

Wheelerburg Baptist Church 2/13/94 PM
Luke 9:57-62 "The Cost of Following Jesus"

Intro:

Lloyd John Ogilvie is a well-known pastor and author who ministers in Hollywood, CA. One day, Ogilvie was to speak at a luncheon in Darien, Conn. Here's what happened, according to his own testimony (Contemporary Preaching Handbook, 179): "A woman stood up to introduce me as the speaker of the luncheon. What she said put panic in my soul. 'We have someone with us today who will change our lives. He will give us hope, new self-esteem, and power to live a dynamic life!' she said confidently. I wanted to crawl under the table as she continued: 'Meeting this person will be like the rivers of your life will stop and flow in a new direction. You'll experience freedom, joy, and gusto in your life.' The woman paused, smiled, and said: 'This person's name is Jesus Christ and here is Lloyd Ogilvie to tell us about Him.'" That's why we're here tonight--to honor Jesus Christ. He alone is worthy.

It is a privilege to follow Jesus. It is a privilege to know Him personally as Savior and Lord. I'll never forget the day He entered my life at the age of 11. Jesus Christ transforms lives. Life is never the same again, once you trust your life to Him.

What's involved in being a follower of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Himself tells us in Luke 9:57-62. He makes a surprising announcement. There's cost involved if we want to follow Him.

You're thinking, "I thought salvation was free." It is free, but it's not cheap.

We live in a day in which the church is plagued by what has been called "easy-believism." Jesus' words stand in stark contrast. They remind us that becoming a Christian is more than merely "adding Jesus" to an already cluttered life.

What's involved in following Jesus? Let's look at a true story, and find out.

Proposition: In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus encountered 3 different people, and told them clearly what was involved in following Him. From the story, we learn that there are 3 costs involved in following Jesus.

I. A Volunteer (57-58)

Cost #1--To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of Convenience.

II. A Recruit (59-60)

Cost #2--To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of Conformity.

III. Another Volunteer (61-62)

Cost #3--To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of Control.

Jesus was walking along. Along came the first person. Let's call him...

I. A Volunteer (57-58)

Listen to what the volunteer said.

V 57 "Lord, I will follow Thee wherever thou goest."

Those are noble words! Lord. I will follow you. Wherever. This guy sounds like a pretty good candidate for discipleship. If he walked into the typical American church today, we'd sign him up, no questions asked. After all, we have enough trouble getting people interested in spiritual things these days. Here's a guy who took the first step. He volunteered! We'd put him to work. You don't find this kind of guy very often. Willing. Ready. Committed.

But was he really?

I must remind you that when this volunteer latched on to Jesus, Jesus was in the height of His popularity. He'd just performed the miracle to feed the 5000 (9:12). News about Him spread like wild-fire when He sent His 12 disciples on a preaching and healing tour (9:1). Why even the Herod the ruler heard of Jesus growing fame (9:7).

Lots of people were intrigued with Jesus. But being intrigued with Jesus doesn't save anyone. Watch how Jesus responded to the Volunteer.

V 58 "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes..."

What did Jesus mean by that? "Foxes have holes. Birds have nests (actually "roosts" is a better translation--birds always have roosts, but build nests only at certain times of the year)." What does a hole mean to a fox, and roost to a bird?

Security. It's where they go for safety and comfort. It's there home. See that? Foxes and birds have a place to rest. What about the Son of Man?

"The Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

Why did Jesus say that? Think about it. Here was a man who wanted to follow Jesus. Wherever. But who did he consider Jesus to be? A Miracle worker. A great teacher. Someone who passed out free lunches by turning 5 loaves and 2 fishes into a feast!

Who wouldn't want to follow someone like that?! But here's the problem. The volunteer's view of Jesus was shallow. He doesn't seem to grasp that following Jesus involves inconvenience. More than inconvenience, it involves a Cross. That's where Jesus was heading (9:22).

"Now, do you still want to follow Me?" Jesus says. Who wants to volunteer to sign up with a leader who doesn't even have a place to lay His head? Who wants to follow a leader who will be rejected, even slain? Only one who has count the cost.

Here's cost #1...

Cost #1--To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of **Convenience**.

Don't miss this. If I am to follow Jesus, I must realize that there is a cost involved. It's not always convenient to follow Jesus. There's risk involved. There's sacrifice. That's why the decision to follow Jesus is not one we can make flippantly, or influenced by fickle emotions.

The spirit of the volunteer that came to Jesus is alive and well in our day.

Illust:

Tran: To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of Convenience. That's cost #1.

Next, another man enters the scene. The first fellow came to Jesus. He was a volunteer. Not so the second. Jesus went to him. He was a...

II. A Recruit (59-60)

V 59 "And He said to another, Follow Me."

What's the correct response to such an offer?

Lk 5:11--When Jesus called Peter, James, and John to follow Him, the text says, "they forsook all, and followed Him."

What did the Recruit do?

V 59 "But he said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."

Sounds like a reasonable and legitimate request. Was it? Listen to Jesus...

V 60 "Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead..."

You say, "I don't get it. What's wrong with showing compassion for a father who has died?" The answer--nothing. But in this case, there's a twist that we miss.

The recruit's father was still living. In fact, he wasn't even sick.

The phrase "bury my father" is a figure of speech used in the Middle East, even to this day. The same figure of speech is used in the villages of modern day Syria or Iraq. When a rebellious son tries to assert his independence from his father, the parent will say, "You want to bury me!" You want me to hurry up and die, so my authority over you will end, and you'll be on your own.

In essence, here's what the Recruit was saying, "Let me go and serve my father while he is alive, and after he dies I will bury him. Then I'll come and follow you."

Listen to an observation made by an Arab commentator Ibrahim Sa'id: "If his father had really died, why then was he not at that very moment keeping vigil over the body of his father? In reality he intends to defer the matter of following Jesus to a distant future when his father dies as an old man, who knows when." (Bailey, 26)

What did Jesus say to the Recruit's request?

V 60 "Let the dead bury the dead..."

What's the point? Following Jesus involves a conflict of values. The Recruit was wrestling with peer pressure. The accepted custom in his day told him that he had to be loyal to his father. That's what the community expected.

Illust: I have a friend who was in line to inherit the family business. He worked side by side with his father. His father took great pride in knowing that one day his son would carry on the business. But God called my friend into the ministry. The tension was incredible. What should he do? Stay in the business and please his father, or enter the ministry and please the Lord.

Listen. It's never right to dishonor your parent. But as a follower of Christ, it's always right to put God first.

Cost #2--To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of **Conformity**.

When I become a follower of Jesus, my value system changes. My highest value in life is not family loyalty. It's seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Conforming to people is out. Obedience to Jesus is in.

Are you willing to obey Jesus no matter what? No matter what anyone thinks?

Tran: We've seen 2 costs--Convenience, and Conformity.

Now we come to a third individual. Since like the first, he came, we'll call him

III. Another Volunteer (61-62)

V 61 "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; BUT..."

BUT. What a dangerous word! It indicates a divided loyalty.

You say, "Wait! What's so bad about going home and saying good-bye first? After all, when Elisha was called to follow Elijah, he asked for permission to go "kiss his mother and father" (I Kgs 19:20)! And Elijah let him!"

What did Jesus tell the second volunteer?

V 62 "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit..."

Why did Jesus say that? All the man wanted to do was say goodbye, wasn't it?

No. Again, remember we're dealing with the Middle Eastern culture. Family loyalty is tight. When the man asked to go home first, and bid farewell, here's what he was saying, "I'll follow you Jesus, after I go home and get permission from my parents. I won't do anything without the support of my family."

Listen carefully. This is a delicate subject. God is pro-family. After all, He designed the family. But that means He determines the place the family should have in our lives. And family loyalty is not #1. Loyalty to Him is.

The issue here is not whether we should honor our parents. The issue is who's first place in our lives.

Following Jesus is a personal decision. We don't take a poll to see who will be impressed by our choice. We count the cost.

Cost #3--To be a follower of Jesus involves letting go of **Control**.

Again v 62, "No man having put his hand to the plough...is fit..."

When I choose to follow Jesus, it means I count the cost, and turn the controls of my life over to Him.

Lk 12:51-53

Lk 14:25-26

Conclusion:

What's involved in following Jesus? Cost #1--I must let go of Conveniences.

Cost #2--I must let go of Conformity. And cost #3--I must let go of the Controls.

You say, "Wow! The cost is great to be a disciple, isn't it?"

Yes, there is a cost. But the cost is really nothing compared to what He did for us.

Is it costly to be a disciple? Yes. But unfortunately, we don't talk about it much. Someone has observed (Barclay, 131), "It may well be that we have done great hurt to the church by letting people think that church membership need not make so very much difference. We ought to tell them that it should make all the difference in the world. We might have fewer people; but those we had would be really pledged to Christ."

What happened to these 3 men? Did they follow Jesus? The text doesn't say, does it? Why not? Why are we left hanging? Because WE are the answer. What really matters now is not what those 3 men did with Jesus. What matters tonight is what you are doing with Jesus.

Are you willing to count the cost and follow Jesus?

You say, "Tell me more. What must I do?"

1. You must repent of your sins.
2. You must trust Christ alone as the Savior and Lord of your life.