

Beware of Following Jesus

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. Good morning. Take out your Bibles with me please and turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 9.
- We come to the end of chapter 9 this morning. And preface this.
- These words that Jesus is going to share with us today. Are not popular. They are quite challenging.
- Okay. So brace yourself. Or surrender yourself maybe. So with that.
- We're going to look at verses 46 through 62. So the very last section of Luke chapter 9. So if you're able please stand as I read.
- [0 : 5 6] From Luke chapter 9 beginning of verse 40. Six. Well let me start at 44. This is right after. The transfiguration where the disciples had.
- Three of the disciples had seen. The majestic glory of Jesus. As he's transfigured before them. And then the next scene. He comes down from the mountain.
- And there is a demon that none of the disciples are able or powerful enough. To cast out. And so Jesus casts out that demon. And the crowd is amazed at his majesty.
- Okay. Okay. So the disciples view his majesty on the mountain. And then he displays his majestic power. By casting out a demon that no one else could cast out.
- So in response to that. Verse 44. Jesus says to his disciples. Let these words sink into your ears. The son of man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.
- [2 : 0 5] Now remember this is in the context of showing majestic power. So in other words. This majestic power he has that no one else has. Is about to yield to betrayal.
- Okay. Let these words sink into your minds. The son of man. The powerful son of man is about to be delivered or betrayed into the hands of men. But they did not understand the same.
- And it was concealed from them. So that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about the same. An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.
- But Jesus knowing the reasoning of their hearts. Took a child and put him by his side. And said to them. Whoever receives this child in my name.
- Receives me. And whoever receives me. Receives him who sent me. For. He who is least among you all.
- [3 : 1 9] Is the one who is great. John answered. Master. We saw someone casting out demons in your name. And we tried to stop him.
- Because. He does not follow with us. But Jesus said to him. Do not stop him. For the one who is not against you.
- Is for you. When the days drew near for him to be taken up. He set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him.

Who went and entered a village of the Samaritans. To make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him. Because. His face.

Was set. Toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples. John. James and John saw it. They said. Lord. Do you want us to tell fire. To come down from heaven.

[4 : 17] And consume them. Yeah. That's a great idea. But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

And as they were going along the road. Someone said to him. I will follow you wherever you go. Excuse me. And Jesus said to him. Foxes have holes.

And birds of the air have their nests. But the son of man. Has nowhere. To lay his head. To another he said.

Follow me. But he said. Lord. Let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him. Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you.

Go and proclaim the kingdom of God. Yet another said. I will follow you Lord. But let me first say farewell to those at my home. Jesus said to him.

[5 : 14] No one who puts his hand to the plow. And looks back. Is fit. For the kingdom. Of God. So it reads. Let's pray.

Father. Grant us. Eyes to see. And hearts to receive. What Jesus is saying. Cause your name. Oh father. To be set apart.

Cause your kingdom to come. Cause your will to be done. Here. This day. Give us this day. Our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts. As we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into. Temptation. But deliver us. From the evil. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Please be seated. So these verses.

[6 : 10] As I said. Are very. Very challenging. Jesus. Kind of. Gets. Right. To the point. And. Almost. Sounds. Not. Almost. But in some. Senses. Sounds.

A bit. Harsh. Harsh. So. How. Are we. To take it. Well, I think these verses all speak about followers of Jesus.

We have disciples who he's confronting about arguing about greatness or, you know, forbidding other people to do ministry or casting fire down because they dishonor Jesus.

And then we have three would-be disciples who come to Jesus. But Jesus kind of says, yeah, but this. Yes, I'll follow you, but. All right, so we have Jesus rather challenging statement.

So I believe these verses are about following Jesus and considering what it means to follow Jesus. So I've titled it, Beware of Following Jesus.

[7 : 17] Beware. It's not as easy as you think. Don't take it casual. Count the cost. So let me ask some questions as we begin. What does it really mean to follow Jesus?

Can I just follow at my leisure? Can I pick and choose where I follow him? Can I set my own path?

Can I define my own terms? What we're asking is, do we take his words seriously?

Does he mean what he says? Does he really want exclusive, prioritized followers?

His calling is very high and very hard. He told us earlier in chapter 9. If you want to follow me, what?

[8 : 19] Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. He's very clear. Following me is not about you.

Bonhoeffer in his book, The Cost of Discipleship, said Jesus bids a man come and die.

That's discipleship. Come and die. So here at the end of Luke 9, we come upon some of Jesus' most challenging words.

And I think these words really are warnings about following him. Beware. Consider the cost.

What does it really mean? So here we have Jesus correcting his 12 closest to him and those who are would-be followers of him.

[9 : 24] Correcting. Clarifying. First, I want you to know we're at a major transition in the book of Luke. I've mentioned that before. As soon as Jesus' identity is clarified, when he asks his disciples up on the mountain, who do you say that I am?

And Peter says, you're the Messiah. Everyone else has been saying, oh, he's John the Baptist or he's Elijah or he's a prophet. Peter gets to it and just says, no, you're the Messiah.

And then they go up on the Mount of Transfiguration. And the father, the voice from the cloud, clarifies, he's my son. So he's the Messiah, the son of God.

So as soon as that is clarified, Luke, that's kind of like ends the first section of Luke. The first section of Luke is, who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Now that Jesus has been identified as the Christ Messiah and the son of God, Luke tells us in verse 51, Jesus now sets his face toward Jerusalem.

[10 : 34] This is the second part of Luke. It's not about who he is. Now it's about why he came. So in terms of timing, if we harmonize all four gospels, we know that two years of, at least two years of following Jesus has already passed.

We're now into the final year. All right. We know that. So he sets his face and it's going to take. Now, if you went straight from Galilee to Jerusalem, it would take three days if you cut through Samaria.

Now, most Jews don't do that. They go around Samaria. So it takes five days. Jesus is going to take almost a year. So when he says he sets his face toward Jerusalem, that's the goal and that's the plan.

But it's going to be a while to get there. But what Luke is clarifying for us is that now he has set his face.

Now he is determined. Now he has a fixed purpose. He always has. But now it's like he's taking it to another level.

[11 : 50] And these next 10 chapters of Luke are quite unique. What we find in from the end of Luke 9 until Luke 19:44 is almost all Luke.

He presents things that we don't find in Matthew or Mark or John. So we're getting unique material. Luke is the only one that zeroes in on this.

These events that happened during this time. Now, if you read the harmony of the Gospels, you'll see a little bit from Matthew and you'll see, you know, little reference to Mark or John.

John has some unique stuff as well. But for the most part, this is unique. And the focus of these next 10 chapters, this now the second stage of Christ from going toward Jerusalem is the focus on teaching and training his disciples.

There are 17 parables in these 10 chapters and very few miracles. So the miracles were displayed mostly in the first nine chapters.

[12 : 56] Now it's a focus on teaching and training. Now it's about the 12 and others. But primarily about the 12 as he goes to face Jerusalem.

And remember who these 12 are? They don't understand, right? They don't get it. Their Messiah isn't coming to die.

Their Messiah is coming to conquer. Yes, but not like they thought. Okay. So he's got his work cut out for him to train these guys to get them focused, to work these things into their hearts and minds.

Okay. So that's the context. Luke tells us in verse 51. He set his face. And actually verse 51 says, as the days drew near for him to be taken up.

That word taken up could be translated ascend. So in other words, as the days drew near for him to finish his mission, right? To lay down his life, to be crucified, be killed, to rise again and then ascend.

[14 : 02] That's as those days draw near within this next year. Jesus just has a few months left to live, as he knows.

They've just celebrated one Passover, which was around the time of the feeding of the 5,000, which we saw earlier in chapter 9. The next Passover is when he dies. So that's where we are.

That's why I say just under a year, because we just had that other Passover. Okay. So let's get to this section, verses 46 to 62, where Jesus seems to be rebuking and correcting his disciples.

And warning, beware. You want to follow me, do you know what you're getting into here? Okay. So consider this. And by the way, one of the questions we ask, can I set my own terms and path in following Jesus?

No. Oh, you can, but you won't be following Jesus. Okay. He sets the terms. He determines the path. And true disciples will follow that.

[15 : 13] Okay. So as he turns to focus on Jerusalem, or to go to Jerusalem, he focuses on his disciples. So this is the question I want to ask. Right? What does it really mean to follow Jesus?

How does Jesus define that? What does it mean? What does that involve? What does he expect? And so in these verses, we have two areas that Jesus corrects.

One is about attitudes. You know, who's the greatest? And hey, they can't do that. And let's cast fire down. That's all about attitude. Correcting attitude as his followers.

And then the other section, verses 57 to the end, we have these three guys come and say, I'll follow you. I'll follow you. And Jesus says, yeah, but. He's correcting.

He's clarifying. Okay. So first correction that we see in verses 46 to 56 is about attitude. Let me summarize it this way. Following Jesus.

[16 : 13] What does it really mean? Following Jesus means total self-denial. Total self-denial.

So he's already said that, right? If you want to follow me, deny yourself, take up your cross, follow. So now we're seeing Jesus kind of work out what that looks like. Now we're seeing him correct.

Okay. No, I talked about deny yourself. One of that. One of the ways is about talking about how who's the greatest. Okay. That's not a real self-denial kind of thing. Okay. So here we go.

So three issues here in verse 46. And I'm going to call it these things. I'm going to say the argument about who's the greatest is really about a misplaced ambition.

Because I think the disciples really want to be zealous for Jesus. They want to be do great things for him. But they misplaced what they want greatness to be. And then a mystique and devotion is John points out, hey, they shouldn't be doing that.

[17 : 13] They're doing that. Only we get to do that. A misplaced devotion. They're devoted. John's devoted to doing things right. But not at the exclusion of excluding everyone else from doing that.

And then finally the fire coming. You know, misplaced zeal. They're zealous for Christ's name, for his honor. He got rejected. They want to defend that. That's a good thing.

But not the fire part, which is probably not good. Okay, so let's look at that. So misplaced ambition. They're arguing about who is greater. So you think about that.

And it's interesting that that follows in this, in Luke, after a verse that said they don't understand what Jesus is talking about. Right? They don't understand that he's going to go die.

They don't understand that he's going to be betrayed. They just don't get it. It's not in their realm. That's not in their wheelhouse. They don't have a category for that. So they're arguing about who's greater.

[18:15] They're comparing themselves to each other. Which one's greater? You can imagine James, John, and Peter saying, well, we're greater than anyone else. Because we got to go up on the mountain.

And you guys did. We get to go into the secret prayer meeting, Jesus. And you guys did. I don't know. We're not told how they argued, but that they did. They're comparing each other.

They're competitive. They're ambitious. Is that okay? It's natural.

We do that all the time. We compare ourselves. We simply do that. And I think it's fascinating how Jesus handles it. He doesn't write out, just say, you know, you nuzzle heads.

He comes at it rather softly, doesn't he? He's going to give them a lesson. He's not going to berate them because they've done something that they've probably done all their lives.

[19:16] And by the way, they're going to do it again when the next Passover comes. When they're sitting at the Last Supper, they don't know it's the Last Supper, but they're sitting at the, and they're still arguing about who's greatest.

Okay, so they're not going to get over this until the death and resurrection and they start putting things together. So how does Jesus redirect their comparison?

Well, he puts a child in front of them. Let's talk about who's greatest. So he takes a little child, and it must be little enough because he picks up the child, the little child, and then he puts him beside him.

He holds this child, and he says, what does he say? Verse, where are we? Verse 48. Thank you. Whoever receives this child in my name receives me.

Whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great. What's he getting at? His conclusion is, he who is least among you all is the one who is great.

[20:18] That's his conclusion. His illustration is the child. So how does receiving a child have anything to do with who's the least? So who's the least in the illustration?

Is the child the least or the one receiving the child the least? Well, yeah, you've got to think about that, huh? I think it's the child. So the correct answer is child. No. I think he's talking about the child because he sets a child up.

Now, what is a child compared to everything else? Now, don't think from our cultural standpoint. Put yourself in the sandals of a first century Jew.

Oh, a child is innocent and adorable. That's us, okay? First century. Children are the least. They're simply, they're just, they don't, they can't work.

They can't contribute. They're totally dependent. I'm overplaying it, but not that they didn't adore their children. I'm not saying that. But by comparison.

[21 : 24] How great is a child compared to others? Being crude. Well, they're small. They're weak. They're dependent. Not a lot to contribute.

But they wouldn't expect the child to. Right? It's not a criticism. It's simply an observation. So Jesus takes a young child. Whoever receives this child in my name receives me.

What does it mean to receive the child? So we're going to come to a verse later where they go into a Samaritan village.

And the Samaritan village does not receive Jesus. What are they doing? They're rejecting him. They're not honoring him. They're not accepting him.

They're not receiving him. They're dishonoring him. So whoever receives this child, whoever honors this child, whoever accepts and welcomes this child in my name is receiving me.

[22 : 30] In other words, if you're receiving the child in my name, you're receiving me. And not just me, but the one who sent me. Wow. So if I receive a child, a little child, who's not great by his own measure, but because he's connected to Jesus, if I receive him, I'm receiving Jesus.

Does that make any sense? So in other words, and then he says, for the least among you is the one who is great.

He talked about greatness earlier. Remember when he talked about John the Baptist? He said, no one born of women is greater than John the Baptist.

Right? Who's John the Baptist? Is anybody more committed than John the Baptist? Nope. Anybody more faithful than John the Baptist? Nope. Anybody more sacrificial than John the Baptist?

No. Well, Jesus. But okay. But John the Baptist. Who's comparable to John the Baptist? Who's greater than John the Baptist? In terms of effort, faithfulness, and duty, and the kind of things we usually measure by.

[23 : 40] And then Jesus says, but the very least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Has nothing to do with performance. Has to do with they're in the kingdom.

John's before the kingdom. Jesus brings the kingdom. And what Jesus brings is so much greater than what John was doing. That the least in the kingdom is greater than the greatest man who lived on earth outside the kingdom.

Does that make some sense? It's because of the kingdom that makes the least greater. It's because the child is in the name of Jesus that makes the child great.

Anyone in the name of Jesus is great. In other words, no comparisons. It's not about how great, not about how good you do, not about how much you do, not about what Jesus has you do and not have somebody else do.

Peter's not better than John, and John's not better than James. Even though Peter is, you know, more outspoken and gets more right answers. He also gets a lot of wrong answers. And, you know, what about Andrew?

[24 : 51] Well, Andrew, I don't know much about Andrew. He can't be very great. Maybe he's greater than them. Because maybe he brings more people. I don't know. But the point is, it's not about comparison.

Everyone's great. The least is the greatest. In other words, stop comparing. Stop competing. It has no place in the kingdom of God.

Correction one. Correction two. So John answers, oh, you want to talk about people accepting Jesus and working with Jesus. Hey, Jesus, verse 49. Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name.

They're stealing. And we tried to stop them because he does not follow with us. He doesn't wear our uniform. He doesn't march in our regiment so they can't be right.

He's not in our denomination, so he must be wrong. Their theology is not as precise as ours, so we should forbid them. Don't go to their church because, you know, they don't believe in blah, blah, blah.

[26 : 03] Now, I'm not talking about people that get the gospel. Okay? I'm not talking about the majors. I'm talking about the minors. They do baptism different, so.

It's a minor. Well, they see Jesus is not God. Okay, that's different. Or they say the gospel is about you and about you feeling good and about you being prosperous and all that.

That's a different thing, isn't it? But when they're simply doing the work of Jesus genuinely, and they have some different conclusions about how that work is done, but it's not error.

Leave them alone. Leave them alone. But they don't baptize the right way. Leave them alone.

Leave them alone. Okay? We're not going to be part of your church if you don't baptize them. That's fine. Go where they do it right.

[27 : 15] I don't care. It's really not that important. Baptized by the Holy Spirit, that's important. Right? Amen. That's what matters.

Not how we use the water. Now, we do it the right way, but you know. Their motive is good.

They're devoted to purity in the way of Christ. You know, John is just concerned that, you know, hey, they're not with us, so what if they're doing it wrong? But they've are.

But John has already said they're casting out demons in your name. Well, as far as the gospel that we know so far is, that's the right way. They're not doing it in someone else's name.

They're doing it in Jesus' name. So they're about Jesus. That's okay. Leave them alone. And so Jesus summarizes and says, if they're not against you, then they're with you.

[28 : 14] Leave them alone. A third area he addresses is this zeal. Verse 51, Luke tells us, now Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem.

And he sets, sent messengers ahead of him. Literally, he sent messengers before his face. Who went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for him.

But the people did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem. So I don't know what that looks like. I don't know. I know what it means that his face was set toward Jerusalem.

He's determined. He's purposed. He's on his way. He's fixed. But I don't know what that looked like. If they saw his face and said, oh, oh, oh, no. I don't know what that looks like.

But they knew he was on his mission to Jerusalem. That's all, whatever that means. And so they rejected it. Why? Samaritan and Jewish problem, right?

[29 : 17] Jesus has no problem going through Samaria. He doesn't feel like he's going to, you know, or bringing his disciples through Samaria. He's not worried about getting impure, you know, cooties or anything, you know, going through there.

He's not worried about it. Just not a problem. Because uncleanness isn't from what's outside. Uncleanness is what's inside. But the Samaritans reject him.

So Jews have a problem with Samaritans. Samaritans have a problem with Jews. Okay? It goes both ways. And who are the Samaritans? Do you remember who the Samaritans are? Remember? When we walked through the Old Testament, remember who the Samaritans are?

When Israel got kicked out, the last time went to Babylon. Remember? All the Israelites were kicked out and cast out. Remember that Samaria is where the northern tribes primarily were.

Remember when the northern tribes disappeared, they never came back. What came back were Babylonians, Assyrians, right? All kinds of other mixed race.

[30 : 21] Now they intermarried with some of the Jews that were still there. But pretty much it's a mixed race. And primarily more Gentiles. That's why the southern Jews would say Galilee of the Gentiles.

Gentiles up there. Jesus lived up there. How can he be? He must be impure. So that's who the Samaritans are. Samaritans had their own form of worship.

They worshiped at their own mountain. Remember when Jesus met the woman at the well? You know, you worship in Jerusalem. We worship over here. You know which one's right. Remember they had that discussion? They had a different kind of worship.

They didn't accept the Bible of the Jews. They accepted the Pentateuch, the first five books. But that's it. And of course they interpret it their own way. So they're different.

They thought they were like Jewish but an off brand of it. So when Jesus is coming through, they reject him because he's on his way to Jerusalem.

[31 : 18] They don't want to support that. So what did James and John do? What do the sons of thunder think is right to do? How dare they dishonor Jesus? It's kind of funny, right?

I mean, they ask him, do you want us to speak fire from heaven to come down and consume them? You want us?

You know, we're the sons of thunder. We can do that. I don't know where they got that idea. Right? They're very confident. Now, remember back at the beginning of chapter 9, they went out and they were given authority, right?

They could cast out demons and they could heal people. And perhaps they thought, oh, fire from heaven, that's only one more step. I don't know. It's kind of humorous. But it was a zeal to honor Jesus.

They felt so offended that their majestic one would be dismissed. Don't we feel that sometimes?

[32 : 22] Jesus is dismissed or dishonored or disparagedly talked about or rudely interpreted wrongly. Our zeal for his honor is a good thing.

Of course. We want to honor that. We want to protect that name. But not with fire. Elijah could do that, okay? But you ain't Elijah.

I'm not Elijah. Only Elijah was Elijah. And only Elijah did that. So James and John, no.

And then Luke tells us, he just said he rebuked them. And say what he said. What did he say? I want to know. What did he say? Now, the King James adds some words that were later added that aren't part of the original manuscripts.

You know, some later traditions about what he said. But the originals don't tell us what he said. Just said he rebuked them. Maybe he just said, uh, no. Move on.

[33 : 30] Leave them alone. Remember, he had told them before, if they don't receive you, you shake off the dust and you move on. You're an attack. You don't punish them. Okay.

So what does it mean to follow Jesus? What is the Christian mindset? What are the right attitudes? I think Paul summarizes it well in Philippians 2. He says, if there be any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy.

If you've experienced any of those Christian blessings. Complete my joy by being of the same mind. Having the same love.

Being in one accord and of one mind. Why do you have to tell them that? Because they're prone to division and competition and comparison.

And he gets to the point. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

[34 : 39] Wow. I can't do that naturally. I won't do that naturally. I have to renew my mind to actually think that others are more important than me.

I'm going to just be honest and confess that to you. Anybody else with me? I just don't do that. Because it's a natural instinct in me to think of myself first.

And to think I'm more important. Even if I hate myself, I think I'm more important. Even if I twist that, my self-image and I hate myself. I'm still thinking I'm more important.

Because I'm consumed with me. Whether it's good or bad. So he asks us to do the impossible. Let each of you look not only to your own interest, but to the interest of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Who? Here's the example. Who, though he was in the form of God. Literally, he was God. Did not account equality with God as a thing to be grasped.

[35 : 43] Or literally, to be held on to. But emptied himself. He let go. Emptied himself. How did he empty?

How can you stop being God? Well, he didn't. But he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. In other words, veiled in flesh the Godhead see, right? He put flesh on.

He took on the form of a servant. He emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. Being found in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form and flesh. He humbled himself by becoming obedient. To the point of death. Even death on a cross. How would the second person of the Trinity ever do that?

Why would he do that? How could he actually consider others more important than himself? Because there's no one more important except the Father than him.

[36 : 41] And yet he considered us who have no deserving attribute as worthy to die for.

Not worthy. But important. Important. That's interesting. The difference between am I worthy? No, I'm not worthy. Am I important?

I am important to God. That's a different. That's a different. To follow Jesus means total self-denial. Denying my selfish ambition of comparison and competition.

Excuse me. Denying my pride. In thinking that only we do it right. Denying my zeal to strike back in defense of Christ. By leaving it to God.

So following Christ means total self-denial. Secondly, denying Christ. Following Christ. Denying Christ. That was it.

[37 : 40] Following Christ involves total dedication. So total self-denial and then total dedication we see in these next verses. 57 to 62.

He's now correcting. Whereas he was correcting attitudes. Now he's correcting priorities. Because he encounters some people that want to do something else first before they follow Jesus.

They have another priority. So Jesus is going to correct this whole idea of what's most important in my life. What is my priority? Who do I serve first and foremost?

What is the most important thing in my life? So three areas. One, verse 57 about securities. You know, where's your home? Secondly, verse 59 about loyalties.

About family. And verse 61. Affections. You know, looking back to home. After I've started. So securities.

[38 : 38] Verse 57. We have somebody come up to Jesus. And says, I will follow you wherever you go. So there's the key word wherever. Not just I will follow you.

But I'll follow you wherever. Wherever. So Jesus says, oh, wherever? Really? You'll go wherever I go. Okay. Well, foxes have holes.

They've got a home. They can keep going back to their home. They're safe. They've got a secure place. Birds of the air even have nests that they come back to. And they have a secure place that they consider their home.

Their security. But the son of man has nowhere. You're going to go wherever? Wherever I have nowhere to lay my head. I have no home to go back to.

I have no secure place to lay down my head. Now he's going to go into villages. And he's going to get invited in. And I'm sure he's given a nice place to stay at times.

[39 : 35] But he doesn't have that guarantee. Wherever he's going. And he's on his mission to Jerusalem. Where's he going to go? Well, this village rejected him. So where's he going to lay his head? Don't know.

I don't have a place to lay my head. So he's confronting this sense of. If I want to follow Jesus, but I don't want to give up my comfort and convenience.

I don't want to give up my security. That's tough, isn't it? I'm kind of used to a nice warm bed. Following Jesus is not about comfort, convenience, security in the world.

We all know that. But if Jesus says that to us. If we really say, Jesus, I'm willing to follow you wherever you go. Wherever you want to send me. Do we mean it?

Are we really willing to go if he says go? How do I know?

[40 : 44] Next one, verse 59. This one Jesus calls to follow. He, to a different verse of this 59 says, follow me. But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

That sounds reasonable, doesn't it? What's wrong with that? I got to go bury my father. And then Jesus says something rather rude, I think.

Don't you? Well, leave the dead to bury their undead. Thank you very much. My father died. Is that what he means? But you go and preach the kingdom of God.

What about my father? Honor your father and your mother. That is a command from the mountain.

In fact, Jesus told the Pharisees. Who, remember, he said, you're neglecting the command of God to honor your father and mother. By your tradition where you say, oh, the money we have that could have helped my father and mother.

[41 : 51] I've already devoted to God. You know, they got them. And Jesus said, you're rejecting the commandment for your tradition. Isn't that what Jesus is doing? Don't honor your father and mother.

You got to bury your father. Don't honor your father and mother. You got to do my thing. If that's what he meant, he could be accused of the same thing he accused others of. That's clearly not what he meant.

What does he mean? The key is, let me first go bury my father.

This is a Jewish man. If his father had just died, he wouldn't be with Jesus. He would be taking care of his father's body and burying him the same day. That's what they do. Okay?

Not about, I got to go bury my father. Oh, you know, something just came out. I got to go bury him. He's postponing. His father hasn't died yet.

[42 : 51] Because if his father had died, he'd be there with his father. He wouldn't be over here wanting to follow Jesus. Well, or available where Jesus can say, come and follow me.

It's an excuse. It's postponed. Sounds reasonable. The response sounds harsh. But really what the point is, it's a beware point. It's a warning point.

Beware of letting family loyalties interfere with our call to serve Christ. We have family responsibilities. We have family loyalties.

Absolutely. The New Testament later will make clear. You take care of your family. If you don't take care of your family, you're worse than a pagan. Paul will say.

Okay? He's not saying you neglect your family once you follow Christ. He's not saying that. You still honor your father. You still honor your mother. But they're not the priority.

[43 : 52] You don't use that as your excuse for not serving Christ. First, let me fulfill all my obligations to my family.

I had a fellow elder in Illinois. I won't say his name. Not that anybody out in Illinois listens anymore. who told me he wanted to be a pastor.

But first, he wanted to make enough money so his family is secure. I said, then you'll never do it. If you want to serve Christ and you want to go into full-time ministry, go into full-time ministry.

I can't until I... Then you'll never do it. You'll never have that. You'll never feel like you have nothing. And you never did. Is there some security...

And I'm saying... We can make excuses. How many people today who call themselves Christians have that excuse? That family comes first?

[45 : 02] The numbers must be astronomical. We've looked at the data before. We've talked about the data about the declining number of people that say they're Christians but don't even attend.

Don't even give the slightest evidence. Attending would be the first and easiest. Evidence of following Christ. Since he told us to do it.

But we have people. And people, maybe people have gotten hurt. So they don't want to go to church anymore because they've been hurt. Yeah. Got the t-shirt. Join the club. It's part of the experience.

Not fun, but it's just part of the experience. We wouldn't have a New Testament if people were perfect in church. But now they won't come back.

I just won't. I like Jesus, but I don't like his people. I'm not sure Jesus liked them either. But he loved them. Huh?

[46 : 10] Did he like them? Especially at moments where they're wanting to throw fire down. Yeah, James and John. Who is John?

Not James. Who is James? Yakov. Yeah. That's us. We're all James and John, aren't we? We have our bad moments.

We may not be 100% of the time. But see, what Jesus is confronting here, we all can feel guilty about. I want security.

Jesus says, son of man has nowhere to lay his head. I want a place to lay my head. He says, don't, you know, commitment to your family.

That's good. But it better not be first. No, he doesn't say better not. He says, let the dead bury the dead. Who are the dead, by the way, there?

[47 : 11] If he means literal dead, it can't mean literal dead, because literally dead people can't do anything. So he's using a metaphor. So he's dead spiritually, dead to the kingdom.

People are dead to the kingdom. Let them do what they're going to do. That's not your business. That's not your focus. Going and preaching the gospel. That's your focus.

It doesn't mean you don't take care of your family. It just means don't make that an excuse for not serving Jesus. That's what it means. Don't let that interfere.

Thirdly, verse 61, affections. This one sounds a lot like the last one, doesn't it? Verse 60, 61. Another said, I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.

That shouldn't take long, right? I go say goodbye and I'm gone. I don't think it meant just I go say goodbye and I'm gone. I think it's another postponement. It's another, I've got this priority.

[48 : 15] So Jesus, you come second. Let me first go do this. And Jesus's response reveals what the real issue is.

So let's not read into what the person says. Let's read what Jesus said to him and then understand what was going on. What does Jesus say to him? Verse 61.

No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. What's Jesus saying about this person? I want to follow you, but first I want to do this.

No one who puts his hand to the plow to follow me says, I want to follow you, but looks back. But let me go do this first. Is fit for the kingdom of God.

Is useful for the kingdom of God. Is suitable for the kingdom of God. Why? Because their hearts divided. They're not fully engaged.

[49 : 22] It's I want to follow Jesus, but. I want to do this first. I want to make enough money so that I'm secure and then I can serve Jesus and it won't be so scary.

First, let me get my kids all raised. Let me get make sure they're all taken care of. I focus on them.

I make sure that, you know, they're in all the activities. They need to be all weekend. So we don't have time for church. Let me make sure I take care of all those things. And then I'll follow you, Jesus. No, you won't.

No, you won't. Because by then you're so far gone. You're so used to not not coming and not being involved that you'll never be involved.

I see people say, we're going to come back. I don't think so. After a few years, I don't think so. We want to come back. That's great. I wish you would.

[50 : 21] I hope you do. I pray for you to come back. I actually have a hit list of people who've stopped coming. Hit list.

I have a salvation hit list like that, too. I got people, right? I'm sure you do, too. Because outside of a miracle of God, they're not coming back.

They're just not. They're not useful to the kingdom. They're not fit for the kingdom. They're not doing anything for the kingdom.

Because they're looking back. They've never stayed. And Mark reminded me of this picture that we saw back in verse 51.

What did it say about Jesus? He set his face toward Jerusalem. He ain't looking back. His face is set.

[51 : 18] He will do it. Will I? Will I set my face?

Right after his? Am I willing? I want to. So what does it mean to follow Jesus?

Well, as Jesus describes to these three people, it involves total dedication. First and foremost priority.

That comes before everything else. Even worthy good things like family and marriage and job and other people.

It comes before that. And it's not at their exclusion by any means. Husbands, love your wives like Christ. Right? Parents, take care of your children.

[52 : 20] Children, take care of your parents when they get older. Where's that? Okay, right? That's coming quick. Falling apart.

I heard an amen over there. What was that? Nothing. So let me use Paul in Philipians again to kind of summarize this.

What does total dedication mean? What does it mean to follow Christ just first? Listen to how Paul describes his own experience. He said, whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss. I've given up everything. Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Please hear those words.

He didn't give them up because he had to. He didn't give them up to measure up. He gave them up because of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ.

[53 : 25] That's so much better than everything I lost. That's why I gave it up. That's the only reason to give it up. For his sake, I've suffered the loss of all things.

And count them but rubbish. They don't even compare. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. But that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God that depends on faith. So that I may know him. So that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. And may share in his sufferings.

Becoming like him in his death. Set face. Set face. To die like him.

That by any means possible. I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Now, not that I've already obtained it.

[54 : 23] I've already become perfect. I've arrived and you should follow me. Not that I'm there. But I press on to make it my own. Because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

That's why I do. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind. Forgetting what lies.

Not looking back. Forgetting what lies behind. And straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal.

For the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Setting my face. That's it. That's all I want. Is that your experience?

Following Christ. Right? Have you felt that? At least some measure of that?

[55 : 26] Have you fallen from that? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I got distracted from that? Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But deep down. At the end of the day. Is that what you want?

To be like that. Face set. Like Paul, it's a process.

He even says, not that I've got there. Not that I've arrived. It's a process. I have to keep doing it. I have to keep forgetting. Keep forgetting. Keep forgetting and pressing on. I've got to renew my mind every day.

It takes faith. It's an act of faith. It's intentional. It's deliberate. It doesn't just happen. So how does this strike you? Do you struggle with it?

Well, if you're normal. Is Jesus asking too much? Talk to my soul?

[56 : 22] Yeah. But is he asking more than he would do? Absolutely not.

Is he asking more than he deserves? Absolutely not. So how do we get where Paul is?

How do we get where Jesus wants us to be? How do I become willing to suffer everything for him? How do I get there if I'm not? What if I'm real focused on my soul?

What if I'm really struggling with this? What if I don't know if I really want to follow Jesus to that measure? Because I really like setting my own terms. And I really like having that nice little box where I can feel good.

Like, I'm following Jesus better than that person. So I'm okay. At least I come to church. As if that earns credit. Coming to church isn't about adding credit.

[57 : 28] It's about doing what we need to do. Because we need each other. How do I get there if I'm not there?

Really simple. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Like Paul said, the motivation isn't because I should, would, must.

Motivation is because of the surpassing value. Knowing him. Because of him. That's why I do it. No other reason.

Not because I want to look good. Not because I want to measure it. Not for any of those silly, competitive human reasons. Simply because of him.

He did it. I want to walk in his steps. I want to set my face too. Whatever the cost. Let's pray.

[58 : 37] Father, thank you. For the hard words of Jesus. Thank you for the words that make us step back and look. Thank you for the words that sometimes sound a bit harsh and say, we kind of go, I don't know if I want that Jesus.

And yet that's the Jesus Luke tells us about. That's the real Jesus. Who invites followers.

Who wants followers. But he sets the terms. And so Father, help us surrender to that. Help us to come to terms with that. And Lord, if we're not there, help us to look at Jesus so that we melt our hardness.

As we come to the table this morning, Father, we're going to look at Jesus. This bread and this cup is all about proclaiming him. And what he did.

And his death. And his total sacrifice. For unworthy people who are important to him. Thank you. So let this fall on us, Lord, as you want it to fall on us.

[59 : 48] We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.