



Will I Follow?

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And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke 9: 57- 62

Jesus, Peter, James and John have come down from the Mount of Transfiguration, where these very blessed disciples saw the Lord in his glorified state. The Father once again demonstrated His approval of the Son there, by sending Moses and Elijah to discuss with Him the departure He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem; and by letting His glory shine forth, for the moment piercing the veil of flesh; and by speaking from the cloud to confirm His pleasure with His Son.

Coming down from the mountain, Jesus spoke very clearly to them of what was going to take place in

Jerusalem. They still didn't really understand.

Nevertheless, He has set out for Jerusalem. There are some events recorded briefly for us while they are en route there, some of which we will look closely at today, He is on His way to the Holy City to carry out the purpose for which He came, and He will not be deterred.

I want to go first to the prophet Isaiah, so we can look at a passage that speaks of the resolve of the Messiah to do the will of the One who sent Him.

The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

Isaiah 50:5-7

These words demonstrate the determined resolve of the Messiah to complete His mission.

Then in **Luke chapter 9: 51** we find the verse fulfilling that Messianic prophecy, where we are told, **And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem..**

Jesus Christ has taken His disciples to the far north of Galilee, to Caesarea Philippi, and extracted from them the declaration that He is the Christ, the Anointed One, sent from God. From there He went with His closest friends to the mountain; many believe it was Mount Hermon, which is not far from Caesarea Philippi, where their declaration was confirmed by God's declaration, and now there is nothing left but the doing of it.

So they're on their way to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover.

Now a study of Matthew and Luke focusing on the end of Christ's earthly ministry, reveals a time of intense teaching. Jesus is about to leave His disciples, and there is much yet to say. We are given the account of them passing through a Samaritan village, and Jesus sending some of them on ahead to prepare them for His arrival. You see at this point there is a very large number of people following Jesus along the road, and out of consideration for this small town He probably wanted to give them time to prepare for the sudden influx. But they reject Him, so James and John want to call down fire to consume the entire village.

Now here is a very graphic demonstration of the difference between God's thinking and man's. When God came to Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy those evil cities for their continued debauchery, He was willing to spare the cities at Abraham's request, if He could only find 10 righteous in them. But James and John are willing to destroy an entire population, for a handful of unrighteous.

Luke 9: 55-56, "But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

We also see the account of His sending 70 of them in pairs to minister. He gives them power to heal the sick, but sends them with warnings to be wise in their dealings, bringing peace to homes where peace is offered, but not wasting time on those who reject them. Time was too short.

The place I want to settle on today though, is here in **chapter 9, verses 57-62**. In this brief passage we are given three examples of the Divine wisdom of Jesus, as He exhorts three different men with advice that is vital to a successful Christian existence.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Now we cannot know what it was that inspired this man to approach Jesus at this point in time, and declare his devotion. Maybe he witnessed some miracles. Maybe some member of his family was healed and/or saved from death by Jesus. Maybe he had sat listening to Jesus' teaching, and was inspired by the words of Him who spoke as no man spoke.

Maybe he just saw the crowd and wanted to be a part of it, but wanted to endear himself to the Leader so he wouldn't have to walk in the back of the entourage, eating dust. We don't know.

Fortunately, Jesus did. If you'll allow a twist on a famous line from Abraham Lincoln, you can fool all the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time; but to Jesus all hearts are laid open like a book. Friends, He knows your heart like He knew the heart of this unnamed man on the road to Jerusalem. What would He say to you if He met you on that road?

Well He apparently saw that this man was impetuous and that his motives were shallow, because as He has done in so many other interviews we study in the gospels, He seemingly ignores the man's opening statement and goes right to the core of the issue. This isn't comfortable.

You want to follow? I have no place in this world to call my own; not even to sleep on a regular basis. Where do you think we're headed? The Jerusalem Hilton?

Anywhere, you say? You'll follow Me anywhere? Will you follow Me up Calvary's trail? Well, Jesus didn't ask him that; at least not that's recorded. But I wonder what the man's reaction would have been?

Jesus had been telling the twelve that was where they were headed, but a new member to the group might have found the whole idea rather unsettling. That is, IF he had understood any better than the others.

Here is something I think is very interesting about Jesus' response to him. He didn't invite him to come along. Jesus didn't invite him in the first place, and then after the man swears devotion, Jesus just tells him like it is and keeps on walking.

Friends, listen. There is a point of doctrine typified in this account. No one truly comes to Christ unless

first drawn by God's Holy Spirit. In the first part of **John 6:44** Jesus said it Himself, "**No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:**

He repeats Himself in verse 65 of the same chapter, "**And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.**

There are some people who come to church for selfish reasons. Some are not here long because they start hearing sermons on commitment and spiritual growth and they're bored or frightened away; or they stay because they like the social fellowship, but there is never a hint of spiritual development or desire for the things of the Spirit from them. I have heard this spiritual condition dubbed 'carnal Christians', but perhaps a more accurate description of this spiritual condition would be 'churched pagans'.

The Holy Spirit has pleaded with them but in their lost spiritual condition, they never have sensed a need for repentance therefore they have not sought it, and of course it follows that the Holy Spirit could not regenerate them.

If they were told the spiritual facts in the love of Christ when they first came to investigate, they would be constrained to make a proper decision, and either turn and run away or say 'it sounds worth it all to me', and fall in behind and continue on down the road to glory.

Have you made that decision in your life? Have you heard Jesus say that in order to follow Him you must reckon yourself dead to sin and this world and follow Him first to Calvary, and then beyond? Have you understood that Heaven is not yet, and that before the skies there was a grave?

Because Jesus isn't necessarily interested in the number of church members. But He is profoundly interested in dedicated Disciples, who count the cost and are willing to be crucified with Him in order that they might be raised by Him.

"No earthly ties, no earthly considerations, should weigh one moment in the scale against duty to the cause and work of God. Jesus severed His connection from everything to save a lost world, and He requires of us a full and entire consecration. There are sacrifices to be made for the interests of God's cause." Testimonies Vol 3 Pg. 500

"Are ye able, said the Master, to be crucified with Me?"

'Yea', the sturdy dreamers answered, 'to the death we follow Thee'.

'Are ye able?' Still the Master whispers down eternity,
And heroic spirits answer, now as then in Galilee."

- Earl B. Marlatt

What would He say to you, on the road to glory?

SECOND ENCOUNTER

Luke 9: 59 - 60, "And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and

bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

This time, Jesus does invite the man. "Follow Me". And the very next word in our text is perhaps the saddest word that could come on the heels of such an invitation. "BUT."

"But he said,..." In this case, he was concerned to do the honourable thing for his father, who was apparently ill or aging or both; he wanted to see to his burial and probably make sure the house was in order for the rest of the family before striking out on his Christian walk. Sounds noble, doesn't it?

Thing is, Jesus says to many, "Follow Me", and if their response, written down, would be preceded by "But he/she said", we have a problem. Is there an indication that any of the twelve balked at that invitation? Nope. Dropped their nets, left the tax table,... I like what William Barclay said about Matthew. The only thing he took with him was his pen.

So what does Jesus mean by that invitation? Does He mean always be in church and doing your part there? Involved in missions and committees and ushering or singing or teaching a class, and giving financial support sacrificially?

Those things are very important, but if I was to tell you that is what Jesus meant and that you are not following Him if you aren't doing all those things, then I would be trivializing the ministries of some of other people.

A few examples:

A woman who misses a great deal of church because she was taking care of her grandmother who is a shut-in, and for a while, both her grandmother and her mother were ill, and she was going back and forth between them as well as holding down a full-time job.

Another couple who missed a few weeks of church because they occasionally travel with other couples where they minister to children in an orphanage; building and painting and helping out in any way they can.

Another couple were gone because the local company he worked for went under, and he has had to take work in Corner Brook to keep the bills paid and food on the table. Every other weekend his wife and son are gone to be with him.

Could we stand with a clear conscience and berate any of these wonderful people for not being in church? God forbid.

So what did Jesus have in mind? Was it a matter of, 'if you don't get in line and come along right now it'll be too late'? No! There were a lot of Pharisees and Roman soldiers who weren't ready to get in line at the moment, but it wasn't too late for them.

In fact, there were a lot of people in line at the moment, who were there for the wrong reasons. As soon as Jesus started talking cross-time they scattered like cockroaches when the light's turned on. But it

wasn't too late for them either.

No, Jesus just wanted this man to see that there is Kingdom work to be done, and it calls for commitment, and the first valuable step in making that commitment is recognizing that what is of this world is passing away, and the Christian's focus must be on that which is eternal.

Those who are dead to God can take care of their own. You go and proclaim the Kingdom of God everywhere.

Let me make the contrast a little sharper for you. Instead of burying people, we should be raising them to life with words of life.

Friend, if Jesus met you on the road to Glory and said, 'Go and proclaim the Kingdom of God everywhere', what would your response be? What do you feel you have to do first? Tomorrow your life may be required of you. What's your response?

THIRD ENCOUNTER

Luke 9:61 - 62, "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

This one is rather humorous, if you compare it to the first two. The first one is just full of energy and raring to go. "Lord, I will follow You anywhere." The second is an unwilling draftee. "(Gulp...) Permit me to go and bury my father first."

This guy voluntarily declares like the first that he will follow, and then puts a condition on it! Why not go say goodbye to his friends if he wants, then come and say, "Lord, I'm ready and willing. Where are we headed?"

Personally, I don't think he would have been back. Have you ever interacted with people face to face, who have admitted that they need the Lord, and have even cheerfully declared that they would be in church that Sabbath, and repeat the promise as they walk away, but they've never showed up once?

Some of them even make the promise with no prompting! Perhaps they think that's what we want to hear, so they say, "Guess what! I've been thinking about coming to church" (or coming back to church) "and I'll be there next Sabbath". But you know what? They love the world too much.

That's what this man's problem was. He was making this offer with a sort of melancholy air, as though he was giving up all that was precious to him in order to embark on this journey of drudgery.

Have you ever made a stand for the Lord? If you have do you regret it? Has the Lord fulfilled every promise He made to you? Has He changed you from a life of sin to a life of loving service? Has He ever forsaken you? Are there any here who have never made a stand for the Lord? What is holding you back? This world? What is this world offering you? Can eternity with the Saviour of the world compare to a few brief moments in this sin-sick world?

So when Jesus tells this man that anyone putting his hand to the plow and then looking back is not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven, He didn't mean the person wasn't good enough, like some might say a ragged shirt isn't fit to wear to church.

Jesus meant that if your tendency is to look back longingly at the things of this world, the necessary change has not taken place in you. You haven't been made fit. The Holy Spirit is not who is influencing you.

TIME TO TAKE STOCK

If your friends want to come along, that would be good. But don't let them hold you back. I lost my friends. That hurt. But if I had gone back to being like them, I would have lost Jesus.

Jesus' words are strong, aren't they?! Here is what it will cost you to follow after Jesus. In short, it will cost you EVERYTHING. He calls for us to commit ourselves completely to Him, and hold nothing back. And THAT is the picture of the authentic Christian.

What would Jesus say to you, if you met Him on the road?

You have to take stock for yourself. Beyond expressing these truths this morning, I can't really help you. The Pastor can't help you. No one can help you. Truly, the only one who can help you in Jesus Christ. You have to answer Jesus in your own words.

The Holy Spirit has given us three examples; three warnings; three exhortations here.

The first guy was a groupie - Jesus told him to be sure what he was getting into.
The second was a conditional follower - Jesus told him there can be no conditions.
The third was a lover of the world. - Jesus told him there's only straight ahead.

What would He say to you?

In closing, let me take this back to where the sandal meets the road. He was on His way to Jerusalem; to Calvary; to glory.

He says to you and to me, "Follow". And when you follow someone, you go where He goes.

O Happy day! that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God;
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

'Tis done, the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Now rest, my long-divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful centre rest;
Nor ever from my Lord depart,
With Him of every good possessed.

—*Philip Doddridge*