

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 9- Luke 9:57-62

190- The Radical Cost of Following Jesus

February 17, 2012

Luke 9:57-62

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."

58 And Jesus said to him, "**The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.**"

59 And He said to another, "**Follow Me.**" But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."

60 But He said to him, "**Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.**"

61 Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."

62 But Jesus said to him, "**No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**"

To the Glory of God

Now it is true that God is always doing more than we know. In every event of our lives and in every event in the life of this Church and every event in the life of this city and this state and this country and this world- God is always doing 10,000 things that we do not see and do not know and really cannot appreciate.

The designs and the effects of every event from the fall of a bird, or the birth of a baby, or the death of a Senator, or the capturing of a sniper, or the storming of a Russian theater or the ripping of a tornado through a city – the designs and effects of every event are 10,000 times more than we know. So it would be true to say that 99.9% of God's specific Purposes are hidden from our eyes.

For example- when God scattered the nations at the Tower of Babel- He was doing more than just one thing. Certainly, Obviously, God was restraining evil by preserving diversity that would function as check and balance in the human craving for power and fame and wealth. But in the same act of judgment- He was also preserving and increasing the diversity that would become the many-colored mosaic of Redemption at the very same time.

So on the one hand- evil in the earth would be *deflected* by diversity in language and culture- but on the other hand- the Glory of Jesus Christ would also be *reflected* by that very same diversity in language and culture. **Psalm 67:3** says:

Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

All the many languages, all the many cultures, all the many races of people- let them all praise You, O God. For You will shine all the more brightly in our eyes when we see You reflected and praised by all the peoples! Verses 4&5 of **Psalm 67** says:

Psalms 67:4&5

4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.

5 Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

So God is very busy- doing much more in these days than anyone knows for the sake of His Glory being seen and praised by the nations of the world. His Authority and His Love and His Mission are having a tremendous effect. Jesus said in **Matthew 28:18-20:**

18 ... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

So Jesus says here, "*All authority is Mine. Go make disciples and I will be with you.*" And that Command and that Promise is flying over us

right now and there are untold thousands of unseen and unknown effects of that Command and that Promise being unleashed in the world right now- most of which we are not even aware of.

But this Passage here in **Luke 9** is about the radical cost of following Jesus. And Dr. Luke gives us three examples here in these 6 verses of men that either wanted to follow Jesus or that Jesus told to follow Him. And Jesus gives each one of these men something very hard and something very sweet.

Yet what Jesus says here in this Passage is very different from the way that the modern Church calls people to either discipleship or evangelism. If you listen carefully to what is being taught today- you would come to the conclusion that becoming a Christian is a matter of a moment rather than a lifetime; that being saved is a matter of some kind of human acceptance of some information about Jesus Christ on some level rather than a radical and miraculous and supernatural transformation; that being born again is a matter of some kind of an emotional experience brought about by a heart rending story or some soft music rather than what Jesus says here.

Far too much preaching today deals with the unbiblical concept that being saved is really nothing more than us exercising our own willpower to adopt some tips on better living whereby we become an improved version of the same old fallen Man selves and become nicer people and have a better marriage and drive more respectable cars and live in nicer neighborhoods rather than being Sovereignly born again as a new creature where all our loves and desires are made new.

So the modern Church teaches and believes that whatever might be used to induce a person to a moment of emotional breakdown where they will “walk and aisle” or “raise their hand” or “pray a prayer” or “make a decision” or “accept Jesus into their hearts” is therefore good and desirable- even though that flies in the face of what Jesus says in the Passage that is before us.

Modern day evangelists say that all they have to do is “seize the moment” and do whatever they need to do and say whatever they need to say to get the people to say that prayer or make that decision and then they are able to add another hash mark to their bragging rights of how effective their ministry is and how many people they have “led to the Lord”. And if the people don't know what to do- we will supply them

with a neat and tidy packaged prayer to pray and that's all it takes to become a Christian.

But as you read the Passage that Brother Andy just read to us- it becomes very obvious that Jesus didn't believe that; He didn't teach that; and He didn't do that. And what I want to try to establish in your minds this morning is that Jesus was God and as God- Jesus loves people more than you do and Jesus is infinitely more interested in saving souls than we are and so the *Way* in which Jesus evangelized was right and the *Way* in which Jesus operated was right and the *Words* that Jesus used were correct. And where the modern Church is at odds with either the *Way* or the *Words* of Jesus in either evangelism or discipleship- we should repent and trust that His *Way* is best. And then Jesus personally commissioned the Apostles who preached Jesus' Message and carried out Jesus' Ministry- so they were right about evangelism and discipleship this too.

So how Jesus conducted Evangelism is the way that we should carry out Evangelism and what He did- we should do; and what He said- we should say; and what Jesus did *not* do and did *not* say- we should not do and we should not say. Churches today are infinitely more concerned that they fit in with the model of evangelism that was invented by Charles Finney and promoted by Billy Graham than they are in fitting in with the model of evangelism created by Jesus Christ and promoted by the Apostles. And we should repent of that.

So notice very carefully that Jesus never said, *"Get people saved by moving them emotionally to a moment of crisis, or a moment of decision, or a moment of acceptance of Me."* Jesus never brought anybody that I know of in the New Testament to a place where they were supposed to pray a prayer. Jesus never did that and none of the Apostles ever did that. It just isn't in the Bible- anywhere. I have no idea where Charles Finney got it from- but he didn't get it from the Holy Scriptures- which is the Word of God and the Rule of Faith in the Christian Church.

There is no New Testament Teaching (or Old Testament Teaching- as far as that goes) that instructs anyone to move people toward some crisis event in which supposedly the sinner is redeemed from sin and death and hell.

And yet the Call to Christ- the Call to Salvation today is almost universally viewed in the modern Church as a one- time event or as a one- time response to an emotional moment where once you do that- you

then refer back to that event or that response as to what you place your trust in. If you ask people today what they are actually trusting in for their Salvation- very few will say, *"The finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ"* which is the only correct answer. But most will refer back to a prayer that they prayed or an experience that they had.

And even though that is true- you will never find that in the inspired and inerrant Words of the Jesus. Every time Jesus invited someone to come into His Kingdom or when Jesus invited someone to receive His Forgiveness and Salvation- Jesus always and in all cases made demands on that person that were going to radically and totally impact him for the rest of his life. Jesus wasn't interested in a one- time event. Jesus couldn't care less about the moment. He didn't want the emotion- Jesus sought then and still seeks today a carefully thought out understood commitment of an entire lifetime.

You see genuine repentance from sin; true confession of Jesus as Lord; honest obedience from the heart to the Word and the Spirit was and is today a total commitment and an unconditional surrender for an entire lifetime. That is what Biblical Salvation is and anything else is a lie. And there was always that emphasis in the Ministry of Jesus and of the Apostles. Over and over again- you can see throughout the Gospel records that Jesus categorically condemned the short-term disciple. The Lord Jesus Christ made so many demands of those who followed Him and said so many unbelievable things to all the "would-be disciples" that, for example, in **John 6:66**- it says,

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

The standard was just too high; the demands were too great; and the cost was too much. What Jesus required was just too demanding for these people. Now here in **Luke 9**- we see three different people:

- ✓ **Group 1- (Luke 9:57&58)** In verse 57 to the man who says, "I will follow you wherever you go," Jesus says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
- ✓ **Group 2- (Luke 9:59&60)** where Jesus takes the initiative and calls a man and says, "Follow me." But the man responds, "Lord,

permit me first to go and bury my father." To which Jesus replies in verse 60, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

- ✓ **Group 3- (Luke 61&62)** we see a third candidate for discipleship say in verse 61, "I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." To this Jesus responds in verse 62, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Now we must understand that more than one thing is going on here in each of these encounters. And to see clearly the way Jesus intends all this- requires that we go back to verse 51. There Dr. Luke says,

Luke 9:51

When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

Now the word that was translated here as **"determined"** is the Greek word, *sterizo*- which means: *to determine; to make stable; to place firmly; to set fast; or to fix.* Now the ESV; the KJV; and the NKJV all say that Jesus **"set His Face"** or that **"He steadfastly set His Face"** to go to Jerusalem" and that phrase means determined but it seems as though it adds a measure of force that we need to understand.

So Jesus didn't just think that it was a nice idea to go to Jerusalem. This wasn't a simple desire or some whim of His. No, Jesus was *determined* to go; He was *steadfastly fixed* on going; He was *stable in His determination* to go; He had *set fast His mind and heart* to go to Jerusalem; Jesus had *set His Face* to go to Jerusalem. So this is a big deal.

Now we know what Jerusalem meant for Jesus. For example- He said to His Apostles over in **Luke 18:31-33,**

31 ... "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.

32 "For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon,

33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again."

... And then when Jesus got to the city **Luke 19:41-44** says,

**41 When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it,
42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.
43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a
barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side,
44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and
they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not
recognize the time of your visitation."**

So there is an ominous ring about **Luke 9:51** that we need to hear when Jesus says,

... He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

Or

... He set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Then to make clear the implications of going to Jerusalem Luke tells us what happened next and why. Look again at **Luke 9:52&53:**

**52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.
53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.**

So in this case- the Samaritans didn't receive Jesus' emissaries- not because of Jesus' Teachings or because of Jesus' miracles- but because of Jesus' association with Jerusalem. And this is a signal to us- that if we join in with Jesus on the way to Jerusalem- we may end up not having a place to stay either; we may not be popular with everybody either; and we may also be rejected.

Now we are ready to see more clearly what is happening in our text, verses 57-62. Three times in this passage- we read the word "follow" to describe what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

- ✓ Verse 57, "I will follow You."
- ✓ Verse 59: "Follow me."
- ✓ Verse 61: "I will follow You."

So the word, **“follow”** is the operative word here. Following Jesus is the meaning of this Passage. So if we want to understand what following Jesus is and is not and we desire to follow Jesus in the 21st Century- we need to understand this Passage. So this Passage is about the high cost of following Jesus and it's also about what hinders people from following Jesus.

Now many times, Jesus called people to follow Him. He called Matthew to follow Him. He called the rich young ruler to follow Him. He called Philip to follow Him. He called Peter to follow Him. He called all of the Twelve to follow Him at some point and He called many others to follow Him. And always when Jesus did that- He used the same Aramaic word, *akolouthéo*, and He used it in the present imperative tense which means that it is an ongoing command.

So from that we know that following Jesus implies *continuity*. It implies something way beyond just the moment. And so nobody who is truly saved follows Jesus for only the moment- that isn't true conversion. We do not follow Jesus just on Sunday Morning for a couple of hours- but we *keep on* following Him all through the week; we continue to follow Him every day- all day long. So following Jesus is not an experience- it is a way of life for those who are saved. So the right way to understand this- is that Jesus is saying:

"From now on- follow Me."

And the point in this phrase is that being a disciple of Jesus; being saved and forgiven and being a Christian, is much more than just learning some interesting information about God- but it also includes actually *following* Jesus wherever He goes- agreeing with what He agrees with and hating what He hates and trusting in what He said and striving to obey what He commands- regardless of what that might do to us or require from us. Now look back up to **Luke 9:23-26** and read again what Jesus said there:

23 ... "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the* glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

So when we preach God's precious Word- we echo God and we call people to repent and believe the Gospel- so we must be clear and we must be totally unapologetic that God is calling them and we are calling them to a life of self-denial. And you may remember when we were studying this a few months ago- that this word translated here as "self-denial" means: *to refuse to associate with.*

So what Jesus is saying here is that if you want to come after Him and have all your sins forgiven and go to heaven- you *must*; you *have to*; it is a *requirement* that you deny yourself; you must "*refuse to associate with yourself*" any longer. You must be brought to a place by a Sovereign Act of God the Holy Spirit where you refuse to associate any longer with the lost person that you are.

Over 500 years ago- Martin Luther wrote the document that got the ball rolling and that eventually evolved into the Protestant Reformation when he penned down his "95 Thesis" or "95 Points" or "95 objections or Protests" that he had with the way Rome was preaching and teaching and applying the Biblical Gospel. In that document, Luther termed this "*self-denial*" as put forth by Jesus here in **Luke 9** as actually being "*self-hate*". Later on- the Puritans called it "*self-loathing*".

And what that means is that God has graciously and Sovereignly brought the lost person who is going to be saved to a place where he despises his sin and he hates who he is because of his wickedness. And even though that flies in the face of much of what the modern Church teaches as they seek to promote "the basic goodness of Man" and "the internal self-worth of Man"- this self-denial is what Jesus requires for Salvation. And the purpose of God bringing the lost person to this place of complete "self-hate", or this "self-loathing" so that he no longer wants

to associate with the sinner that he is- is that this brings the lost person to a place of utter desperation over his sins. And that is the only place where God the Holy Spirit brings the elected sinner before they can be saved.

In other words- God has no interest in anyone coming to Him other than in this condition of utter desperation over the weight and the guilt and the horror of your own sin. If you come to God in any other way or in any other condition- you are wasting your time.

So if you come to God so that God can fulfill all your dreams; or so you can hit more home runs or if you come to God to be wealthy or to get more material goods or to get out of jail or so that your wife will love you or so that you can have whiter and brighter teeth- you are not in that place of utter desperation over your sins and you have not been granted with the ability to see yourself as God sees you and you do not hate yourself and you are not loathing yourself and you are not refusing to associate with yourself and you are not denying that there is any good in you and therefore Jesus says that you will not be forgiven and you will not be saved. And that is true- no matter what you pray and no matter what you feel and no matter what song is being played and no matter what kind of emotional experience you have.

If you do not deny yourself- if you do not accept the Truth that there is no good thing in you and that you are a wicked sinner and that you are wrong and that you *deserve* to be damned and that the Wrath of God is bearing down on you like a freight train at 300 miles an hour and you are chained to the railroad tracks and that God is correct to do that- and unless you get to a place of utter desperation over your sins so much that you cannot even look up into Heaven- but you simply beat your chest and cry out-, "*Have mercy on me- a sinner!*"; unless you are brought to that place by God the Holy Spirit where you are making no bargains with God; and you are willing to surrender everything; and lay everything down to the point where you make you mind up that you will follow Jesus from that day forward no matter what the cost- then you will remain in your sins and you will not be born again and you will die an unrepentant sinner and you will spend all of eternity in a devil's hell.

And we must know that for *any* lost person to get to that place of desperation- it takes a Sovereign Act of God. Because what the Sociologists teach about Man is wrong and what the Psychologists teach

about Man is wrong and what the Psychiatrists teach about Man is wrong and what the inerrant, infallible eternal Word of the living God teaches about Man is right and The Fall is real- even though many in the modern Church want to either deny it or minimize it- but it is real. And we really are just as fallen and depraved as the Bible says that we are; and we really are just that dead in our sins and trespasses as the Bible says that we are; and it is true that every single imagination of the thoughts and intents of our hearts are only evil continually just like **Genesis 6:5** says and it is true that there is no good in any of us and it is true that we do not simply sin- but that we actually *love* darkness rather than light just like Jesus said in **John 3:19** and it is true that we are- by nature- the children of wrath and children of satan by birth just like the Apostle Paul said in **Ephesians 2:3** and it is true that there is not a single one of us who is righteous in our lost condition- no not one- as **Romans 3:10** says and so because all of that is true about every single human being born of woman who is lost- for *anyone's* blind eyes to be open and for *anyone's* deaf ears to be unstopped and for *anyone's* stony heart that refuses to accept the Truth about our lost condition and insists that we are not really that bad- for that kind of heart in any lost person to be taken out of us and replaced with a heart of flesh that is soft and easily broken and will not rebel against God any longer but will melt in His Presence- for wicked sinners to have that kind of heart I tell you takes a Sovereign Act of God- to come to us *before* we are saved and *before* we even want it or desire it or even ask for it and God Graciously and Merciful *violates* our sinful will and He interrupts our rebellious lives and He imposes Himself on us without us wanting Him to and He does all that all by Himself and *that* is what brings every single lost person who is saved to the place of denying ourselves.

So no matter what the modern Church growth gurus teach- it isn't the music; it isn't the cleverness of the preacher; it isn't the style of the preacher- it isn't that he screams or shouts or prances around like a peacock; it isn't the smoke or the mirrors or the emotional pull or the tender stories or the choir singing in the background or because we dim the lights so people will get in the mood.

No, people are miraculously and eternally saved only because God the Holy Spirit Sovereignly invades our bodies and He rocks our world and He transforms us forever and He empowers and enables us to act counter-intuitively to our fallen natures and to see and to hear and to

believe and to respond to that gracious gift of faith by repenting and trusting in Jesus.

Listen to me- Salvation is not one iota different from Creation, dear friends. In Creation God- all by Himself- without consulting with anybody and without needing any help spoke Light out of darkness; He instantly and miraculously created light out of darkness with nothing but His Voice and when that black darkness heard the Voice of God- light instantly appeared!

When Jesus spoke his name- just one time- stone cold dead Lazarus opened his eyes and came out of the grave- fully alive. No recovery time- he went from death to life in a second because God called His name.

And that is the way every single one of you were saved. God Sovereignly called your name- and I don't care what you were doing at that moment- you may have been on your way to kill yourself; you may have been in terrible sin or engaging in horrific wickedness- but when God's Voice called your name- because He chose to set His Love upon you and save you way before the foundation of the world- your eyes were opened and your ears were unstopped and your heart was softened and you were Sovereignly and supernaturally and instantly and miraculously born again and in that new condition- you knew you were lost and you despised yourself and you felt the weight of your sin and you felt the hot breath of God's Wrath on your neck and you cried out for a mercy that you do not deserve and a Grace that you cannot earn and you believed the Gospel and you repented and you were instantly justified by a loving God and the very Righteousness of Jesus Christ was imputed to you and you were adopted into the family of God and you were on your way to Heaven!

And because Salvation was like that and because it was *not* simply a human choice like which color socks you chose to put on this morning and because it was far more powerful than simply praying a prayer; and because it was far more eternal than you simply adopting some moral code to live by; and because it was far more supernatural than just acting on your own free will- but precisely because it was a Sovereign Act of God- and that is why you are forgiven and that is why you are born again and that is why you are forever rescued from the Wrath of God- then it doesn't matter what God requires of you now that you are saved and it doesn't matter what God expects from you and it

doesn't matter what God demands out of you- you were lost and on your way to hell and Jesus mercifully and graciously rescued you- what difference does it make if your life down here is infinitely harder because you are a Christian?

What difference does it make if you are persecuted or beaten or rejected or scorned every single day that you live if all of your sins are forgiven and if your black heart has been washed in red blood and now it is whiter than snow and if you're going to spend eternity with Jesus in Heaven!

Now we are ready to see that more than one thing is going on here. When Jesus says, "*Follow me*," and says it in the context of going to Jerusalem and having just been rejected in Samaria for going to Jerusalem, He is clearly saying two things, not just one thing.

A. He is saying: "*Follow ME*."

B. And He is saying "*FOLLOW Me*."

So there is Jesus but there is also Jesus' Mission. There is a real Person- Jesus Christ but there is also the Path on which we follow Jesus. So, yes, it is following Jesus. But, no, that is not all. There is also the Path that Jesus expects and requires and demands that every single human being who is saved must follow Jesus on. So there is no such thing as people loving Jesus and yet not walking on the Path. Those who do not follow Jesus on the Path do not love Him- that's what Jesus is saying here.

So there is a wonderful sweetness in the Person of Jesus Christ- but there is also a dedicated and consecrated life that is filled with blessings and joy and trials and suffering. So there is Jesus- but there is also Jerusalem. So when Jesus said at the end of His Life,

"Go... make disciples of all nations!"

... He wrapped that Command and that path and that suffering in His mighty and merciful Self. First He said,

"All authority in heaven and on earth is mine."

And last He said,

"I will be with you to the end of the age."

So there is the **"FOLLOW Me!" (Go!)** And then there is the **"Follow ME!" (I will be with you).** So there is the Path to the nations through Jerusalem but there is also the Person Who will be with us forever. So when you hear the words,

"Follow me,"

... you need to hear at least *two* things- not just one thing. You need to hear that there is a straight and narrow Path that Jesus requires that we walk on- but there is also the Promise that the Savior will forever be with us on that Path.

Now what was Jesus doing in responding the way He did to these three would-be followers? Listen to what Jesus says in this Passage to these three people:

- ✓ **No place to lay your head (Luke 9:58)**
- ✓ **Let the dead bury their dead (Luke 9:60)**
- ✓ **Put your hand on the plow and don't look back (Luke 9:62)**

So what was Jesus doing by saying these things? He was teaching, and He was testing. He was teaching that the Calvary road through Jerusalem will be a very hard road, and will require sacrifices and surrender and dedication and perseverance. And at the same time- Jesus was testing to see if He Himself was the greatest Treasure of their lives.

They came to Jesus and said, *"I'll follow YOU."* And Jesus said, *"Really? You love Me, you treasure Me that much? Well, let's see. Here's what it will cost you."* So Jesus was testing how much they treasured the "You" in "I will follow You," by telling them what the "follow" part would cost them.

So there are *two things* that Jesus was doing that day with those men and there are *two things* that Jesus is doing this morning with us.
1. Jesus is offering Himself for our fellowship and friendship and partnership in this life. Just think of that. The Owner and the Creator of the entire Universe- the King of kings and the Lord of lords- The One Who upholds all things by the Word of His Power- the One

Who is from everlasting to everlasting- the One Who was born of a virgin as the Holy One of God- the One Who was perfect in this life- the One Who was triumphant over sin and death and hell and all the demons you will ever meet- the One in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This Jesus says to you and me this morning- right here; right now- *"Follow me!"* And then this same Jesus says:

I will be with you to the close of the age . . . I will never leave you or forsake you.

About 130 years ago- John Paton's experienced this very same two- fold Promise and his testimony is deeply moving. At the moment when this Promise came to him- he wasn't sitting in Church on a Sunday morning- he was being pursued by hostile natives on a cluster of islands north east of Australia in the South Pacific which was called back then New Hebredies. And John Paton wrote about it and said,

"Being entirely at the mercy of such doubtful and vacillating friends, I, though perplexed, felt it best to obey. I climbed into the tree and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but of yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and the yells of the Savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe in the arms of Jesus. Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among these chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone! If it be to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, to feel again my Savior's spiritual presence, to enjoy His consoling fellowship. If thus thrown back upon your own soul, alone, all alone, in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a Friend that will not fail you then?" (John G. Patton: Missionary to the New Hebredies, An Autobiography Edited by His Brother [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, orig. 1889, 1891])

2. Jesus is testing you and me- to see if this is enough- to see if He is really our Treasure in times of want and our Joy in times of sorrow and our Security in times of fear and our Hope in times of weakness and our Friend in times of loneliness. And so to test us in all these ways- Jesus is good to tell us what following Him will cost.

Now we must take heed and not make the hard words found in here this Passage more difficult than they really are. Jesus is *not* telling anyone, *"There will never be time when you have a bed and pillow and a roof."* He's *not* saying, *"It will always be wrong to be at your parent's funeral."* He is *not* saying that *"Struggling with fear or doubt will render you useless and unfit for future service"*.

We must understand these hard sayings of Jesus the way you understand Jesus' Words to the rich young ruler and his words to Zacchaeus. To the rich young ruler Jesus said,

"Following Me is going to cost you all your possessions- so since that is true:"

Matthew 19:21b

... go and sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

When Jesus came into the house of Zacchaeus, the little tax collector said,

Luke 19:8

"Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

And Jesus responded with joy and said:

Luke 19:9

"Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."

... meaning that God had Sovereignly gifted this sinful tax collector with the same faith as God gave to Abraham.

In other words, the point of all these tough words as Jesus interacts with different people is not to create laws that all disciples have to keep all the time like:

- ✓ Thou shalt give away all your money!
- ✓ Thou shalt give away half your money!
- ✓ Thou shalt go without a bed!
- ✓ Thou shalt go without a funeral for your dad!

No, the point here is that Jesus knows what your idol is. Jesus knows perfectly well what is competing in your heart with affection for Him. Jesus knows right now what sin and what idol troubles all of us here today. And so Jesus is looking each of us in the face this morning and He sees right to our heart.

So don't take offense at this. He does this to win us for Himself. **"Follow Me!"** is the goal. Being with Jesus is the goal. It won't be easy- but it will be very good. There will be a deep and profound and lasting joy- even if there is suffering and continual sorrow- precisely because Jesus will always be with us!

And that is why Jesus raises the issue in verse 58 about your attachment to your home. Read that verse with me again- **Luke 9:58:**

And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

The Son of Man has no place to lay His Head. So why would anyone in their right mind follow Someone like that? Will you follow a Man Who has no earthly home? And be careful how you answer because following a Man like this may mean you won't have a home either. So what about your home and your furniture and the safety and security you enjoy there- all the comforts in the climate controlled year-round perfect atmosphere, your roach-free, mouse-free, ant-free, totally automated kitchen, your new surround-sound home entertainment center?

Jesus says, *"Follow Me"*. It may be God's Will to give you a beautiful home with many furnishings and many pleasures. But it may be God's Will to take all that away from you. That is God's Business. Our business is to follow Him. So the issue here is not whether you have a home or not. The issue is- is Jesus more precious and more satisfying and more valuable to you than any of these things?

Then He raises the question about our families in verse 60:

Luke 9:60

But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

So who do you cherish more: Spiritually dead relatives, or the Giver of Life- Jesus Christ? The point is not that it's always wrong to go back home to your dad's funeral. The point here is that it might be right not to. And the issue is not how close you are to your father. The issue is how doing that serves the proclamation of the Gospel, and how it reveals the real treasure of your heart. So who is first, Christ or family? And the point here is that Jesus Christ is absolute and all other allegiances are not.

And just in case you think these words of Jesus are harsh- please turn with me to read even more harsh Words from the Lips of our Holy and sinless Savior found in **Luke 14:25-35**

25 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,

30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

34 "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?

35 "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Now the point that Jesus is making here is not that we are all supposed to hate our parents- but that our love for God must be so exclusive and so preeminent and so strong and so eternal that it makes all other loves for all other things appear to be hate in comparison.

And I suggest to you that that kind of love is supernatural and is not the result of rubbing the two sticks of your own will power and your own human energy together to produce that kind of love. No, that kind of love for God is a gift from God and I suggest to you that for us to have that kind of love for God is the very purpose of Salvation.

We must understand that we don't have to be saved to want a better marriage. You don't have to be saved to want more money or a nicer car or a better job or to live a more moral life. Lost unsaved pagans want and seek after those things and many of them obtain those things without being saved.

No, but you have to be saved to want Jesus like that. You have to be saved to love Jesus like that. You have to be saved to follow Jesus that close and to seek after Him and to hold Him as your Treasure and your Prize and your Hope and Joy. It doesn't take a regenerate nature to want more stuff- but it does take a regenerate nature to value Jesus more than all the stuff this world affords.

So there will be a hundred choices you must make in this life – that have no simple Biblical Command to settle the issue. And in those cases- the issue will be:

Do you want Christ above all? Do you want to follow Him more than anything?

And finally Jesus raises the question in verse 62 about fickle following. The danger of indecisive discipleship or periodic devotion. Read that verse with me:

Luke 9:62

But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

You can't plow a straight furrow while looking back where you came from. You can't follow Christ with joy and with consistency- you can't make Jesus look glorious- if you are always second-guessing the value and the worth of following Him. The term, **"Looking back"** means

longing for what you used to have or wanting what others who do not serve Christ have; or lusting to obtain what those who deny the Lord have obtained. Looking back means that you're really not sure that Jesus is worth following- especially to Jerusalem- where following Jesus will cost you something dear.

So our hearts must not be divided. It must not be split between Jesus and something else. You cannot serve two masters- it is all Jesus or it is no Jesus at all. It is serving Jesus with no regrets or it is a lifetime of haphazard and pitiful service while all the time wishing you could have and wishing you could be what those who do not serve Him have and are.

Divided hearts like that cannot and do not display the infinite Value and the infinite Worth of Jesus Christ and they bring no glory to God and they possess no joy for themselves.

But I want to end this by saying to you that Jesus is worthy! He is worth following- even through Jerusalem- even to the cross. Yes, Jesus will die in Jerusalem- and you may die with Him. But that is not bad news. Not anymore. That is our life. He loved us and gave Himself for us. Jesus didn't say

"Follow me to Jerusalem"

... because He needed help with His redeeming Work, but because if you are with Him in the hard places and in the Trials and in the suffering- you will be saved, and not only will you be saved, you will be given a mission that according to verse 60 is more precious than burying your father. Which is:

"Go and proclaim everywhere the Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus."

So this morning I want you all to know this: Jesus is worthy. He is worthy of receiving whatever God, in His Wisdom has chosen to bring into your life- whether that seems good or bad to us and Jesus is worthy lose whatever God, in His Wisdom, has chosen to take away from you- whether that seems to be good or bad to us.

And following Jesus will always mean more than one thing. If it means for you the place of suffering and loneliness- then the Promise is that He will be with you in that suffering and in that loneliness and He

will never leave nor forsake you in that place. So to follow Jesus means there is the Path and there is the Person; there is the suffering, and there is the sweetness; there is the Jerusalem, and there is Jesus. So let us hear what the Spirit is speaking to the Church in this hour and let us Follow Jesus.

Let's pray.