

- ***READ Luke 9:57-62*** In just a few weeks we will be coming up on **Luke 9** in our Daily Bible Reading, and let me tell you that you better be strapped in and ready for a jammed pack chapter in regards to a lot of things taking place one right after the other. Within this one chapter alone we have: The Apostles being sent out to work teaching and healing (**vv.1-6**), The 5,000 being fed (**vv.11-17**), Jesus asking the Apostles who they believe Him to be (**vv.18-22**), His teachings on taking up our cross (**vv.23-27**), The transfiguration (**vv.28-36**), Jesus healing the man's demon possessed son (**vv.37-43**), & some varying teachings as they make their way to Jerusalem for the last time (**vv.43-56**).
 - It is at the end of this chapter, however, where arguably the most important and challenging teachings can be found. The verses we read just a moment ago show us three different men who come to Jesus and express their desires to follow Him as disciples. Yet, each of these men is confronted with something that could or did present itself as a roadblock to their following of the Lord.
 - The book we studied last year in our men's class *"Not A Fan"* does an excellent job detailing and teachings on these particular verses, and as I read those three chapters I couldn't help but think to myself, *"this'll preach!"* So this morning I would like to take some of the thoughts from this book and share them with the entire congregation as we continue to consider this year's theme and focus of growing mightily and prevailing. We will use our time of study looking at the important concept of following Jesus Wherever, Whenever, & Whatever.
- I. Fully following Jesus means remaining faithful to him wherever we might go. (Luke 9:57,58)**
- A. The first man comes to Jesus and says he will follow Him wherever He goes, but Jesus responds by saying, "foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."**
1. We might look at Jesus's reaction and think it a bit harsh, but Jesus, knowing the hearts of men, might have known that this man wasn't fully aware of where exactly he might be going as a follower of Jesus.
 2. Many were well aware of the miraculous abilities of this man Jesus, and they might have come to the belief that being with this powerful man would be a cure and remedy for the stresses and difficulties of life, but it seems that Jesus didn't want for this man or any who might have been there with Him to be misinformed at all.
 3. Jesus's response to this man's statement seems pretty clear within my mind. *"You say that you are willing to go anywhere I go, but you must realize that following me will not lead you to a place of comfort in this life. Instead it very well and probably will lead you to a place of discomfort."* Certainly Jesus speaking of the animals having proper resting places, and yet He Himself having none must have made an impression on those who were standing there and listening. This man said he would follow Jesus wherever, but did he truly mean *wherever*??
- B. We must recognize that being faithful to Jesus will sometimes take us to difficult places in this life, and it has always been that way with the faithful of God.**
1. As might have been the case with this man in **Luke 9:57**, there are many people today who are disillusioned to the idea that following Jesus in this life will create an almost carefree and easy life because God loves me and will give me anything I want or desire. The health and wealth gospel, really the health and wealth heresy, has raised up a generation or more of people who claim to be Christians just so long as that faith takes them to some place nice and comfortable, but friends we must recognize that being faithful to God has never come with the promise that this life will be nice, comfortable, and care free.
 2. We can look all the way from nearly the beginning of the Bible and recognize that men who were faithful to God experienced very difficult and often uncomfortable circumstances. Their faith and following of God's will sometimes took them to places that they wouldn't have

chosen to go otherwise. Would you consider just a few?

- a) Noah's faith and trust in God took him to the inside of a huge vessel that floated on the water, and he had little to no control as to where he might end up.
 - b) Abraham's faith in God took him to a completely unknown land when he had it made back in the land where he had been presiding.
 - c) Moses's following of God's will took him before the most powerful man where he made demands that he let God's people go.
 - d) David's faith in God took him to stand before a giant...the most feared man in all of the land.
 - e) The faith of the Apostles took them to beatings, stonings, and eventually their deathbeds.
3. We must fully recognize that fully following Jesus as true disciples isn't going to take us into a life full of comfort and bliss in regards to this world. Simply striving for holiness and righteousness every single day will put us in uncomfortable circumstances as we see wickedness all around us. We must keep in mind that we are only pilgrims and aliens in this life, and that we are called to abstain from the lusts that surround us everyday. **(I Peter 2:11,12)**
4. Why are we willing to do all of these things? We should be willing to follow Jesus wherever He leads us because we want to be with Him where He now resides: in heaven. Yet, we must remember that Jesus wasn't able to go to heaven until He had first gone to the cross, and the exact same thing is true for us. Just a few verses back in **Luke 9:23,24**, we see Jesus emphasizing the demand that those who follow Him must take up their cross daily and die to self in order to live for Him.
5. The true problem we see all around us is that there are plenty of people who want to go to heaven, but they're not willing to follow Jesus there exactly as He got there. They want to go to heaven, but they're not willing to go to the cross first. This is what Jesus demands. He demands that we go wherever He goes. This means we must first go to the cross, and then we must be willing to go to whatever uncomfortable place that follows if we truly want to be His disciples.

II. Fully following Jesus means following Him right now without any delays. (Luke 9:59,60)

- A. Jesus then turns to another man and tells him to "follow me." This man seems willing to do so. He even calls Jesus "Lord", but he wants to first go and bury his father before he follows Jesus.
1. To us this might not seem like all that unreasonable of a response. The man's father has just died...or at least that is what we think in our minds, so it seems like the right thing to do to allow for him to go and tend to that matter, first. However, might I suggest that it could be possible that what this man is saying is, *"Sure I'll follow you, but first let me go and live my life, and once my parents die then I will come and follow you."*
 2. This man seemed interested enough in following Jesus, but that interest wasn't enough for him to drop everything he was doing and go to follow the Lord right then and there. Maybe his parents wouldn't have been all that excited about him following this popular rabbi that was shaking things up. Maybe he had some family business that he had to attend to first. Maybe he was waiting for his share of the inheritance.
 3. Whatever his deal might have been...it was currently keeping Him from going right away to follow the Lord Jesus, and Jesus responds pretty harshly, **"Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."** Jesus wasn't willing to wait on this man...He only wanted for Him to go now and do the work Jesus had given him to do for the kingdom of God.
- B. If we are always waiting for the "perfect" time to follow Jesus, then we will never follow Him. Instead, we must realize that now is the right time to fully commit to being His disciple.
1. I am fully convinced that one reason so many professed Christians give less than all of themselves to the Lord is because they are thinking that they can just give a little bit now and

then at some point down the road they will make that full leap into true discipleship. There is normally something in their lives right now that they aren't willing to part ways with, and it makes right now not the perfect time. Really what they are saying is that right now isn't the easy time to give my life fully to Jesus.

2. The reality is that there is no easy or perfect time to give our lives to Jesus because following Jesus will always require sacrifice. That is the whole idea behind taking up our cross and dying to self. Furthermore, if we are always saying day after day *"tomorrow"*...then when will that day of change ever come? The truth is that it won't come. Tomorrow will never become today because we are repeatedly hitting the spiritual snooze button.
3. The book mentions this principle of behavior called the *"as now, so then"* principle. It puts forth the idea that the greatest predictor of future habits is what we are currently doing today. This means that if we are constantly saying *"tomorrow"*, then we will likely continue saying tomorrow in the future, and how many of us can relate to that very thing in any area of our lives? It's one thing to say that in regards to cleaning the kitchen, mowing the yard, or starting a diet, but it is a whole other thing to say this in regards to our decision to follow Jesus.
4. We must not allow for ourselves to wind up in the same place as Felix found himself when he became frightened because he recognized the truth and yet told Paul, *"Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."* (**Acts 24:25**) We don't have any indication that Felix ever made such a call for Paul, but he had his chance in that moment to do what was right...yet he let it slip away in favor of a time down the road.
5. We must, instead, be like the disciples of Jesus who respond in much better fashion than the man we see here in **Luke 9:59**. We can look to the responses of Peter and Andrew and James and John in **Matthew 4:18-22** and know exactly what we ought to do when we realize the need to follow Jesus. Jesus said, *"follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"*, and they did that very thing immediately and right then. Too many people are waiting for that easy and perfect time, but they don't realize that right now is the right time. Right now we all need the saving grace of Jesus, and we are doing ourselves no favors if we are not willing to make a commitment right now where we are and follow Him wherever it is that He might lead.

III. Fully following Jesus means putting Him first before everything else in this life. (Luke 9:61,62)

- A. Finally, we see the last man coming to Jesus and saying that he will follow Him, *"but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."*
 1. Again this might not seem like all that unreasonable of a request, but that might speak more to our not understanding of the present day culture. It wasn't like it is now where we can move hours and hours away and still communicate with our loved ones. Back in these times, moving away was a huge ordeal and called for a grand celebration that wasn't likely to be some quick thing. These going away parties and the festivities could last days or even weeks.
 2. Jesus seems to be pretty annoyed with the culmination of these men and says to this last man, *"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* In other words, *"you say that you are wanting to follow me forward, but I can tell that your heart is elsewhere. You say you want to follow me, but I am not at the top of your list of priorities."* This man talked a good game, but his actions showed that there were other things that meant more to him at the moment. Therefore, he was not willing to go with Jesus right then wherever it was that He might lead him and do whatever it was that might be demanded.
- B. True discipleship can only exist in our lives if Jesus is our chief and truly only priority.
 1. There are so many people who want to have their cake and eat it too when it comes to discipleship and following Jesus. Much like we talked about earlier, they want to follow Jesus only if He leads to comfort and ease, but that will never be the case when it comes to Jesus.

2. Much of this is a result of the fact that following Jesus means that we must lay aside everything we want, and simply do as Jesus wants. We must put aside everything that we long for and have a longing for only pleasing our Lord. This means anything that we might turn to instead of Jesus needs to be relegated from that top spot. What might we turn to? Could we turn to food? Could we turn to lust? Could we turn to our kids? Could we turn to money? Could we turn to alcohol? Could we turn to any other worldly thing? Of course we could! But in doing so we would only prove that Jesus isn't our true joy. He isn't our true strength and rock.
3. We can look to different men in the New Testament and find them as having things they desired more than Jesus at that particular time. Nicodemus seemed to initially prefer his religious status above all else. The rich young ruler loved his stuff and didn't want to part ways. This man seems to love his family and friends and wasn't willing to give them up just yet in order to follow Jesus as a true disciple.
4. Yet we know what Jesus thinks about our love for family above Himself. Just a few chapters later in **Luke 14:26** we find Jesus stating clearly and bluntly, *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."* His point is crystal clear, *"everything you love needs to take a back seat. Really everything you love, you must hate in respect to how highly elevated I am in your life."* Especially when He follows up these words by speaking concerning taking up our cross,
5. Simply put, Jesus must be our priority in this life. If we truly desire to please Him in all respects then that means that we will fulfill whatever role that we might need to feel because He demands we fulfill it and we want to please Him so badly. Our overwhelming love for Christ will cause us to love others because He commands that we do so. Putting Jesus first will only help us to keep everything else in our lives exactly where they need to be.

These three men were all presented with the opportunity of the lifetime. They were offered the opportunity to be a literal follower of Jesus while He walked this earth, and yet as best we can tell...none of them took advantage of this great blessings. The reasoning for such isn't hard to figure out. Being a true disciple of Jesus is difficult. It isn't for the half-hearted. It isn't for the casual follower. It is only for those who are truly willing to give it all up to God. Yet they are willing to do so because they know that the reward is great and worthwhile. Really when it comes to Jesus's desires for us...they are simple, but we must admit that they are difficult, as well, because they demand everything from us. He wants for us to follow Him wherever He leads, He wants us to do whatever He demands, and He wants for us to do all of that right now. The will of Jesus has been laid out before us. The ball is in our court. May God help us to follow His Son wherever, whenever, and whatever.

PRAYER *Our glorious Father in heaven...may each of us be impressed and convicted by Your Word this morning. May we fully comprehend and grasp what you desire of each of us as to how we ought to follow Your Son. You do not want half-hearted followers who will only go some places. You won't accept us coming on our own time, and you won't be pleased with people who love other things more than Your Son. Knowing that this is the case, we ask and pray that You would help each and every one of us to follow Him anywhere He might lead. Help us to follow Him there now, and help us to lay everything aside in order to put Him first in all things for He certainly is worthy as the one who gave His life for us on the cross. Help us all to take up our crosses and die daily so that we might please You, and may our faiths grow as we become strong disciples. Thank you for the opportunity to be called Your children, and may Your name always be praised in our lives. In Jesus most holy name we pray...amen.*