

The Gospel According to Luke
Luke 9:56-62
Reading: Matthew 8:18-22

Sermon #43
July 7, 2019

The Cost of Following Jesus

Jesus Requires Obedience

God is always doing more than we know. In every event in our lives and in the life of this church and in these mountains and this state and this country and this world God, is always doing millions of things that we do not know about. The designs and the effects of every event from the fall of a bird or the birth of a baby or the change of a country's leader or the shooting and death of 17 children in Parkland – the designs and effects of every event are thousands of times more than we know. I am thinking that 99% of God's specific purposes are hidden from our eyes. God's plans are eternal and we are finite. God reveal a little at a time and wants us to follow by faith.

When God scattered the nations at the Tower of Babel, in Genesis chapter 11, he was doing more than solving one problem. He was restraining evil by preserving diversity that would function as a check and balance in the human sin craving for power and fame and wealth. While in the very same act of judgment he was preserving and increasing the diversity that would become the many-colored mosaic of redemption. Evil would be deflected by diversity in language and culture, and the glory of Christ would be reflected by the diversity in language and culture. This may have led to the writing of Psalm 67, which is a song and certainly is a prayer. **“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah* (A Hebrew word meaning: pause and reflect and bow before God) ² that **your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.** ³ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ⁴ Let**

the nations be glad and sing for joy, for **you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.** *Selah* ⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! ⁶ The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. ⁷ God shall bless us; **let all the ends of the earth fear him!**” All the languages, all the cultures, all the colors and all the people groups – let them all praise the most Holy God. For you, our God, will shine all the more brightly in our eyes when we see you reflected and praised by all the tribes, cultures and people groups of the world!

Two Sundays ago, we had Abel speak to us about his ministry in Spain. The need for evangelism and missions is great and God is doing more in these days than anyone knows for the sake of the nations. God’s authority and his love and his mission are having a tremendous effect and he is holding back much of the evil of this world. God’s plan for salvation for the world is unfolding as he has planned from before creation. The prince of this world is taking his last prisoners and his end is near. Because of the resurrection of Christ, the evil one now has reduced power and his power is on a time-line to end. We eagerly await the return of Christ, but until he comes, he has given us a job to do. By his death and resurrection Jesus possesses **“All authority in heaven and on earth that God the Father has been given to me him. By the authority of God, Jesus commands for us to** ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus says all authority is mine and I am empowering each of you to go and make disciples and as you go, I will be with you. As it is written in Jeremiah **“Declare among the nations and proclaim, set up a banner and proclaim the kingdom of God, conceal it not, and say: ‘Bel and the prince of the world is put**

to shame, *their images are put to shame, their idols are dismayed.*” *Our God is greater than all the world!* (Jeremiah 50:2) The gospel must go out into the world.

I ask each us now – “Who are you inviting to Canyon Bible? Who are you discipling, that you may both grow spiritually? What lost person are you sharing the gospel of Christ with? Are you taking your relationship with Jesus seriously and being obedient to your Lord and Savior’s commands to share his gospel with the lost? Take a moment to consider these questions. PAUSE.

I will now prepare us to hear the Word of God in prayer.

Oh, God our Father, help us, I pray. Strengthen us and embolden us to share your gospel of salvation with all the people you put into our lives for you have a purpose for placing us here in this time and in this place and among these people. What is the purpose of our lives? Father, show us the path to walk. Father, give us the faith to serve you by serving others in the name of Jesus Christ. Let us not fear for You are with us now and always – no one has the power to take you away or take our salvation. Let take to heart what our Lord Jesus said, “**The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.**” (Matthew 9:37-38) Lord we now pray the Spirit would embolden us, so that, we would be laborers of your gospel and have the joy to participate in the harvest. Let us fulfill your call to evangelize the world beginning here and at work and in our community and from these efforts let your gospel will spread out to the world. Amen and amen!

Jesus’ Response To Would-Be Followers

God is always doing more than one thing in everything he does. So, let us go to Luke chapter 9 beginning in verse 57 to see what Jesus is doing in this unusual

series of encounters. Three would-be followers meet Jesus and Jesus says to each of them something hard and something thought provoking.

In verse 57 the man says to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus responds in a way that was not expected, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Then in verse 59 Jesus takes the initiative and calls another man, “Follow me.” The man responds to Jesus’ call by saying, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Again, Jesus responds in an unusual manner, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Then a third candidate for discipleship says in verse 61, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” To this man Jesus says, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

More than one thing is going on here in each of these encounters. To see that clearly the way Jesus intends it, you need to go back to verse 51 to make sure that you feel the tension in the air. In verse 51 we read, “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is the epi-center of man’s persecution of the Messiah and God’s answer – salvation for all those who come to believe in Jesus.

Jesus’ Focused On Jerusalem

Because of the gospel accounts and history, we know what Jerusalem meant for Jesus. He said to his 12 apostles in Luke chapter 18, ³¹“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³²For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³And after flogging him, they will

kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” As plain and direct as Jesus was the disciples did not understand, because it says the meaning was hidden from them.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem Luke tells us, ⁴¹ “he wept over it, ⁴² saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.’” (Luke 19:41-42) Jesus view was very different from the joyous crowds celebrating the arrival of what they thought was a conquering king. Within the name Jerusalem is the word “salem” or peace and the people of the city had no idea what brought true peace, like the disciples this was hidden, so that, God’s plan would unfold as he ordained. Now, we can understand how deep the meaning was behind verse 51, Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Then to make clear the implications of going to Jerusalem, Luke tells us in verse 52 and 53, Jesus ⁵² “sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. ⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.” This should tell us that if one becomes a follower of Jesus, they too will journey to Jerusalem; to be more personal, I speak to each of us - we may not have a place to stay along our journey – for we will be rejected by the world for our faith, most likely we will not be popular for Jesus offends the world, but this is our journey – following the path of Jesus, a path that is narrow and difficult, but a path that leads to eternal joy in the presence of God.

I believe, now we are ready to see more clearly what is happening in our passage at the end of chapter 9. Three times we read the word “follow” to describe what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. In verse 57, “I will follow you”, in verse 59, “follow me” and in verse 61, “I will follow you”. The point in this phrase is that being a disciple of Jesus, that is, being a Christian, is more than learning about him; it includes following him as he lived and where he goes. Jesus made this clear

when he said, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:27) The three lacked faith, but Jesus had the authority when he commanded, “Follow me”

Jesus Says – “Follow Me”

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. He is saying: “Follow ME” and he is saying “FOLLOW me.” Jesus is saying there is Me – I am the Messiah and there is my mission to bring redemption. There is a person Messiah and there is a path he has given to FOLLOW. There is a sweetness and there is suffering. There is Jesus and there is Jerusalem.

This is the way Jesus’ call to follow him and take the gospel to the lost has always been and the way it will always be. When Jesus said at the end of his life, “Go, make disciples of all nations!” he wrapped that mission and that path and that suffering and that Jerusalem in his mighty and merciful self as the servant Christ. First, he said, “All authority in heaven and on earth is mine” and ended with saying, “I will be with you to the end of the age.” There is the “FOLLOW me!” meaning go into the world with the gospel, and there is the “Follow ME!” meaning I will be with you always and to the end. There is the path to the nations beginning in Jerusalem and there is the person Jesus, who will be with you. So, when you hear the words, “Follow me”, hear at least two things, I am sure there are more, but I know it is not just one thing.

Now what was Jesus doing in responding the way he did to these three would-be followers? No place to lay your head. Let the dead bury their dead. Put

your hand on the plow and don't look back. What was he doing? 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 of home and family. He was testing to see if he himself, as the Christ, was the greatest treasure of their lives. They said, "I'll follow You." Jesus replied, "Really? You love me, you treasure me that much? Then you choose wisely, now here is what it will cost." So, he is testing how much they treasure the "you" in "I will follow you" by telling them what the "follow" will cost, maybe cost everything but your salvation and relationship with God.

So, there are two things going on - then and now. First, Jesus is offering himself for our fellowship and friendship and partnership in evangelism. Just think of it. This is the Creator of the universe. The King of kings and Lord of lords. The one who upholds all things by the word of his power. The one who is from everlasting to everlasting. Born of a virgin as the Holy One of God. Perfect in life. Triumphant over sin and death and hell and all the demons you will ever meet. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This Jesus says to you, as you ponder the possibility of following and serving by taking the gospel of eternal life to the lost – "Follow me". Jesus is not, is not, saying choose your own path, he is saying I have chosen a path for you. He is saying if you are mine – go where I send you – out into the community and work place and to the nation and the unreached corners of the world. Go near or go far - if it is I who sends you and if I send you – you are to be obedient. My beloved, **"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."** (Deuteronomy 31:6)

John Paton was the eldest of 11 children, born in Scotland and at the age of 12 he began working 14 hours a day in his father's factory. John's father stopped 3

times every day to pray and studied the Bible during his meals at the factory. This set a great example for his son. John matured in his faith and relationship with Christ, he felt God called him to New Hebrides islands southeast of Papua New Guinea where Joyce and I served. John brought to the natives of New Hebrides islands education and the Christian gospel. He also helped the people develop small industries to be self-supporting and advocated against Great Britain's desire to use the people as slaves in New Zealand and other colonies. John was obedient to God's telling him to go. Because of the "white" businessmen conflict with the nationals one night it became very dangerous. John wrote, "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 Hebrides, An Autobiography Edited by His Brother [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, orig. 1889, 1891], pg. 200) Though his life and work in the New Hebrides was difficult and often dangerous, Paton preached gospel, and raised a family, people came to Christ and the church was established.

The second thing that Jesus was doing with these three men was testing them to see if he was truly their Messiah. John Paton was tested and Jesus was his

treasure and he was obedient. Jesus will test you as well. Is Jesus your treasure, your Lord and your Savior? Is your life's purpose found in Jesus? Like John Paton is Jesus your joy, your security, your hope, your friend when you are all alone? Does Jesus empower you to push ahead for the kingdom no matter what the cost? To test you exposes the cost of following Jesus and what you truly treasure.

I do not want to make Jesus' words harder than they are for you. Jesus is not saying if you follow him your life will be hard at every turn. Jesus is not saying; you will never have rest or joy or peace. Jesus is not saying; it is always wrong to go to your parent's funeral. He is not saying, if you fail, if you make a mistake, you will never have another chance, you will never be used for the benefit of his kingdom. Jesus is not saying, if we battle with fear and give in, at times or if we battle with temptation and are weak and fail there is no hope. If that were true I certainly would not have been saved or be here today. Yesterday is gone, seek Jesus this day, hear his call and be obedient to follow and you will be blessed and be able to use those blessing to help others.

Jesus has a path for each to follow, the question is - will we follow? Also, know that each of our paths may be similar or very different. Obedience is key. An example of this difference is how Jesus responds to the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus. In Matthew chapter 19 we read about the rich young ruler's disobedience, ¹⁶“behold, a man came up to him, saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ ¹⁷ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’ ¹⁸ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ²⁰ The young man said to him, ‘All these I have kept. What do I still

lack?’ ²¹ Jesus said to him, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’

²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (Matthew 19:16-22) The young ruler wanted Jesus on his terms and would not pay the cost to follow.

Then there was the tax collector Zacchaeus, as Jesus “entered Jericho ... ² there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was ... ⁴ he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him ... ⁵ when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.’ ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ... ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.’ ⁹ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’” (Luke 19:1-10) Zacchaeus did two things; first, he received Jesus with joy and he did not treasure his money more than helping others. In his case Jesus did not ask him to sell all and follow because through his business and wealth he was helping many.

Jesus and Your Idols

In other words, the point of all these tough words as Jesus interacts with different people is not to create laws that all disciples or followers have to keep. He did not say to all, “Give all your money to the poor!” or “Give half your money!” or “Do not go to your father’s funeral!” The point is that Jesus knows everyone’s idol. Jesus knows perfectly what is competing in your heart with affection for him.

He looks every one of us in the face this morning and sees right to our heart and knows what is in our heart that prevents us from fully giving our self to him.

Do not try and hide what is in your heart – Jesus sees all, so freely let him in and do not take offense. He exposes what is there to win you for himself. Jesus says if you truly love him - then be obedient and “Follow him!” this is his goal – he loves you completely and gave his life for your salvation – “follow him” living to bring him glory. Living to bring him glory means to be obedient to whatever he has planned for your life. Being with Jesus is the goal. It won’t be easy. But it will be good. There will be joy even if there is continual sorrow, as Paul wrote, his life was, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” (2 Corinthians 6:10) The world is confused by all this because they do not have the Spirit of God in them. These things are true for those who follow Jesus because he will always be with us to the end of time.

So, Jesus raises the issue in verse 58 about your attachment to your home – “the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Will you follow him? What about your home, your furniture, the security you enjoy there, your comforts in the climate controlled year-round perfect atmosphere, your roach-free, mouse-free, ant-free, automated kitchen and your new surround-sound home entertainment center? Jesus says, “Follow me. Am I more precious, more satisfying than these?”

Jesus raises the question about our family in verse 60, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Whom do you cherish more, spiritually dead relatives or the giver of eternal life, Jesus Christ? The point is not that it is never right for a follower to go back to his parent’s home for a loved one’s funeral. The point is that it might be right not to go and the issue is how it serves the proclamation of the gospel and how it reveals

what is your true treasure. Who is first, Christ or family? The point here is that Jesus Christ is absolute and all other allegiances are secondary. There will be a hundred choices you must make in life that have no simple biblical command to settle the issue. The heart issue will be - do you want Christ above all? Do you want to follow him more than anything?

The question Jesus raises in verse 62 concerns fickle following. There is a danger associated with indecisive discipleship. Reading verse 62, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” You cannot plow a straight furrow while looking back. You cannot serve Christ, you cannot make Christ look great, if you are always second-guessing the value of following him and looking back to the world. Looking back means longing back. It means that we are not really sure he is worth following, especially to Jerusalem. Divided hearts like that are not useful in displaying the worth of Christ. It might be a proper place to consider what happened when Lot’s wife looked back – just a thought.

Jesus Is Worthy To Follow

I want to close by saying, Jesus is worthy! He is worth following, even to Jerusalem and even to the cross. Jesus is worthy to follow here in the East Mountains, in our state, in our nation and to the world. Jesus promised that a true follower “will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Here is a promise and a command. Jesus died in Jerusalem, but that was not bad news, it was the greatest news for it secured the eternal future for all his followers. He loved each person and gave his life for their salvation. Jesus did not say, “Follow me to Jerusalem” because he needed the help of the

disciples or any human. His work of redemption was the plan of God before creation. Here is the blessing – because you follow him; you are saved and not only saved but he has a mission for you that is more precious than burying your father. What is that mission? Jesus says “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20) My beloved, wherever Jesus commands you to go; here or there, you are to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God! There is great joy in following Jesus – the path is narrow and it may have sorrows but the joy and peace and experienced love of Christ is greater than anything of this world. My beloved I challenge each of to FOLLOW CHRIST! Amen!