

Text: Luke 9:57-62

Title: Following Jesus

Truth: Jesus calls us to follow Him—and recognize that it is not easy to do so.

Date/Location: Sunday May 12, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

If you were studying this passage, what word would you say is the most important or notable word, the *key* word? It appears to me to be the verb *follow*. It occurs three times – verse 57, 59, and 61.

I. Considering the Cost

A. A person came to Jesus with initial enthusiasm, and perhaps assured self-confidence (like Peter, Mark 14:31). He held back nothing in saying that he would follow Jesus wherever. We might criticize his ignorant zeal, but at least he had *some* zeal to be with Jesus. That initial eagerness is followed by a reality check.

Note: the idea of following here may lead your mind down a path that is not correct. When the Lord was present in Israel, becoming his follower was to be with Him and learn from Him. It included travel and being a student (disciple). How this translates to today is *not* in terms of vocational ministry, that is, a calling to the pastorate or missions. If that were the case, it would not be generally applicable, and you could easily dismiss it as something for only a certain class of “very committed” Christians. *Following* at that time was manifested in a certain way. After the Lord left the earth, following was what we call today “being a Christian.” Following means believing and practicing Jesus’s teaching, and not being caught up in the world.

B. Problem #1 for this man’s proposal to follow Jesus is the man’s own moral weakness and sin. The Bible does not address this point here, but plenty of other passages do. Problem #2 consists of the difficulties that a follower of Jesus will face because of what the association with the Lord will bring with it. Jesus had nothing. He has no property, no home, no bed, no family. Foxes have dens, birds have nests and roosts, and that is more than what Jesus had on this earth. Think of it—the creator of all, from the glories of heaven, to lower than a servant on earth.

Sure, He has some followers, but many also who despise him. The devil is after Him, many people need help, everyone needs teaching, and the gospel must reach all the villages. He does not even have time to rest or eat (Mark 6:31) much less a *place* to rest his head. He is going to be killed

by the religious and civil authorities. To follow Jesus is in some measure take on these privations and dangers for oneself.

C. Jesus is on the way to the cross. Following him leads you to the cross, and for some of his disciples, onto their own cross.

D. The reality check is Jesus's way of making "full disclosure" to the person who wants to follow Him. He tells it like it really is.

There is nothing good about hiding the difficulties of the Christian life from inquirers. When you say that it is all about love and it is all nice and warm and fuzzy, you are not giving the true gospel. Instead, we must give a WYSIWYG report about the gospel – What You See Is What You Get. You do not make it sound rosier than it is. People may suffer new difficulties when they come to Jesus. Existing difficulties may not go away or may even get worse. Friends may fail them; foes assail them, but Jesus is the friend who will never leave them. They will be forgiven, justified, transformed, made righteous, given the power to overcome temptation and sin.

E. A bit of a side note, but notice how Jesus identifies Himself in verse 58, as the "Son of Man." This is a favorite self-designation. It points to the human nature of the Lord (the meaning of the phrase in Num 23:19 and Psalm 8:4, Psalm 146:3, Jer. 50:40). But it is also used in an interesting reference to His supreme authority and everlasting office as King in Daniel 7:13-14. None other than the Pharisees considered it blasphemy for the Jesus to refer to himself this way (Matt. 26:64-66).

II. (Not) Burying the Father

Then Jesus called another person to follow, like He did with Peter and Andrew and Matthew (Matt. 4:19, 9:9).

A. This does *not* mean that the father was dead. For if he were dead, the son would be with the family doing the funeral ceremony and burial at that very moment. Burials were commonly done within a day, so this conversation with Jesus would not have happened if the father were already dead.

B. What was happening was that the father was elderly, perhaps ill, and perhaps expected to pass away in the next weeks or months or years. Some suggest that the phrase "bury my father" means to await his passing to receive the inheritance.

C. *That* is no way to live, much less serve the Lord!

Allow me to comment on the mindset of awaiting an inheritance so that you can live at ease. This is lazy and lacking in Christian virtue. Even if you inherit a generous sum, that should not cause you to sit on the rocking chair on the porch, so to speak. It should cause you to improve your lot and be more generous and help other people and fill gaps that may be in your own situation, but not cause you to stop working.

And now, think about the “wait for my dad to die” mindset, whether tied to an inheritance or not. You cannot live like that either! A good dad will want you to serve God and do your work with vigor while you have strength. He will not want you to wait hand and foot on him until he croaks. Plenty of people are selfish and want their offspring to serve them and put their lives on hold and such. But that is not the way of righteousness. Children care for their parents, but do not stop living while waiting for them to die, and certainly do not put the Lord Jesus in second place.

And now, thinking about the “bury my dad” focus for a delay in following Jesus, I recognize it is a strong pull that might try to keep you off the foreign mission field. Or from moving away to serve the Lord, or—get this—just simply becoming a Christian. Following Jesus is not only for super-Christians who devote their lives in service to God. It is for *all* people, missionaries, homemakers, pastors, mechanics, service workers, administrative assistances, technical writers, etc. “Follow Me” is the call of Jesus to every person and every true Christian is a follower of Jesus who recognizes that they are leaving behind certain things.

You might be objecting in your mind: “I cannot follow Jesus because what will my parents say? What will my friends think?” “What about all the time I refused Jesus, and all the sin I have done, and all the ways I have disappointed God?” “I would be terribly inconsistent if I rejected him before and then I changed my mind and accepted him.” When you consider coming to Jesus and believing in Him, please remember that those factors do not matter because Jesus died for people just like you. He knows about that already—and *still* invites you to come, in fact, commands you to come to Him for your own good!

We are talking about your *soul*, your life, your eternity, your sin, and forgiveness from it. Whether you get your inheritance, or ever see your dad alive again, or lose all your friends, it will not matter in 100 years, much less 1,000 or 10,000. The matter of salvation is so important that it outstrips the importance and priority of family ties, career, everything

else. There is absolutely *nothing* more important than that you have a relationship with God. Nothing.

- D. The solution for the burial problem: let someone else take care of it. “Let the dead bury their dead.” That means that the spiritually dead can take care of things like helping dad finish out his days and burying him. The inheritance if any will come whether you are there or not. You are not indispensable to those things, and you have a more important task. The Lord is saying that such issues are best left to others who do not have a calling on their life to follow the King. They can oversee it. We need to preach the gospel.
- E. This is not a call to leave one’s immediate family—that is almost never the case. Perhaps you have read biographies of people who have done that. But remember those biographies are not Bible. Sometimes people left their wife and children behind for prolonged periods of time, and that was not right (1 Cor. 7 teaches this).

III. (Not) Saying Goodbye to Family

- A. This is an analogous situation to the prior one. I do not understand the man to be saying that he wants to merely inform his family of his whereabouts and say a word to them before he leaves on the mission. Apparently, something longer winded is in his mind. These two situations remind us there are probably a hundred more excuses that you can use...I have bought land and have to tend it, or I just acquired a new team of oxen (or a tractor!) and must test them out, or I have just been married and I need to focus on that (Luke 14:18-20). These are just excuses. They do not hold water.
- B. The Lord calls for whole-hearted service. If you are constantly looking back to the country from where you came, you are not going to be effective in the country where you are (like Heb. 11:14-16). Thus, the plowing illustration. You will pull in one direction or another as you look back, and the resulting work will be shoddy.

By the way, do you know why careful plowing and furrow alignment is important in farming? It has to do with watering the crops and prevention of erosion, as well as ease of harvesting the crops at the end of the season.

- C. Please take note of the absolute statement of the Lord Jesus. *No one* who has his heart back in the old things and old way of life is fit for the kingdom. Only that which is fit for the eternal state will be in it. Love for this world is a snare that drags you away from God.

Conclusion

Jesus knew the cost of totally following God; He may have left His earthly father at the end of his life; He did not stay with his mother and left His brothers and sisters behind and did not spend the last few years with them.

Do you hesitate to believe in Jesus because of ties to this world? Because of the potential costs to your lifestyle, friends, etc.? But what about when confronted with the command, "Follow Me"? Do you rank Jesus higher than all that? Do you honor Him with more honor than all those things that could draw you away from Him?

This kind of teaching caused many people to turn away from Jesus during His ministry. They might say, "If that is what He is asking, I am out!" What he offers is certainly not palatable to our sinful natures. But what He gives is so much better than all that. You might leave 10 friends today, but you will gain 1,000 more in eternity future, and a sizable number today as well! You might lose some measure of closeness with family, but you will gain family far beyond in size and closeness (Mark 10:29-30).

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