

## Considering the Cost of Discipleship Luke 9:57-62

To begin the message today I would like you to take your hymnal and sing some songs.

Hymn #588 – All for Jesus

Hymn #566 – I Am Resolved

Hymn #552 – I Am Thine, O Lord (Stanza 2)

Hymn #597 – Take My Life and Let It Be  
Consecrated

Perhaps from these hymns you have surmised that the resounding theme of each is one of surrender and commitment. That's the nature of a disciple. From our passage in Luke 9:57-62, Jesus challenges us to consider the cost of following Him. There are three primary areas of our life that have the greatest challenge to surrender. Surrender is a lifetime of moments when we give control of ourselves and yield to God in obedience and trust. Surrender of our will and ways is absolutely essential if we will follow Jesus. Jesus teaches a very clear principle that we cannot live for self and live for Him at the same time. What cost then is Jesus asking us to surrender if we are to follow Him?

There are three in this passage.

Surrendering riches

Surrendering responsibilities

Surrendering relationships

### I. SURRENDERING RICHES – v. 57-58

Luke describes the scene this way: Jesus and His disciples are walking along a road, some road, any road. Matthew records that a crowd was around Jesus who gave orders to get in a boat and go across the Sea of Galilee to the other side. This is when Jesus calms the storm and then heals the two demon possessed men in Gadara. Remember that Luke doesn't necessarily keep things in chronological order as do Matthew and Mark. His goal is to present Jesus to his Gentile audience in such a way that reveals the person and work of Christ as it relates to the overall gospel message. Luke's style

is to present detail that fits together with what he wants to convey about the life and ministry of Jesus and is less concerned about chronology.

Luke is also not concerned about who is talking to Jesus at this time. Again he's writing to Gentiles and only wants to present to them the cost that must be considered when following Jesus. Matthew on the other hand is writing to Jews and mention in his account that a teacher or scribe came to Jesus and spoke to Him is significant to the Jew.

Let's remember some things about scribes. First of all they were educated men. They were learned in the law, which meant they were more than just guys who copied the law down, they taught the law. The Scribe was also a jurist. When it came to the law they studied it and then set precedent regarding what the law said. So in a sense, they interpreted it and then saw that it was followed. It was then their responsibility to pass judgment if someone did not obey the law. Among those in Israel, Scribes were respected and had a lot of clout.

Being well educated they were also from the upper middle class and so had some wealth. As we read the Gospels we find that the Scribes didn't like Jesus. They were hostile toward Him.

Matthew 9:3 after Jesus heals a paralytic He forgives the man's sins, the Scribes had a meeting and declared that Jesus was committing blasphemy. In Matthew 15:1-2 they challenged Jesus as to why His disciples didn't keep the traditions of the elders by not performing the ceremonial washing before they ate.

In Matthew 27:41 at the crucifixion of Jesus we find the Scribes among those who were in the crowd mocking Jesus.

They were not overly fond of Jesus, so to find a Scribe coming to Jesus seeking to follow Him would have been surprising to the Jews. It is possible that he had witnessed the teaching and miracles of Matthew 8 and wanted to attach himself

to this very gifted teacher, desiring to become a pupil of Jesus. In Matthew he addressed Jesus as “Teacher”, indicating the respect he had for Jesus. Notice with me what the Scribe tells Jesus. “I will follow You wherever You go.”

Notice the promise he makes: “I will follow You.” He was claiming that he would follow Jesus exclusively. Whatever other allegiances he may have had to other teachers he was admitting a willingness to break loyalty with them in order to follow Jesus. Isn’t that the essence of the songs we just sang? Ponder again what we just sang and ask if that is the desire of our heart or do we still hold on to other allegiances?

I am resolved no longer to linger,  
Charmed by the world’s delight;  
Things that are higher, things that are nobler –  
These have allured my sight.  
I will hasten to Him,  
Hasten so glad and free.  
Jesus, Greatest, Highest,  
I will come to Thee.

I am resolved to follow the Savior,  
Faithful and true each day.  
Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth;  
He is the Living Way.

I am resolved, and who will go with me?  
Come, friends without delay;  
Taught by the Bible, led by the Spirit,  
We’ll walk the heavenly way.

Does that describe us? Do we hurry to follow Christ or do we drag our feet? Do we linger in the world or do pursue a higher, nobler cause?

Genesis 19:16, 26

They were told by the angels to hurry out of the city of Sodom because God was going to destroy it due to its rampant sin. It says Lot lingered so that the angels had to grab he and his family by the hand

and literally pull them out of the city. If the angels hadn’t intervened Lot and his family would have been destroyed along with Sodom, but his wife’s heart was still in Sodom and when she looked back God destroyed her.

Do we hasten to follow and obey God or do we linger because of other things that appeal to us? That song also says that we will hurry gladly and freely in following Jesus. There is a great eagerness in following. I ask again, does that describe us?

Maybe the Scribe was eager to follow Jesus. Maybe he was bold in his decision. Maybe he was hasty and hadn’t fully understood the ramifications of the promise he made. After all he didn’t know where Jesus was headed. He may not have even known anything else about Jesus other than He was a great teacher and miracle worker. This man was inwardly prepared to give up a great deal unless he thought there was some greater, tangible benefit to him, like a promotion of sorts for following Jesus into the kingdom He was hoping would soon come on earth. He may have been enamored with the crowds and accolades showered on Jesus and thought he would like to get in on that kind of action. They may have all been selfish reasons.

Now I want you to notice something else in the promise he made. Not only did he claim that he would exclusively follow Jesus, he claimed that wherever Jesus went he would go too. The Greek gives us a clue about his intentions. We can read it and think that he is doing a very noble thing and admire him for his devotion. The phrase “wherever you go” is written in the present middle subjunctive mood. That it is written in the present tense indicates the idea of progress. I think we would all agree that the more we come to know and learn about the Christian life there is progress that we make toward Christ likeness. We might say it’s like our education. It’s the very rare student who can enter first grade and have a grasp of calculus or

differential equations. Normally the student begins by understanding numbers by counting and then adding simple numbers and then more complicated numbers. Then the student works on subtraction, multiplication and division. Some story problems are thrown in and over time progress is made toward greater math skills.

I think we come to understand the same thing about faith and following Jesus. As we learn more about our relationship with Christ we come to understand what is required and expected of following Him. We learn more and more as we go and grow. That's progress. Even Paul recognized that he hadn't attained everything in the Christian life. He continued to press on to the goal.

So while the Scribe's intention suggests progress, it is also in the subjunctive mood which makes no distinction of time between tenses. The present subjunctive does not necessarily refer to the present tense. So what this is saying is that the Scribe was willing to follow Jesus, but at a time when it was convenient for him. It could be a week, a month, a year, some indeterminate time in the future.

Maybe that's where we are today. We're willing even eager to follow, we'll follow if there's possibly something in it for us, but we'll choose when that time comes.

What was Jesus' response to the Scribe? We see it in verse 58. "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head."

Think about that for a moment. Here the Creator of the universe is saying that creatures of the world which He made all have a place to call home, but He, the Creator doesn't even have anywhere to lay His head. But what He is saying is more than just not having a residence. Following Him would require a cost. The cost is a willingness to surrender riches. Was the scribe willing to give that

up? Was he willing to surrender the comforts of a home and live on the road? Was he willing to attach himself to the wandering lifestyle of Jesus without the assurance of comforts?

Let's be clear that Jesus isn't saying that we must give up everything and live in a cardboard box down by the river or under some bridge or an abandoned car. I believe the principle Jesus is setting forth here a willingness to surrender those things up – the security of a nice home with all its creature comforts, the security of a weekly pay check, the security of three meals a day – would we be willing to surrender them to follow Him? How loosely do we hold on to those things or do they hinder us from following Him? I think Abraham is a wonderful example of this principle. God told him to leave his family and country and go to a place He would be shown and there be made a great nation. It meant that Abraham had to give up family ties and any inheritance he might have otherwise received from his family and trust God.

Are we willing to surrender riches to follow Jesus? Let's not be like the rich guy who went away from Jesus unwilling to surrender his life to Christ because he was unwilling to surrender his riches.

Now some might say "I'm off the hook, because I'm not rich, I don't have much." The amount isn't the point. The point is are we willing to surrender what we have to follow Jesus wherever He goes?

Riches can be a tremendous hindrance to following Christ. That may not be a problem to you, but how about this second issue? Let's look at the next consideration of counting the cost of discipleship – surrendering responsibilities.

## II. SURRENDERING RESPONSIBILITIES – v. 59-60

We assume that Jesus is talking to someone else in the crowd. Perhaps the man Jesus addressed

showed some interest when Jesus was talking to the Scribe. Perhaps he just looked at the man and pointed to him and told him to follow. We don't know but notice that Jesus is the one bidding the man to leave everything and follow. He is the one making the appeal to the man. It's the same appeal He makes to us. "Follow Me." It was as clear a call to the man as it was to the twelve disciples.

The word follow used here means to be a companion. It is in the present imperative tense and indicates that Jesus was not seeking a temporary following, but one of a lifelong commitment. It is used some 77 times in the gospels and metaphorically it's used of discipleship. The appeal Jesus makes is to active rather than passive or casual discipleship. I think casual discipleship is an oxymoron since casual and discipleship would be considered opposite or contradictory terms. A disciple is a committed learner and in Jesus' day a person would attach himself to a teacher and follow that person everywhere to learn whatever the teacher taught both by words and example. By its very nature discipleship implies total commitment to follow Christ, one who puts Christ first.

A disciple is not only convinced the person they are following is worthy of such devotion, they are committed to following with an unsurpassed devotion, willing to give up everything else in order to follow. This man had heard the response Jesus gave to the Scribe that to follow Him meant total surrender and so he began the mental process of considering Jesus' request. Notice what he said: "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

He understands who Jesus is by the way he responds in calling Jesus Lord. He even understands what is being asked of him and at first glance his response appears to be honorable – I'll follow You but first let me go and bury my father.

In that day and culture the burial of a father was a sacred duty, but most scholars believe the father

was not yet dead, so it might be a long time before he would begin to follow Jesus. Something else to consider is that when a father died, the inheritance was passed on to the son and so it may have been that the son wanted to get the inheritance from his father first so that he could be financially set when he did begin to follow Jesus.

The man was letting his responsibilities stand in the way of following Jesus.

I have shared before but it bears repeating again that when my folks made the decision to move to Barakel they had to consider the cost. There were those, well-meaning as they were, family and friends who tried to talk my folks out of following God to serve at Barakel. They argued from the standpoint of all their responsibilities:

Dad had a family of seven to provide for.

Dad had a good job as head mechanic in the Birmingham school district with the responsibility of keeping over 100 busses on the road every day.

Dad was on the Deacon Board.

Dad headed up Christian Service Brigade.

Dad was the church janitor.

Mom headed up Jr. Church.

They both taught.

They both sang in the choir.

The list of responsibilities was long.

Now let me ask you a question. Are those things good or bad? Let me ask you another question then. If they are good and honorable things, and if they knew that God had called them to follow Him to serve at a Barakel and they said no, we have all these responsibilities to tend to, would those things still have been considered good and honorable? Now people would have looked at them and said they were doing such a wonderful job serving the Lord, yet God would have said they were what? He would have said they were disobedient.

The man had legitimate responsibilities with regard to his family. The father could have recently died.

In that culture he would have been buried on the same day followed by a 10 day mourning period, or the father may have still been alive. Either way, the man wanted to postpone the call on his life. He wanted to wait to get the inheritance and in essence was saying that he didn't quite trust the Lord to provide for his tangible needs as a disciple.

Dwight Pentecost writes in *Design for Discipleship* "The man was self-sufficient, independent, and he did not want to be obligated to Christ. Therefore, he would rather postpone the decision and the commitment to Christ until he did not have to depend on Christ. This is one of the major temptations of the age in which we live. Price demands that we be self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency demands that we can make and pay our own way – that we be dependent on no one. A man's desire to be able to take care of himself often keeps that man from committing himself completely and totally to the Person of Jesus Christ. He refuses to be brought to the place of dependence. Until he is willing to depend on Christ, he cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ."

We can allow family responsibilities to be a hindrance to following Jesus.

I'll follow when the kids are grown and out of school.

I'll follow when I retire.

I'll follow when I have enough money saved up.

Jesus forced the man to make a decision. Too many sit on the fence of indecisiveness. But notice that Jesus made it very plain what was at stake. "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

He was speaking about the urgency of the gospel. That has greater priority than burial responsibilities. Let me be clear by saying that Jesus is not saying we should ignore family obligations or that we shouldn't care if someone dies in the family. He is not against giving honor to family in such a

situation, but don't let that be an excuse for not following Him.

Jesus says that the spiritually dead can bury the physically dead because the urgency of spreading the gospel can't wait. It is what Walvoord and Zuck call a radical commitment.

This man was willing to follow but only on his own terms and in his own time.

In the call to follow Jesus we must consider surrendering riches.

We must consider surrendering responsibilities, even when those responsibilities seem honorable. Lastly, we must consider surrendering relationships.

### III. SURRENDERING RELATIONSHIPS – v. 61-62

This is one more example Jesus gives when illustrating the cost of discipleship. These three examples flesh out what He said earlier in vs. 23. "And He said to them all, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me."

A third person also spoke as the first person did about his willingness to follow Jesus, but it came with certain conditions. In it we see a lack of commitment. He was willing but wanted to delay it because first he wanted to bid his family farewell.

There isn't anything inherently wrong with wanting to say good-bye. Like the previous man, this request also seems reasonable. In I Kings 19:19-20 when Elijah called Elisha to follow him, Elisha went back to say good-bye, but he didn't remain there. To show his commitment to follow Elijah he chopped up his plow for firewood and then chopped up the oxen and sacrificed them as a demonstration of his total commitment of not returning to his previous work.



How many of us, though, have responded like this third guy? I'll go, but first... And we let relationships hinder our commitment to immediate action. He wanted to go home first and set things in order and in due time when everything was taken care of then he would follow Jesus. Maybe he was hoping the family would talk him out of it. My Dad's family certainly tried to do that. They listed all the negative reasons my parents shouldn't go.

In that culture as long as the father was alive his authority was greater than any other. The man in essence said to Jesus that he recognized His authority, but to him the authority of his father had priority and would honor that until his father died, hence the delay in following.

Pentecost again writes "Until a man is willing to recognize the absolute authority of Jesus Christ in his life, he is not and cannot be a disciple."

Notice that the last two excuses are similar in nature – me first and then the kingdom. We could assume that at the first sign of hardship, they would be gone. That was John Mark when he went with Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey. Perhaps allured by the travel and the talk of big crowds and sharing the gospel all sounded appealing to an adventurous heart. But when trouble came he headed home. Only later on after he matured did he become valuable to Paul and the writer of our 2<sup>nd</sup> Gospel.

How many would be disciples have given up because of hardship or who didn't even begin the journey because they used the same excuse "But first..." Unwilling to surrender relationships.

Notice how Jesus replied to this person. "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

The Phillips translation states that such a man is useless for the kingdom of God.

Here's a man looking back. Jesus uses an illustration out of agriculture to depict what such discipleship would look like. How could a person expect to plow a straight line if he kept looking back over his shoulder to see where he had been? We cannot follow Christ with a divided heart.

This is a call to look with urgency toward the kingdom. If we would follow Jesus, we must fix our eyes on Him (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Philippians 3:12-14 Here was Paul's response.

Detrick Bonhoeffer concludes in his book *The Cost of Discipleship* that "Discipleship means adherence to Jesus Christ alone, and immediately."

This call on the part of Jesus sets apart the serious from the superficial, those who are committed from those who are casual. That's why when Jesus called the crowd to follow Him (John 6:66) many followed Him no more because the cost was too great. These three examples show us an insincere commitment to Christ. And curiously, we don't know the outcome of whether or not they chose to follow Christ.

During my senior year of High school our basketball team was ranked as high as 12<sup>th</sup> in the State polls for class D schools. About ¾ the way through the season during one particular practice we were all starting to feel the effects of rigorous practices and we started goofing off during drills. The coach stopped practice and lectured us about commitment and if we couldn't be serious about our dedication to the team, we were welcome to leave.

A call to follow Jesus should not be made as a result of an emotional appeal and neither should it come because of an impulsive decision. Some will resist, some will be reluctant, but some will relinquish their will to Jesus to follow Him. It's all about surrender. He has called us. Will we give excuses or will we surrender and follow Christ?