

*The Great Sayings in the Gospels*  
*Message 86*  
*The Price of Following Jesus*

Luke 9:57-62

- 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.
- 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
- 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.
- 61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.
- 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. KJV

**Introduction:**

With this message we come to the end of what is called The Great Galilean ministry of Jesus. His earthly ministry was more than half over, even though, so far as the revelation given to us, the larger part of the New Testament lies ahead of us. The reason for this is that so much space is given to the last week of His earthly life, His crucifixion and resurrection. The gospel of John, for example, is taken up mostly with the last period of Jesus' life.

The gospel writers acknowledged that much of what He did was not recorded in either of the gospels.

John 21:25

- 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. KJV

We are satisfied, however, that all we need to know is recorded and that the events not recorded and the teachings not written down were the same in essence as the ones that we have.

The discussion that took place in our text apparently occurred as Jesus was departing Galilee and preparing to enter Samaria again on His way to Jerusalem. You will remember that as He had begun His Galilean ministry, He had traveled through Samaria, encountered the Woman and the Well and had many converts. Luke recorded in the passage that follows our text for this morning that some of the villages of Samaria were not welcoming to Him.

Our passage this morning records three different men interacting with the idea of coming with Him for the duration of His ministry. One was even invited to do so by Jesus. The lesson is

that Jesus demands the kind of devotion to Himself that is willing to pay a great price to follow Him. It seems that this was more of an emphasis in the latter part of His ministry than the beginning, possibly because many had headed the gospel of repentance from sin and had become disciples who now needed to be prepared for the persecutions that would follow His death.

I have often viewed this passage as if these who were coming to Christ here were mere 'hangers-on' or casual disciples but I have changed my mind. At least the second one was commissioned by Christ to "preach the gospel" which meant that he had a full working knowledge of Jesus' message and was able to proclaim it to others.

Since Jesus and the disciples were leaving Galilee for good, some of them (James) never to return, it may have been that these interactions concerned those closest and most faithful to Jesus. It may also have been that His departure from Galilee took them by surprise and some felt that they should take care of some pressing things before leaving. At least one's father had just died and was in need of burial. So, these interactions were with serious servants of Christ and the challenges were real, not hypothetical.

## **I. The Need for Security and Comfort.**

The first issue contained in our lesson today is that the believer in Jesus Christ must be willing to go without some of the accepted comforts of life that we expect.

- 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.

Jesus always knew intimately the details of the minds and hearts of the people who came to Him and spoke directly to the issues that were the greatest needs.

Here we have a man approaching Jesus who has a house, maybe a nice one, of which he is very fond. He, like many of us, loved to get home to his bed after a long day of work. Jesus wanted him to know that being a serious disciple and actually joining the band of those who traveled with Him meant that he would often sleep outside, on the ground, without many of the comforts of home.

Since Jesus, for the most of the Galilean ministry, had kept a house at Capernaum, we now assume that He has let it go. If He owned it, He has sold it and if He rented it, He has now moved out and returned it to the owner. It is now literally true, and will be for the remainder of His time, that He has "not where to lay His head." Those who traveled with Him would need to be willing to live as vagabonds for a while. Many of them, no doubt, never again had a permanent home but, after Pentecost, would be on the move for the rest of their lives preaching the gospel to the ends of the world.

## **I. The Need to Follow Conventional "Norms" of Society.**

- 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
- 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

Now, no one should think that Jesus forbids us to attend the funerals of our parents as a general rule.

HOWEVER..... when one is personally called by Jesus Christ as this man was, the only appropriate response is an immediate commitment to do whatever He demands. Jesus was leaving immediately and had no time to dally over even important matters. The Work of the Kingdom trumps all other obligations, needs, commitments, and relationships.

The apostle Paul, not long after his conversion, had made a trip to Jerusalem to visit the church and the elders there. When the Jewish authorities heard that he was in town, they set about to take him and kill him. The saints and apostles, concerned for his safety, had sent him home to Tarsus to be safe. This is found in Acts 9. Later, when the church at Antioch was in formation, Acts 11, Barnabus was sent from the church at Jerusalem to help them. While there, he decided to travel to Tarsus to get Paul (still being called Saul) to come and help them. You will recall that it was from Antioch, Acts 13, that Paul and Barnabus were called to the mission field. From this point on in Paul's life we have no evidence that he ever returned home. His family is rarely mentioned while he whole-heartedly sought to serve God as a minister of the gospel.

The point being made, I believe, is that the call of God upon a person's life trumps every other concern. Jesus did not say, personally, to every one of His disciples, "come, follow me." This was a special event, a particular call, and those who are so called are expected to respond immediately and completely.

There are many people who would view such a request as harsh and unloving, but we shall discover in a little while important reasons that make this request not only valid but completely reasonable.

#### **I. The Need to Maintain Family Relationships.**

"Let me go say good bye to my family." Again, not a seemingly harsh as the previous command but difficult nonetheless. Leave on a trip from which one may never come home, without saying farewell? This is surely an immense order.

The family will be grieved and offended. They will be deeply hurt. The Jewish families were often very close and involved in one another's lives. Ordinarily a son would inherit a part of the family land and remain for his whole life in the village working with his father and brothers in the family enterprise.

Do we draw from this that Jesus would have us abandon our families when we come to faith, disown them, withdraw from them and have nothing to do with them? No, that is not the issue

in this text. The issue is that Jesus was heading for Jerusalem and would shortly be crucified. At least humanly speaking the future of the disciples was uncertain.

But, not only that, those who went with Him and saw the crucifixion were also going to see Him in His resurrected body, be commanded not to leave Jerusalem until endued with power from on High and then were going to be filled in a mighty way for service which was going to require all of their attention and devotion.

For this man, at least, the break with family had to be immediate and without farewell. I suspect that Jesus knew something about this man and his family that made this necessary. The only possible rational explanation is that this man was too attached to the family, they had too much influence over him, and they were opposed to him following Christ. What He prescribed was best for His disciple and best for His kingdom and its work.

**I. So, does Jesus require that we live without a home, sleep under the stars, refuse to bury our fathers, or withdraw completely from our families?**

I honestly do not believe so. These were the heart issues for *these* men who desired to follow Him. These were the issues that were obstructions in some way to following Him. It was not necessarily an issue for every one of them but each one *had and issue*.

Just like you and I they, to a man, had some matter, some relationship, some fear that stood in the way of whole hearted devotion to Him and that matter had to be handled.

For the apostle Paul it would become his Jewish identity, his status among the learned men, the power brokers, of Israel that had to be forsaken. It was his own self righteousness and the glory that he had in it that had to be left behind.

Phil 3:4-8

- 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
- 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
- 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
- 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
- 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, KJV

And what is it for you? Do you have some matter, some thing, some possession, some piece of pride, some relationship, some status, some money, some element of your identity that keeps you from full-hearted devotion to Christ? I guarantee you that there is something that you either love or fear that holds you back.

Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Judge of all things, has laid down a principle here. Even if it requires going against all convention, all expectations, all 'duties' that society or family lay on you, you must follow Him with your whole heart. Remember what He said, ***“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”***

We are saved by faith and not by works, Paul said, and it is absolutely true. But it is also absolutely true that faith without works is dead and cannot save, as James said. Our love and devotion to Christ is proven or disproven by that which we will obey and that which we will sacrifice for Him.

What is your issue?

**I. And, how does one come by such a loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ?**

How and when does a person become willing to live as a homeless person, abandon family and relationships, in order to follow, serve and obey Jesus Christ?

One can only do that who is shown some things by the Spirit of God concerning the Work of Jesus Christ.

1. His sins in all of their ugliness and vileness

No one ever truly appreciates that he has a Savior except those who understand the true nature of their sins, those who look upon them in an honest way with real integrity and recognize just how completely filthy they are.

1. The due, legal, and property penalty for those sins.

Every one who looks honestly at his/her sins can come to no other conclusion but that death both now and forever is the proper way for God to deal with them.

1. The reality that this penalty is absolutely appropriate, just and good.

And, there can be no argument with God, not even the whisper of the idea that His Judgment is somehow unfair, overreaching, and too harsh. The agreement with God concerning His righteous sentence, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” must be honest and absolute. Otherwise one is questioning the validity of the entire legal system that God has established.

1. The incredible and infinite love of God that would motivate Him to love such a person.

Once one has arrived at agreement with God concerning his sin and God's judgment, there comes an issue that may be more difficult than either of those to embrace, God's love for sinners, particularly God's love for “me.”

You know, I do not struggle very much with God's love for you. I love you and I am a sinner, filled with weakness and frailty. I see reasons to care about you, to cherish you, to pray for you and seek your good. It does not surprise me, then, to think that God loves you.

But I struggle with God's love for me because God has shown me my sin and that sight fills me with disgust, horror, shame, humiliation and embarrassment. I cannot make the case to God that He should love me. It is illogical. It defies my capacity to understand Him. Yet, when I embrace that love and accept it, it causes me to love Him and pushes me to be willing to do and be whatever He wants.

1. The enormous price that God required, what had to be done to satisfy Him concerning the guilt of our sins.

Someone had to pay a price, a horrible and awful price, if God's love for sinners was to bring them to a right standing with Him. Someone was going to need to satisfy the Perfect Justice of God in a complete and perfect way so that God could never be found to be excusing sin.

Every rebellion, every violation of His Law, every refusal to obey what He commanded carried a sentence of physical, spiritual death with it and the sentence could not be set aside. **God is Just!**

1. The willingness of Jesus Christ to pay what God required.

Only one option apparently stood as a possibility to the Infinite God Who Knows all things. To that mind Whose wisdom cannot be fathomed in any way. That Mind that created the Universe and all that is in it from nothing and regulates every particle with absolute efficiency, could conceive of only One Solution.

He Himself, in the Person of His Son, would have to take upon Him the body of a man and then take to Himself the guilt of all those who would ever trust Him and not only die the death of the cross but suffer an Infinite Abandonment by the Father in order for the debt to be paid.

The response of the Son to such a task?

Phil 2:5-8

- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. NASU

He readily gave up all that heaven afforded Him and humbled Himself willingly to the cross.

The one who understands that, as Paul said, is to respond with the same attitude, the willingness to give up whatever He demands in order to serve Him.

1. The awful suffering that He endured to make payment for sins.

There is no picture, no movie, no book, no song nor spoken word that can truly unveil to the human spirit what suffering is contained in those awful words from the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Only a touch, a revelation, of the Holy Spirit of God can unfold what agony He bore. And, once that agony is revealed to a soul there is no suffering that He might require that one would refuse.

1. Then, a person must be given, by God, the faith by which to believe such a thing has actually happened for him.

I must not only see all of that but then somehow embrace the idea that this happened for *me!* Suffering beyond measure to obtain a gift beyond price *for me!* If I see that truly, how could I ever tell Him “no” about anything?

1. Once this is embraced in all of its glory and brilliance, the idea of doing whatever is necessary to follow Him becomes easily acceptable.

1. The unwillingness to embrace “whatever is necessary” shows a profound lack of understanding concerning one or more of the issues.

You see, then, that the problem we have is that we simply have not come to terms with what Christ did for us. Our lack of devotion and obedience, our continuing love for things rather than Him, our obsessions with our own “world” tell us and everyone around us that we simply do not understand in any real way the Savior Whom we claim.

May God grant us the grace to love Him as one ought to love the Savior.