

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

191- The Radical Cost of Following Jesus- Part 2

February 24, 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 even though Matthew's Gospel has more Chapters in it- Luke is a longer Book because the Chapters in Luke are much longer. Luke has several very long Chapters. For example- Chapter 1 has 80 verses; Chapters 2 has 52 verses; Chapter 7 has 50 verses. Chapter 8 has 56 verses and today we will finish with the last of the 62 verses in Chapter 9.

Now as I told you in the very beginning- Luke was a Gentile medical doctor who was highly educated. The first few verses in Luke's Gospel Account are written in Classical Greek- which was the language of the educated professionals while the rest of Luke and the rest of the

entire New Testament was written in Koine Greek which was the language of the masses.

Luke was also a very precise Theologian; and a meticulous Historian; and a kind and merciful Pastor and was officially commissioned by the Apostle Paul to write this account who was deeply concerned that the world have a record of the Acts and the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ that had been verified by credible witnesses. So Luke conducted extensive interviews with the various people who saw and were a part of the events and life of Jesus Christ- including Mary- the mother of the Lord.

So you have the Apostle Peter who commissioned John Mark to write one Gospel Account; Paul who authorized Luke; and then you have two other men- who were Apostles in their own right- who wrote the other two Gospels- Levi who was also called, Matthew and John.

So Luke goes to great lengths to provide the reader with intelligent historical realities to prove that the testimony of Jesus is believable and that the claims made in the Scriptures about Jesus are verified and documented.

Now during this time in the first Century- there was a young dignitary in Rome- a man named Theophilus- who was probably in the very Court of Caesar himself- who was either interested in Jesus or else was curious about Salvation and so Dr. Luke writes the Gospel Account that bears his name and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles to Theophilus for a very specific reason that Luke gives in the intro into both Books. At the beginning of Luke- the good doctor writes:

Luke 1:1-4

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,

3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;

4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

And at the beginning of **The Book of the Acts**- Luke wrote:

The Acts 1:1-3

1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,

2 until the day when He was taken up *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

The concern then was the same concern that we have today- that many people genuinely believe that they are saved when they are only deceived about themselves and about their Salvation. So Luke places various tests that come right out of the Mouth of Jesus Himself- so that we may honestly and truthfully examine ourselves to see if we are truly born again.

You see as fallen people- we have an enormous ability to be deceived about ourselves and so we need the rigidity of Divine Truth to shine against the hypocrisy and the shallowness of our lives to bring genuine conviction to us lest we all simply justify whatever it is we are doing and continue on our way to an eternity in hell.

And one of those tests is here in this Passage that Brother Andy just read to us. And that test is that being saved; being born again; being redeemed; being forgiven and rescued from the Wrath of God is a lifelong commitment that is the single most dominant and primary issue in the life of every truly saved individual. And so because that is true- Salvation involves much more than simply praying a prayer or walking down an aisle or raising a hand or having an emotional experience that only lasts for a few weeks.

Salvation is eternal- absolutely- but it is eternal precisely because it is *not* the product of human emotion that can rise and fall in importance over the course of our lives. Salvation is eternal precisely because it is *not* the result of so-called “human free will”; because it is *not* the end result of a frail sinful human being “making a decision”.

So truly saved people will eternally love and serve God- not perfectly- not sinlessly- but honestly- and they will live their lives with abandon to the Glory of God precisely because Salvation is a Sovereign Act of God and precisely because it is *not* begun; initiated; enjoyed; or sustained through the mind or heart or strength of fallen Man.

And what was true in the 1st Century is also true in the 21st Century- because they don't make people any different than they ever did since the fall- and there are enormous amounts of people who think that having periodic crisis of conscience where they temporarily feel bad about doing sinful things or they go to Church on Easter or Christmas; or they cry at a movie about human goodness or they say that they have some foundational belief in a generic God is the proof of their Salvation- but it isn't.

And I suppose that if we asked those people- they would say they believe in Jesus. Many of them might even say they have "made a decision for Christ" at some point in their lives or they have "prayed a prayer". But coming on an Easter Sunday or a Christmas Sunday or going to a Christian concert doesn't constitute a life of following Jesus.

And then there are other more regular people, like some of you who are here today, and you certainly go beyond just the concerts and the seasonal events and you come several Sundays to the church during the year- providing of course that it is convenient and that you feel like it and that you manage to wake up in time to get here.

But for you- being saved is just a Sunday experience. The rest of the week- you follow your *own* desires and pursue your *own* ambitions and go after your *own* goals and objectives with little or no thought as to what the Will and the Word of God is concerning yourself.

But what the last 6 verses of **Luke 9** tell us is that Biblical Christianity is *not* a seasonal event. It's not even just a Sunday event- it is a way of life. It is gladly following Jesus- all the time- in joyous self-denial. Salvation is being supernaturally and miraculously and Sovereignly granted the gift to understand that there is no good at all in yourself and therefore- because God has mercifully rescued you from the Wrath of God that you deserve- you are more than willing to take up whatever Cross God has Sovereignly brought into your life and follow Jesus. So for saved people- serving God is an honor; a privilege; a joy; and a delight- not simply a duty or an obligation.

It is consciously and purposefully laying everything about yourself on top of the table and honestly holding it against the Truth of Scripture- every habit; every thought; every intent of the heart; every word; every action- to see if it honors and praises God and brings Glory to God or not. It is denying yourself to the degree it might cost you your life- and to do that joyfully.

And you welcome the opportunity to do that because you know how bankrupt you really are. And so following Jesus Christ and seeking to obey Him is what brings you the greatest hope and the fullness of joy. And what we have to understand is that the conditions of true Salvation are set by our Lord Himself- not by Billy Graham or Charles Finney or the pope or me or any other man or Church.

Now what is absolutely amazing- as you really read and study the Gospels- is the way that Jesus puts up barriers between people and Salvation. I mean if you and I were to start our own religion- we wouldn't begin it with the premise that made Salvation impossible for people to achieve. That isn't the way to build a new religion and gain new converts. You wouldn't begin your new religion with the premise that denied Salvation to anybody who was not devastated over his own sins and brought to a place of utter spiritual bankruptcy before they could be saved.

If you were starting a new religion- you would want as many people as possible to agree with it and to be a part of it- right? So you would make it *easier* to be saved- not harder; you would *lower* the standards not raise them; you would work hard to *remove* the barriers not build them; you would place as few requirements on people as you could- not make it so steep that nobody could qualify in their own strength and their own human power. You wouldn't keep making the road steeper and steeper for those to be saved- you would remove all barriers to Salvation so more people could participate.

Which is exactly what Man has done with all their false religions and human philosophies. Man says, "*Repeat this prayer and you can go to Heaven*"; or "*Say these words...*" or "*Attend these services...*" or "*Agree with these facts...*" or "*Put this in your mouth...*" or "*Go under this water...*" or "*Speak this language...*" or "*Wear these clothes...*" or "*Stop eating these foods...*" or "*Get rid of these habits...*" or "*Fly these airplanes through these buildings and you can achieve forgiveness and earn favor with God*".

But when God became Man and inserted Himself into His Own Creation and brought forth Divine Truth- He made true Salvation so hard that nobody can achieve it without God Sovereignly and graciously providing it for him. So as you read the Gospels- you see that it wasn't easy to get saved if you were talking to Jesus. He never led anybody to a

superficial or a purely emotional response to Himself- even with the people who actually *did* believe in Him.

Jesus was the single most controversial Man Who ever lived as He always emphasized how rare Salvation was and how miraculous Salvation was and how humanly impossible Salvation was by constantly raising the barrier of sin and self-denial and taking up a cross and hating family and being willing to give up everything you have in order to be saved.

And the issue for us today is the very same one as it was back then and that is this-

How infinitely valuable is Jesus to you?

I mean, if God is really that Sovereign and Man is really that sinful and hell is really that hot and God is really that angry with all sinners- and God is mercifully going to forgive you of all your sins and graciously rescue you from eternal damnation and the only catch is that Jesus has to become more important and more valuable and more beautiful and more glorious than anything else in your life- including your life- then He becomes the real issue very quickly doesn't He.

And sadly the answer for millions of people who will spend eternity in hell is that Jesus is really not that important- they are; and Jesus is not that valuable- their money and their possessions are; and Jesus is not that beautiful- something else is; and Jesus is not that glorious- their plans are.

The only reason that saved people are willing to pay the high cost of following Jesus and to do it with joy is because God has graciously and Sovereignly opened their eyes so that they can see the infinite Value of Jesus. And the reason why lost people are not willing to pay any cost and the reason why they see any sacrifice to serve God as being too much is because they see themselves and their selfish ideas and possessions as being more important and more valuable than the Lamb of God.

So the focal point of Salvation is not what *we* do- but what did Jesus do for us. And it is not about what we have give up- but it is about Who is glorious in our eyes; and it isn't about any sacrifice *we* may make- it is about a sinless Man screaming in agony on a Cross as

the Wrath of God that we deserve is poured out on Him as He willingly dies in our place.

So because that is true- Jesus continually set the Standard of Salvation so high that human will power and human strength and human capabilities cannot earn it or attain it.

And so here in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you, which has a parallel in **Matthew 8:19-22**- Jesus is confronted by three would-be disciples. And in each of these cases- there is a barrier that Jesus puts up. And the sad end of the Passage is that these people all went away unsaved and unforgiven. We have not even a hint that any of these three people affirmed their commitment to Jesus. None of them even responded positively to what Jesus said.

So it is correct to say that in these 6 verses- Jesus had three evangelistic prospects and He set conditions that caused each one of them to walk away without eternal life. And my prayer is that after understanding that- that not one of you will do the same- but you will quickly repent and trust in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus to save your sinful souls.

Now we already know from studying **Luke 9:23** back in July of last year- that the Standard for anyone to come after Jesus is:

- ✓ Self-denial
- ✓ Self-sacrifice
- ✓ Self-submission

And these are not nice things that serve to make you more spiritual than somebody who does not do these things but are in fact *requirements* for anyone to be genuinely saved and go to Heaven. Anyone who is born again by the Spirit of God has been Sovereignly granted the gift of being able to come to the end of yourself. You are truly mourning over your sinfulness and your life of dishonoring God; you are meek and humble because you understand the bankruptcy of your own heart and how much you deserve eternal damnation. You hunger and thirst after a Righteousness that you do not have and cannot obtain in your own strength to such a degree that you no longer cling to material things- whether they are material comforts, material possessions, or material relationships.

This is a level of desperation that says, *“I have come to the end of myself and I no longer want to associate with myself.”* It's beating on my breast in such despair that I cry out,

“O God be merciful to me, a sinner, and give me Christ as my Lord and my Savior and my Master- Whom I will joyfully follow for the infinite Value He is to me.”

Now as we come to this Passage- the chronology is not clear. The good doctor just kind of throws this account in here. But the chronology *is* clear over in the sister Passage in **Matthew 8**. There it is clear that this event actually happened during Jesus' Ministry in Galilee around the town of Capernaum- which was the headquarters for Jesus' Ministry.

In Luke's flow- the Galilean ministry is over and in verse 51- we see that Jesus had resolutely set His Face to go to Jerusalem. So He's on the way now to Jerusalem that will end in His Crucifixion and Resurrection. So there is less than a year left til His Death. And as He moves toward Jerusalem- Jesus goes to various places- but the primary goal is the training of the Twelve, to prepare them for the ministry that awaits them after He is gone.

So Levi tells us this was during the Galilean ministry. But Luke includes it here only because it's part of the training of the Twelve. In **Luke 9:46** Jesus gave them a powerful lesson on Divine Humility. And in verses 51 and following- He gave them a lesson on Divine Mercy. And now here Jesus is giving them a lesson on Discipleship. This is all part of how Jesus is preparing these men and us for this responsibility.

And we can see that there were many who were following Jesus- who were all in various stages of belief. Some were genuinely believing on Him; while others were unbelieving but moving towards Salvation while still others were on their way out- having become offended at the barriers to Salvation that Jesus constantly raised.

Jesus was there and the Twelve- but **Luke 10:1** says that Jesus appointed 70 other people and sent them out two by two as he had done with the Twelve. So there were at least 83 people present when Jesus said these words but we can also assume there are many others as well because Jesus was constantly being followed by a very large crowd. And Levi also tells us that when this incident happened- Jesus had been

doing many powerful miracles- and wherever miracles were manifested- there was always a huge crowd.

So we can assume that there was a huge crowd of people present as Jesus made these statements. And many of them followed Jesus because of His power over demons. Some followed Him because of His Power over disease and His power over death and nature. Some followed because of the astonishing Character of His teaching- and because of the amazing Authority that He carried Himself with. Still others were attracted to Jesus because of His compassionate, loving Nature.

Jesus Christ was and is the single most attractive Person Who ever walked the face of the earth- that is until He opened His Mouth and spoke. And then most of the people who followed Him for miles simply walked off and left Jesus standing in the middle of the road. And people then as well as people today continue to try to make a distinction between Who Jesus is and what Jesus taught. They try to say how much they love the Person Jesus Who healed diseases and raised the dead and fed the multitudes and Who forgave sin- but they really don't care for the exclusive way that Jesus talked about Salvation and God and Heaven and so they work hard to make a distinction between the baby in the manger that they have sweet sentimental notions about and the grown Man Who walked along the Sea of Galilee demanding and expecting people to follow Him and deny themselves. They try to divide between the Healer and the Truth; between the Feeder and the Way; between the Blessor and the Life. They work hard to love the Humanitarian while distancing themselves from the Master. Their efforts are to have Jesus as their Savior and but never as their Lord.

But these people had powerful and irrefutable evidences that He was in fact the Messiah- fulfilling the Old Testament Promises; that He was the Savior- the Son of God. They had ample evidences for that in what He said and in what He did. And yet the crowd was a spectrum all the way from those who were there to find a way to kill Him, to those who were already affirming that He was the Son of God and believing in Him- and everything in the middle. And the middle is what we would call the disciples or the *mathetes*- the students, the learners- who were at all levels of commitment.

In fact, in Levi's Gospel Record- one of these three men is even called a disciple. But don't confuse him with an Apostle- because being a disciple didn't mean that you had actually come to saving faith. As the Apostle wrote over in **John 6**- many of Jesus' disciples became offended at something that Jesus said and just walked away and left Him and never walked with Jesus again. So the word, "disciple" simply means they were there as learners.

But in this Passage- these three people had come to the point where they moved across the spectrum pretty close to the right end and they were convinced that Jesus was in fact a Spokesman for God. They were convinced that there was no one else like Him. They obviously were convinced of His miracle powers because He had done literally thousands of miracles before their eyes. The reputation of Jesus was never even brought into question, nor were any of His miracles questioned even by the people who hated Him most. They knew this was a Man from God- which makes their rejection of Him all the more amazing.

So these three people were convinced that Jesus was the Son of God- the Messiah. And they get all the way up to the point where they actually say that they're ready to follow Him- but under certain conditions.

You could call these three people the best and most likely prospects for the Kingdom of God among the entire crowd. And yet when Jesus is through with them- all three of them turn and go away. So here are three of those most interested; three closest to the right side of that spectrum to real Salvation. And yet our Lord- Who is the Love of God personified- confronts them with the necessity of absolute self-denial to be saved. Read **Luke 9:57** again with me:

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

Now on the surface- this sounds great doesn't it? But as we continue on- we will see that this first would-be follower of Jesus was hindered by his desire for personal comfort. Verse 57 begins with:

As they were going along the road...

Now from just the information that Luke gives us- we don't know what road he is talking about. But over in Matthew- the Apostle Levi- the former tax collector writes that this first man was a scribe who said to Jesus,

"I will follow You wherever You go."

So this is a moment of great emotion for this scribe. And this is the place where most modern evangelism techniques say that we are supposed to get people to. This is that "high point" of emotion and devotion that many of the songs and the "altar calls" are designed to create within a person that were designed and invented by Charles Finney about 150 years ago- but which are not found anywhere in the Bible.

And this guy is there. He is very, very eager. He has been seeing with his own eyes all the miracles that are listed in **Matthew 8:5-18**. This scribe has seen all of that and had been a part of the crowd and had firsthand experience and he is emotionally moved and attracted to Jesus on a surface and human level. And he reaches the highest level of human emotion that a persona can reach and he says,

"I will follow You wherever you go."

In other words- this guy is saying, *"I'm done with what my past has been. I'm going to leave my career as a scribe and follow You, Jesus."*

So far- so good, right? Now by the way- the scribes were very esteemed people in Jewish life. Scribes were the experts of the Law. They were the lawyers, the religious lawyers who interpreted the Law the way that lawyers interpret the law of the land today. They interpreted the law of the rabbis and the Law of Scripture. So they were qualified and authorized by Jewish authorities, highly educated and loyal to the Jewish system.

But scribes were generally hostile to Jesus. They joined with the Pharisees, the chief priests to seek Jesus' death. So it's a rare thing indeed for a scribe to publicly affirm that he wants to follow Jesus wherever He goes. So here is a scribe- who might even be a rabbi and a teacher saying, *"From now on I want to join Your group, You are my Rabbi."*

Now Levi wrote that before this scribe said this- he addressed Jesus as, "*didaskalos*" which is "Teacher", or "Rabbi". So this guy was literally saying, "*I want to join Your group, Jesus because I think You're the Teacher.*" So this scribe was offering himself as a willing pupil of the Miracle Worker from Nazareth. What better PR could Jesus have than to get a scribe as a convert? And then Jesus could get that scribe to go all over the place and give testimony as to how he had turned from the legalism of his past to the Grace that was found in Jesus Christ. What a wonderful testimony that would be for this new religion. He could headline his meetings, "*Come hear a converted scribe give testimony*". That would surely draw a crowd.

Now the phrase,

"I will follow You wherever You go,"

... implies some kind of permanence. It implies more than a momentary decision. It implies more than a moment of emotion. Surely Jesus was the greatest Teacher this man had ever heard- He was the single most riveting Personality he had ever met. And he knew that Jesus stood for the destruction of the narrow legalism that the scribes stood for. But Jesus was still compelling to him, overwhelming. And he thought he was giving Him the fullest commitment when he said, "I'll follow You wherever You go."

But Jesus had seen this before. As God- Jesus knew what was in all men according to **John 2:23**. When Jesus was in Jerusalem at the very beginning of His ministry- ,

John 2:23b-25

23 ... during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men,

25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Now all these people seemed to believe in Him- but Jesus didn't make any commitment to them at all- precisely because He knew what was in their heart. He knew that whatever faith they had was not

“Saving Faith”- the kind of faith it takes to believe and be saved. It was not a real God initiated repentance and commitment. So what we can see is that unlike modern Church leaders- Jesus always refuses to cash in on a moment of human emotion. He just flat out refuses to do that- and so should we. Jesus knows human nature and He knows that anything initiated by humans is unstable and fickle. He knows it's origin is self-centeredness- not self-denial. This scribe saw the crowds and he saw the miracles and he heard the teaching and he wanted to be associated with Jesus because there was no one else like Him- but not to be rescued from the Wrath of God against his sins.

So even though the offer was very complete on the part of the scribe- it wasn't complete at all as far as Jesus was concerned- and this is just amazing. If somebody came today and said, "I want to follow Jesus wherever He leads," the average evangelical Christian is going to say, *"Pray this prayer; sign this card; and we begin the followup."*

But Jesus doesn't do that. He says the most amazing offensive and insulting thing to him. Jesus in effect says,

"Oh really? You really want to follow me? Well, let's see. Here's what it's like to follow Me" Read verse 58 again:

Luke 9:58

"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but ^athe Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

What we have to understand is that Jesus knew this man's mind because as God- He's Omniscient. And He knew this man had a desire for personal comfort and safety and so Jesus went right to the issue. Foxes were everywhere in Israel in those days and in more ancient days. You remember Samson when he tied all their tails together and sent them through a field burning. Foxes were common to the people and they had their burrows and they had their places to go and rest and eat. And birds were everywhere.

So everybody knew birds had nests and foxes have holes. That's just basic stuff. And as common as that is and as normal as that is for animals- Jesus didn't even have that- the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His Head.

Now at least 80 times Jesus refers to Himself as “the Son of Man”, it's His favorite title for Himself. It marks out not only that He is the Messiah because it's a Messianic title taken from **Daniel 7:13**, but it also emphasizes the fact of His humanness. And in His humiliation as the Son of Man, He says, *"I have nowhere to lay My head. All I can promise you, My friend, is that if you follow Me it might mean you're homeless. Don't expect any comfort following Me. Don't expect any ease or any physical safety and security following Me."*

Now compare this statement with what you hear every day on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network where these pious pipers promise people the moon as long as they give to their ministry. Compare this Statement by Jesus to Joyce Meyer who says she can't even imagine why anyone would want to serve God if they thought they might have to suffer. Why would any discerning believer listen to people like that?

Now why does Jesus make an issue out of this to this man? Shouldn't Jesus be grateful that this man is making this much of a commitment? I mean this guy would be pastor material in most modern Churches simply from having this level of commitment. Yet to Jesus- who is infinitely more interested in Saving souls than we are- this man's commitment was an insult and a reproach. How could that be? Because his statement came from the internal reality of his own *self-centeredness*- not self-denial.

Basically the only reason this man was interested in following Jesus at all was because he thought there might be something advantageous for him to do so. In other words- this man was saying, *"If I follow You- what's in it for me?"* That's the exact opposite of self-denial. And that is the exact wrong way for anyone to proclaim the Gospel.

Being saved is not about any self-satisfaction; or self- fulfillment; or self- worth. Salvation is all about self-denial. You do not come to the Cross of Jesus so Jesus will help you to fulfill all your dreams-. No, you come to the Cross to die. Salvation is all about ending your own way of living and taking up your cross and following Jesus.

It's not about what do I get when I get Jesus- it's about what am I willing to give up. It's about the level of desperation that says, *"Look, I don't make any bargains at this point, my condition is so desperate I*

want forgiveness and I want grace and I want heaven and I put no conditions on it."

The modern technique of winning people to Jesus is probably the single most unbiblical aspect of the modern Church. And it is not producing genuine believers who joyfully deny self and take up their cross and follow Jesus- it produces self-centered spoiled brats who are offended at the slightest notion that Jesus might have the gaul to expect or demand anything of them. And it stems from a complete ignoring and minimizing of the two foundational cornerstones of Biblical Christianity:

- ✓ The Absolute Sovereignty of God
- ✓ The Radical Ruination of Man through the Fall

... which is exactly why these two Truths are either completely ignored or are so minimized that they carry no weight.

Now the second man had probably been listening to all this and Jesus suddenly turns to him and said in **Luke 9:59**:

"Follow Me."

Jesus Christ- God Almighty in human flesh- has just turned to you and offered you eternal life and to follow Him on this earth and the first thing out of this guy's mouth was,

Permit me first to go and bury my father.

Now why was this the first thing this guy thought about? It seems reasonable to go bury your father- I mean if your father had just died that is certainly reasonable, right? And after all- according to Jewish custom,- a burial took place immediately after death. The Jews didn't embalm anybody- they just wrapped bodies and put them immediately in the grave. And there was a 30-day time of mourning. So it would have been appropriate for the son to be there. It was honorable to give burial to the dead and particularly a son's responsibility to make sure that his father was cared for in death. The only way under the Law that a son could get out of caring for the funeral of his father was if he was high priest and then, of course, he couldn't touch a dead body, according

to Leviticus 21, or according to Numbers 6 if he took a Nazarite vow, temporary Nazarite vow and couldn't touch a dead body.

But there's no indication here that this guy had done either, of course. He just wanted to go home and bury his father. If you weren't the High Priest and you hadn't taken a Nazarite vow, that was the honorable and the right thing to do. The final act of devotion to his father seems pretty reasonable.

So on the surface this actually says some very good things about this man, says some necessary things about the man. But the phrase, "I must bury my father" was a familiar Middle-Eastern statement that is still used today. And it doesn't mean what we would think it would mean.

This doesn't mean, *"Just let me honor my father first and then I will follow You"*. This actually means, *"I must stay at home until my father is dead so that I can bring his estate to its final point and so that I can receive my inheritance."* In other words- this man was telling Jesus, *"I'll be happy to follow You- some day- after my father's dead and I've gotten what I need and done what I want to do first."*

So from this we know that this second guy is attracted to Jesus, on some level and he's amazed at His Power- but this guy clearly loves money. He's like the weedy soil in the parable of the different kinds of soil. You know, it says that the seed went into soil that was full of weeds and the weeds choked it out and Jesus explained that as the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches which choked the seed. So here's another guy with a response. Something pops up, looks like life, but the love of the things of this world, the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches choke out the life. He said I've waited too long not to cash in. I want what my father has and what's coming to me.

And we know that is true because Jesus rebuked him and said,

"Allow the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the Kingdom of God."

Look, nobody wants us to honor our parents more than Jesus does and the fact that Jesus rebukes this man here shows that this isn't exactly what we see. This reveals that this second man's intentions were not honorable- they were in fact simply another way of manifesting self- centeredness- rather than self-denial.

After all- Jesus had just said that he didn't even have what foxes and birds have and had no place to lay His Head- and so this second man was going to make sure that he received his father's inheritance first before he followed Jesus just to make sure he had shelter and security.

And so in light of this effort to be self- centered rather than self-denial- Jesus told him to allow the unconverted people- let the people in this world who are outside the Kingdom of God take care of the spiritually dead. In other words- Jesus was telling this man to leave temporal things to temporal people. Leave the matters of the temporal kingdom to the people who live in that kingdom. Jesus called this man to come into the Kingdom of God and for the rest of his life to go and proclaim the glories of that Kingdom. But in order to do that- he had to first let go of the kingdom of this world- even its good and noble and desirable elements and be totally devoted to Jesus.

So from this- we can see that Jesus obviously knew what was in the man's heart. And this wasn't something that Jesus had to read- He heard it right out of the man's own mouth. He will follow Jesus- but not until his father dies and he receives his inheritance.

So this man is committed to personal riches. He's like the rich young ruler back in **Matthew 19**- who came to Jesus and said *"What do I do, good Master, to receive eternal life?"* And Jesus said, *"Well before we talk about eternal life, let's talk about the Law, let's talk about the Ten Commandments."*

And the man said, *"Oh, I've kept all the Commandments, no problem."* And by saying that- he was actually telling Jesus, *"I'm really not a sinner."* Which is the very essence of self-righteousness and so that's a real barrier to this man being saved. But Jesus was not finished. He desired to expose this man's self- centeredness which is the opposite of self-denial and so He told the man,

Matthew 19:21

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

Jesus guaranteed this rich man eternal life if he would sell all that he had. But what did he do? When confronted with his own self-centeredness- this rich young ruler did the very same thing as the

second man in Luke 9 and he valued what he had more than he valued Jesus and the Bible says,

Matthew 19:22

But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

His response was to just walk away from Jesus. He just left Jesus standing there and walked away. There was no self-denial. He wouldn't deny his own self-righteousness and he wouldn't deny his own possessions. And so he went away- grieving.

So Jesus always put the barriers up at the appropriate time to make sure that the devotion of people was real and genuine. So here was a man who was asked by God incarnate to follow Him and he said *"Yea, I'll be happy to do that, Lord- but only at a later date sometime in the future after I've been taken care of with my inheritance."* And Jesus said, "You don't understand. You come into My Kingdom, you let go of the kingdom of this world. Friendship with the world is enmity with the God." If you love the world or the things that are in the world, the love of the Father is not in you- so don't worry about it- just keep it. Now look quickly at the third man in **Luke 9:61**:

Luke 9:61

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

So this man is not going to be like that other guy. He will follow Jesus and he won't wait till his father dies and he gets the inheritance- all he wants is to go home and say goodbye.

And again on the surface- this sounds fairly reasonable, doesn't it? And the only reason why we know that this is not reasonable is because of the way that Jesus responds. Look at verse 62:

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."

So evidently- this third man's family had a hold on him that he couldn't let go of- but Jesus had already said in **Matthew 10:34-39**:

34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;

36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

So Jesus tells this man, *"Look, if you're going to follow Me- you have to say goodbye to your family. You have to be willing to cut the cord with your family."* This man was going to go back to a family who would never understand this; who would prey on him; who would ply him not to do this and dissuade him from following Jesus- and Jesus knew it.

So this means that in a relative sense- your love for the Kingdom of God has to be so great that you are indifferent to the compulsions and the pull and the interests of your family.

Now, by the way- Jesus responds in verse 62, with a proverb that can be traced back to a Jewish writer named Hesiod in 800 B.C who said,

"You can't plow a furrow looking backwards."

And so the point here is that you can't follow Jesus looking backwards. You can't have a divided heart. It's all Jesus; all the time- or its nothing.

So there are people who come all the way up to believing, all the way up and could be pushed very easily into praying the prayer or making the decision and accept Christ into their heart.

But the Truth is that that is all superficial emotional fluff. It isn't real and their emotional response is not true conversion. Now it is certainly electrifying and it is enticing and it will fill a church with

warm bodies- but it is the very essence of being sensual rather than being spiritual and it is part of the problem with the modern Church and is not part of the solution.

So if we will simply resist the temptation to go for the easy sell and confront people with the Biblical Truth that the self-denial that Christ demands for all who will come after Him is so complete that it asks you to be willing to give up all your comfort, all your possessions and all your relationships.

And the Truth is that the person who is truly being prompted by the Spirit of God and brought into the Kingdom is going to say, *"Look, Jesus Christ is so infinitely valuable to me and I am so infinitely sinful that I don't care what the price is, I will gladly sell all for the magnificence of Jesus Christ"*

So the issue here is true Salvation and the eternity of the people we preach to. The issue is not adding people to the pews but them coming into the Kingdom of God. Salvation is only for those who have come to complete self-denial. The Lord may not take away all your comfort. He may not take away all your possessions. He may not take away all your relationships- but there will be no negotiating. There will be no bargaining. So all who will enter into Heaven must come with the attitude that Jesus Christ is so wonderful and so valuable that if He asks- I'll give it all up- and I'll give it up gladly.

So responding properly to Jesus Christ is not a matter of emotion. It's not a matter of an event. It's not a matter of a momentary acceptance or a decision. It is not some superficial interest. It is not even a matter of saying, *"I will follow"*. It is a matter of God Sovereignly bringing that individual to a place of complete self-denial, total self-denial- a willingness to give up everything because the Value of Jesus Christ is so infinite and glorious.

And lost sinners can only reach that level of desperation by a Sovereign Act of God the Holy Spirit. He who doesn't take up his cross and follow Jesus is not worthy of Him. He who has found his life shall lose it. He who has lost his life for Christ's sake shall find it. So true Salvation is all about losing your life. It's about hating yourself. It's about holding on to nothing.

These three men were confronted with their own self-centeredness and with the beauty of a life of self-denial and having their sins forgiven and of enjoying eternal life with God in Heaven but they all responded

by just walking off and leaving Jesus standing there. How will we respond today?

Let's pray