

Sermon Title: **“SCD 2: See, Create, and DISCIPLE”**

Bible: **John 6:56-69**

When: on the 14th Sunday after Pentecost, August 25, 2024

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube Live Streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **1. Another Teaching from the SCD (School of Congregational Development)**

Today’s message is the second part of what I learned from the School of Congregational Development in Chicago. You can watch my first message through our church YouTube or you can find the message script on our church website.

God is good! All the time! All the time! God is good! Let us do it one more time! God is good! All the time! All the time! God is Good! How about this one? God is nice!? All the time? How do you tell the differences between good and nice? What is good? And what is nice? How do you distinguish between them? I will give you some examples of how I tell the difference between good and nice. Have you heard that “A nice pastor is not a good pastor”? A nice pastor might say yes all the time to everyone! But a good pastor can say no even to the church leaders, and even to those in need! A nice pastor might not say anything about social justice, because it can be uncomfortable and controversial. A good pastor can speak up for social justice, even if the message is not welcomed at first or is never welcomed. A nice

pastor only serves you but does not challenge you. But a good pastor might challenge you and sometimes, it might feel offensive to you. Can you see the differences between good and nice? Which pastor do you prefer, a nice pastor or a good pastor? Am I a nice pastor or am I a good pastor? Just for your information, and for your understanding, my goal is to be a good pastor, not a nice pastor. Unfortunately or fortunately, one of my philosophies as your pastor is: “A nice pastor is not a good pastor.”

## **2. DISCIPLE**

According to today’s scripture reading from the Gospel of John, there was a moment to encounter a good Jesus, not a nice Jesus. Many of the disciples left Jesus, because the teaching of Jesus was difficult. They could not accept it. They complained about the teaching of Jesus. They felt offended and they left! This was not the moment of Jesus’ crucifixion and cross, and death, when most of the disciples, including most of the twelve disciples, ran away. No one likes suffering and death; we are afraid of suffering and death. So, it is understandable for the disciples to flee from Jesus’ cross and hide themselves. But here in today’s example, many disciples turned back and no longer followed Jesus, because the teaching of Jesus was so hard. What was this teaching of Jesus? “Eat my flesh and drink my blood.” What does this mean to us? Why did they leave Jesus after this teaching?

## **3. Samples of Discipleship**

How many times do you eat a day? How many times do you drink a day for the health of your body? Food and drink is needed not only for our survival, but also for our growth. How

about your spiritual food? We can come to church to be welcomed and healed. And how about the growth of your faith? Do you have any spiritual practices for feeding your body, mind, and spirit, for the growth of your faith, in order to be better disciples? Let me change my question. Do you want to follow Jesus? Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? And what spiritual practices do you have to become a disciple and a better disciple of Jesus Christ?

I would like to share a sample of the Discipleship System from [SeeAllThePeople.org](http://SeeAllThePeople.org), which is a part of the Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Across the top, we can see the basic steps of growth for a disciple, from searching, exploring, beginning, growing, and on to maturing. And we can see the basic characteristics of a disciple: Worship, Community, Spiritual Practices, Generosity & Service, and Christ-Like. Coming to worship is a spiritual practice or a characteristic for every step of our faith journey as disciples. At the first step of searching, we might miss church or a worship, and then at the next step, we might be invited by a friend to attend our church worship service and come to church sporadically. At the step of beginning, we might decide to come to worship regularly when we are able. At the step of growing, we might begin to recognize daily moments of worship. And finally, at the step of maturing, we might begin to honor and worship everyday in work and play, and we might want to invite our friends to worship. Do you agree with each step and its growth? Even if the growth stages do not come one after another, sometimes they come together simultaneously, it makes sense, right? Then, what step are you in? And what is

your next step?

Let us look at another characteristic, that of generosity & service. Does talking about money offend you? A nice pastor might not talk about money. But a good pastor talks about generosity, not only God's generosity, but also his or her and our generosity. And I am a pastor who talks about money and offering, because I believe that no one can serve two masters; we cannot serve both God and money, and because giving tithes and offerings is one of my spiritual practices. When I share the five steps of generosity, please think of where you are. At the step of searching, we might wonder if there is more to life than making money and selfish gain. At the step of exploring, we might begin to give occasionally in worship and try a service project at church. At the step of beginning, we might begin to give regularly of money, time, and talents and understand Christ's invitation to serve others and discover how God has gifted you to do this. At the step of growing, we might try tithing our resources, time, and talent to God through the ministries of the church and explore ways to use our gifts, talents, and passions. At the step of maturing, we might tithe and occasionally give beyond when led by God and begin to restructure life and resources to join Jesus in mission to others. If these steps make sense to you, what step are you in? What is your next step, and do you want to go to the next step? In terms of generosity & service, I am in the step of growing, because I try to tithe. Yes, I am trying. But I am not sure if God leads me occasionally to give beyond, as I am not quite ready yet to say yes.

**4. Please Do Not Forget Grace All The Time!**

You might find tons of intentional discipleship system samples if you google them, but one of the reasons why I share this kind of discipleship system sample is that it mentions grace at the bottom of the chart. There is a grace, a prevenient grace, a welcoming and inviting grace, because God loves us, even before we know God. And at the beginning of our faith journey, there is God's grace who calls us and accepts us, a justifying grace. And on our faith journey to perfection, there is God's grace, a sanctifying grace, who leads and guides us. I think that along with each step, we just give a high five to God's grace. Is God calling you and waiting for you? With prevenient grace, God is calling you like, "Come and let us high five." Then, we can come to the Lord and give a high five. It is the moment of the justifying grace, and it is the beginning of making a high five with our Lord. Then, God wants to make more high fives, and probably leads us to make higher high fives at the next level. We might need to jump up to give higher high fives. It is on the way to perfection with sanctifying grace. This is how we, Methodists, think of the discipleship in the relationship with grace.

In my experience and witness, the biggest challenge and temptation in becoming better disciples is to forget this grace and to be judgmental. We thought that we had earned, achieved, and deserved to be better disciples. That can lead us to be judgmental towards others without realizing it, without realizing that each person is at each one's own step on each one's own faith journey. We often forget God's grace. What is grace? Grace is a gift, the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God. We just accept God's grace as a gift, and become better disciples. It sounds easy to receive a gift, but it is not easy to receive God's

gift. That's because grace does not only heal our brokenness, but also challenges us to grow, and transforms ourselves and the world. Do we still want to follow Jesus? Do we still want to be good and better disciples? Many disciples turned away from Jesus, and no longer followed Jesus. Jesus might say to us, "Do you also want to go away?"

If you are interested in the intentional discipleship system sample that I shared, you can take a copy of it with a blank one. You can create your own discipleship system. And if you need a PT, a personal trainer for your faith journey, please contact me. I am not trained as a personal trainer for the discipleship system, but I can be an authentic personal trainer, who is good and perhaps nice, too, for your faith journey to become better disciples.

### **Closing Prayer**

Loving and living God, thank you so much for your love and grace even before we know you. Your love and grace was there, and you led us to here and now. And we want to follow you, we want to give you a high five, and higher high fives. Please lead us and guide us to become good and better disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

# DISCIPLESHIP SYSTEM SAMPLE (adapted from the work of Phil Maynard)

	Searching	Exploring	Beginning	Growing	Maturing
Worship	Searching for something more.	Invited by a friend to attend worship. Attend sporadically.	Begin to worship regularly; becoming more aware of God in each day.	Attend regularly and begin to recognize daily moments of worship.	Begin to honor and worship everyday in work and play; inviting others to worship.
Community	Searching for genuine community.	Begin to feel strangely drawn to these followers of Jesus and feel warm acceptance by them.	Move from receiving gracious hospitality to offering it to others in every day life.	Begin to look for ways to love, accept, and relate to others in the same way that the church and God lovingly welcomed you.	Seek to build relationships with others and share with them the life and community that you have found in God.
Spiritual Practices	Wonder about the Bible and if there are ways to experience God.	Feel drawn to the story of God's love and begin to explore scripture.	Begin to pray and read scripture regularly; being open to God.	Move to exploring spiritual disciplines; drawn closer to God on a daily basis.	Enjoy and practice spiritual disciplines, and begin to show others how to use them to grow in faith and be drawn closer to God.
Generosity & Service	Wonder if there is more to life than making money and selfish gain.	Begin to give occasionally in worship and try a service project at church. See other people making a difference in the lives of others and seek to be a part of that.	Begin to give regularly of money, time, and talents; understand Christ's invitation to serve others and discover how God has gifted you to do this.	Try tithing my resources, time, and talent to God through the ministries of the church; exploring ways to use one's gifts, talents, and passions.	Tithe and occasionally give beyond when led by God; begin to restructure life and resources to join Jesus in mission to others.
Christ-Like	The life and teachings of Jesus are intriguing.	Exploring the life of Jesus on my own by reading the Bible and attending my first Bible study.	Accept the call to follow Jesus and commit to the church; seek to become like Jesus and serve others.	Begin to daily apply the teachings of Jesus in everyday life.	Partner with God and invite others to explore the life and teachings of Jesus.
Prevenient Grace		Justifying Grace		Sanctifying Grace	

# DISCIPLESHIP: AS SYSTEM & STRUCTURE (adapted from the work of Phil Maynard)

	Searching	Exploring	Beginning	Growing	Maturing
Worship					
Community					
Spiritual Practices					
Generosity & Service					
Christ-Like					
	Prevenient Grace		Justifying Grace		Sanctifying Grace