons and the everything else that you like, then you're going to come. But after 50 years of church growth seminars and conferences and books about how to grow our church, we see the number of Christians in free fall, churches fighting over everything, Christians who change churches every couple of years when they don't get exactly what they want. And nobody wants to be their pastor anymore. How's that working out for us? But wait, there's more. More joy, more hope, more meaning, more purpose that Jesus gives us. Every crisis brings an opportunity. There are good things ahead. Because most pastors and theologians are crystal clear on what the problem is. A catastrophic failure of discipleship across the board. Discipleship means the process of learning from Jesus how to be like Jesus. Disciples, that's what a disciple is. The last instructions Jesus gave before he

ascended into heaven, famous verse is, go and make church attenders of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's known as the great suggestion, right? No. You watching online, you know that that's not the verse, right? Go make disciples of all nations. And that's a very different thing than church attenders. Go make disciples, a different thing than church attenders.

Now church attending is good and church attenders are good people, but wait, there's more. Jesus offers so much more for us. And we miss out on that more if we're just church attenders and not disciples. One of my favorite verses in the Bible says those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that might otherwise be theirs. And an idol is not, it's not necessarily a bad thing. Often, usually in fact, idols are good things that we make ultimate things. School, job, kids, money, anything we think, unless I have this thing, I can't be happy, that's an idol. And if our hands are grasped so tightly around our idols, they are not open for the blessings that God wants to give us. Disciples open their hands.

And there's two parts to being a disciple, believing, which leads to doing. Believing, not just in terms of intellectual ascent to some ideas, but an experience of Jesus that makes me behave differently, right? Believing leads to right doing. And the problem is a lot of people in churches these days, they don't even know the basics of the Christian faith, right? The American theology, the American religion is sort of faith in the great whatever. There's a God up there somewhere and he wants me to be happy and his job is to help me be happy. That's kind of the American theology. We don't really know what Christians really believe. But even people who do know the basics of the faith don't know the difference it makes in how we live. So for instance, how does the doctrine of the Trinity that God is three in one, how does the doctrine of the Trinity change how I spend my money, or how I use my time or how I treat other people? How does the doctrine of the Trinity affect how I behave? And some of you right now might be going, "I have no idea." Well, we're going to fix that because starting next week, we're going to do a sermon series called, Is It Good or Is It God? Because there's a lot of stuff that floats around as conventional wisdom in our churches. And it sounds good, but it's not exactly what God says. So for a few weeks, we will look at the basic core beliefs of being a Christian and how that changes how we live, because that's the second part of being a disciple, right? It's the doing part. Believing, and then by the power of the Holy Spirit, beginning to do different things that disciples do. And disciples have six characteristics. You could add some more, but just for today, six characteristics, what does it mean to be a disciple? First, disciples are marked by Jesus' love.

You can see Jesus' love all over their life. And love is not a feeling. Love is a commitment to seek the best of the other. And it's Jesus brand of love, not what our culture calls love, but what Jesus calls love.

Second, disciples obey Jesus as Lord through prayer and scripture. Knowing that Jesus wants to give us more than we can ask, knowing that he wants us to thrive and his commands are the best way to get there, I will do what he says to do, whether I like it or not, whether I agree with it or not. If he to do it, I'm going to do it, even if I don't understand it. I'm going to do what he says to do about sex, money and power. How I treat others at school or work, how I heal the pain in the world. I will not bend scripture to fit what I want. I will bend my will to fit what scripture says. That's a disciple. Has Jesus changed how you do school or how you do career? Has Jesus changed how you vote or how you treat other people or how you use your time?

The apostle Paul tells a young pastor named Timothy preach the word that is scripture, be prepared in season and out of season, correct? We don't like that. Rebuke, we really don't like that. And encourage, that one's good. The time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine, instead to suit their own desires they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. Do you have itching ears? I so sometimes have itching ears. We all do. But when we obey Jesus as Lord, even when we don't always understand it, that is when the more than abundance that Jesus wants to give us starts to come into play.

Third, disciples live sacrificially. And many of you do this. You give generously of your time, your talent, your money, but I'm not sure that most Americans are seeing this in Christians these days. I think mostly what Americans see of Christians is they're just as mad about everything as everyone else, just another special interest group, demanding their rights in the public square. The Bible says this. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility, value above yourself, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God a thing to be used to his advantage. Rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. That is so counter, right? Look not to your own interest, but look to the interests of others. What? Are you kidding me? That's not how we operate.

And interestingly enough, this is probably the first Christian hymn ever written, a hymn that nobody sings, right? Jake, have you ever had a request for this hymn? No, let's do the one about laying down our rights for everyone else. I love that hymn. Nobody, right? Nobody wants to do this. Do we see this happening in American churches? Do we see people in American churches falling all over each other saying, "No, no, no, really. I want you to have the programs that you need and the sermon that you need and the music that you need. I want to make sure your needs are met in this church." Is that what we're seeing? But let me ask this. If you are looking out for everyone else's interest and they're looking out for your interests, are your interests being looked out for? If everyone's looking out for everyone's needs, then everyone's needs are going to be met, right? Except this time, without all the bickering and the arguing and the fussing and all of that. But what if I do that, what if I look out for other people's interests and then nobody looks out for mine? That is a great question. Did you see the clause in that verse where it said look to the interests of others if they look to yours? I didn't see it.

But wait, there's more, because the verse goes on. And the very next words are really important. Be like Jesus, who died on a cross. Therefore, therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name above every other name. If you kneel to serve others, God will lift you up. Even if others don't, although they probably will, because that kind of thing is contagious. And that's the kind of church most people would want to go to. Right? A group of people where everyone is looking out for everyone else's needs and interests. I mean, sign me up, who doesn't want to be a part of that community? Fourth, disciples are healers of injustice. And this is just everywhere in the Bible, all throughout, hundreds of verses about how we are called to heal injustice and pain in the world.

Fifth, disciples live connected to a multi-generational, multicultural community. The Bible is crystal clear on our need for community and the community it describes, the early church in the New Testament was young and old, rich and poor, Jews, Gentiles, Romans, Africans, everyone. This is God's vision for this radically counter cultural community that puts together and heals what the world divides. The problem is it's really hard to do because different people want different things. So it's just easier to have churches where everyone's the same. Churches for old people, churches for young people, churches for this race, churches for that race. It's just easier. We all like to be with people just like us. So it's just easier to have churches that are homogenous.

There's just one problem with it. It's not in the Bible, right? You don't see the apostle Paul in any of his letters saying, oh man, you Jews and Gentiles, you just can't get along. So over here, we're going to have a church for Jewish converts. And over here is going to be the church for Gentiles. And over here is going to be the young people church. And he doesn't say that to any of the churches that are fighting in any of his letters in the New Testament. He never says that. What he says instead is y'all need to work this out. Y'all need to work this out. You need to figure this out. Otherwise, all you're doing is repeating the divisions that are in the culture, which means you have no good news to offer the culture, which may be why nobody wants to come to our churches anymore, because we're being hated so badly, including me sometimes, including me.

And then sixth, disciples are equipped and eager to share the good news of Jesus. And I don't think we've done a great job here of equipping you to do this very well and we need to do better, and we're working on that. Because Jesus changed my life and he changed yours and that's good news and people need to know about it. Those are six things that a disciple is about. There could be more, but just those six for now.

And they are life-changing things. They are life-changing things. There are benefits, it's harder, but there are benefits to being a disciple, two in particular. First, we get the adventure of making a difference in the world with Jesus. And I have told you over the years, hundreds of stories of people in this church who stepped out to heal some kind of pain in the world and it became the greatest blessing in their life and filled their life with meaning, purpose, joy, adventure.

And then second benefit of being a disciple, not just a church attender, is real peace and real joy. Let me give you an example. One key moment in my discipleship journey, and it is a lifelong journey, was when I was a college pastor and we put a conference on for the Stanford campus. And we flew in leading theologians and big names, famous people, philosophers, theologians from all of over the world and expected about a thousand people on the Stanford campus, most of whom or many of whom were not going to be Christian because we especially invited them. So we were going to kick this conference off on Friday night, and the keynote speaker was Dallas Willard, a philosophy professor. Well, he called me on Thursday and said, "Scott, my uncle died. And he was like a father to me. He was my father figure. We were really close. So I need to be at his funeral in Michigan on Saturday because I'm speaking."

And I said, "Oh, Dallas, don't worry about it. We'll figure this out. You go to Michigan, you figure it out." And he said, "No, no, no. I still want to do the keynote address. It's just I'll have to leave right after to catch the last flight out so I can get to Michigan for my uncle's funeral where I'm going to speak."

I said, "We can make that happen." So he came and the next night I introduced him and I said, "We don't have time for question and answers after this. Dallas has to get right to the airport to get to his uncle's funeral," and let the whole audience know that. Well, he gave this brilliant talk, really smart talk. At the end of which he says, "Okay, I'll take some questions." And I'm standing there going, "No, you will not," because I know how long it takes to get to the airport. And I know what time it is. And I know we're out of time. So he takes a few questions and I'm like, I'm starting to freak out. He takes a few questions. So then I stood up and said to the thousand people there, "Let's thank Dallas. Shall we?" Right? That is a pastor trick for getting someone off stage. Okay, just, hey, wasn't that great. And Dallas, he just goes, "Scott, I think I'm supposed to take a few more questions." And so he did, one of which was just this God moment. I'll never forget. A really angry, hostile woman, hated everything about Christianity, was rude to Dallas and asked him really aggressive, rude questions. And then Dallas just stepped off the stage and came toward her. He said, "You know, the problem with Christians is that sometimes they hurt people. So here's my suggestion. Read the New Testament and for one year, try to do everything in it that it says to do. And if at the end of the year, your life is better, then ask Jesus into your life because I think your life is going to be better. And ask Jesus into your life because it's really hard to do what the Bible says to do, but Jesus gives us supernatural strength to do it."

And there was something in the compassion in his voice and combined with the rock solid confidence and certainty that he didn't have to defend Jesus at all. Jesus was so real, all he had to do is point this woman to him and she would find him. And you could tell that woman felt loved. Well, he took one or two more questions. And then I said, "Dallas, we're leaving. And we're probably not going to make it because it's too late." So got in my car, I'm driving as fast as I could, got on the freeway, boom, traffic jam, right? Nothing is moving. And I was stressing out. I was kind of drumming my fingers nervously. This is a really important thing he's got to get to and now he's not going to make the plane and all that stuff. And he looks over at me and he goes, "Scott, it's okay." He's missing his flight and he's calming me down. And he said, "These things always work out. God will make sure I get on

that plane if it's important. If I don't get on the plane, that must mean God has something else for me to do tonight in San Jose International Airport. And it will be an adventure asking God to show me what that thing is."

And when he said that, I just thought, wow, this is real for you. Isn't it? This isn't some intellectual or cultural thing for you. Jesus is real, you're the real deal. You are a disciple of Jesus and you're doing what he says to do minute by minute. That's why you took the questions because he told you to take the questions and you had to do that for that angry woman. And I saw three Cs that night. Calm, compassion, even for the angry woman and confidence that Jesus is Lord.

Now you may go, well, that's kind of a little thing, getting a flight. Maybe it was a medium thing. I don't know. But here's the thing, how we do little things is how we do everything. How we do little things is how we do everything. And it was an important thing he had to get to. And I have seen people melt down over far less. I have melted down over far less. Dallas was more than a church goer. Dallas was a disciple who disciplined me.

And back to the bad behavior I was talking about in the pandemic. I know if Dallas were alive today, he would not be so stressed out that he treats people badly, even in a pandemic because Dallas was a disciple of Jesus and disciples have peace and calm and joy and hope, even in a pandemic. And by the way, he made the plane because the plane was also late. So it all worked out.

For me, that was kind of a turning point. I just remember thinking, that, I want that. I want to be like that. It's so much better than fussing and fighting and fuming and fee-fi-fo-fumming all over the place. I want that. I want all of us to have that. I want all of us to have that kind of hope and confidence and joy that Dallas had. So we're going to push into that in the next couple weeks.

BelPres, I love you. You know that, right? I love you. And maybe just making church attenders is good enough for some churches. I don't know, maybe, but BelPres, you are not just any church. You are BelPres. Let me remind you of who you are in Christ. You are the church that was planted here 66 years ago to reach the people on the East Side, whoever they might be. You started out by meeting in a funeral home. Okay? That is not a church growth strategy, meeting in a funeral home. The choir rehearsed in the coffin room. The

choir conductor would come in for practice and go, "Boy, it's really dead around here." You started a coffee shop for drug addicts. You journeyed with a village in Guatemala to help it be economically self-sustaining. You launched Jubilee reach that is breaking cycles of poverty in Jesus' name in ways that make the school district love us. You built a center to give job skills to street kids in Rwanda. You bought homes to create the only homes for homeless teens in Bellevue, and even as I speak, we are interceding in a genocide in Congo.

Many of you have tasted and you have seen that the Lord is good. And you know the adventure of healing the world with Jesus. And we're a good church, but we are not a perfect church. We have our problems. Nobody knows that better than me. We have room to grow, which is why I am challenging us because I believe you can handle it. You are not just any church. You are BelPres, and at BelPres we do hard things because we believe in a very big God. And many of you are on the road to being a disciple. Others of you are so ready for the more that Jesus gives when we get past just attending church. And we're going to talk about that and how we get there and the beliefs that lead us to that for the next couple weeks. But for this week, for this week, just pray Jesus, help me want to be your disciple or at least help me want to want to be your disciple. Because see nothing is more beautiful, nothing is more world-changing than a church that is fully yielded to Jesus Christ, a church filled with all-in disciples of Jesus, which is why the devil doesn't want it to happen. So he is going to throw everything at us to keep it from happening, but we believe in a big God.

And yes, being a disciple is harder. It's way harder than just going to church. But wait, there's more, so much more when we give ourselves fully to Jesus. So Jesus, in the words of the hymn, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart, I want to be an all-in disciple of you. So help us get there, Jesus. Help us be people who follow you fully, more than going to church, but our whole lives. We ask this in your name, Lord. Amen.

Discussion Questions: 2 Timothy 4:1-5 & Matthew 28:18-20

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Introductions:

- Share a little bit about yourself with the group: Are you new to All In or have you been here for awhile? Where do you live, work, play or learn? Any updates since the group last gathered or if it is your first time in this group, something that you want the group to know about your life?

Scripture Reflection Questions – Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage and sermon?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions - *Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:*

- Scott shared the story of Dallas Willard's response to the woman in the crowd and his calm demeanor during the ride to the airport afterwards. For a disciple, "how we do little things is how we do everything." What is a little thing you might ask Jesus to help you do differently this week?
- Being a disciple means both *believing* and *doing* as we follow Jesus. Where is Jesus saying "follow me" in your life right now?

Closing Question and Application:

- Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing Group Prayer:

- Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.
-
-