

Broomfield



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The Cost of Discipleship, Part 3

A Job which Possesses¹

The late Charles F. Kettering, who at one time served as Vice President of General Motors, said that when it came to an employee he didn't want any fellow "who had a job working for him." See Kettering wanted a man whom a job had. The job must get the man, not the man the job. The job must get hold of a man so hard that no matter where he is, the job has got him for keeps. When he lies down he lies down in the clutches of the job. When he awakes that same job should be sitting on the foot of his bed telling him it's time to get up and go to work.

It was Kettering's belief that when a job gets a man that way, he could amount to almost anything.

Brothers and Sisters, this has striking parallels in the kingdom of God. The Christian is not someone who has taken hold of the kingdom of God. Rather he is someone who has been taken hold of by the kingdom.

Now, this truth is beautifully illustrated in our text. We have been examining a passage describing a man who, wishing to take hold of the kingdom of God, approached Christ with the promise that he would follow Him. And yet because the kingdom of God had NOT gotten hold of him, his promise to follow Christ was accompanied by a condition.

The Cost of Personal Relationships

That we might not walk in the steps of this would-be disciple, let's look at this text with the goal that we individually come face to face with the high cost of discipleship. When we come face to face with the cost of discipleship we will be men and women of whom the Kingdom has taken hold. And to do that, let's begin first by looking at it will cost one personal relationships.

Luke 9:57, "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."

As we have seen, this occurred while Jesus was in Galilee just before His departure by boat to the land of the Gadarenes. This being Christ's second year of public ministry, His popularity was rising such that people from all around were coming out to see Him.

¹ Taken from *Let Me Illustrate* by Donald Grey Barnhouse, page 77

Now of the masses that came to hear Christ, there were many who were drawn to Him and thus sought to follow as a disciple. In fact, just after this passage, we read of Christ who had freed the Gadarene demoniac say this:

Mark 5:18, “And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.”

After Bartimaeus was healed of his blindness, we read this:

Mark 10:52, “And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha of Bethany, and Joseph of Arimathea are all examples of this. When they heard Christ and received spiritual healing from Him each of these disciples followed Christ.²

The passage we have been addressing is an account of three such men who, having been drawn by Christ's words, likewise sought to follow Christ. The only problem was that they had failed to consider the high cost of discipleship. The first would-be disciple wanted to follow Christ AND maintain a certain level of worldly comfort. The second would-be disciple was willing to follow Christ ONLY if he could maintain his earthly security.

Now because we never read of these would-be disciples again it is obvious that Christ's words of response drove these men away.

With that we pick up on the final would-be disciple of Christ who failed to count the cost of discipleship.

Luke 9:61, “**And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.**”

As the other two, this man wanted to become a personal disciple of Christ. Just like Mary or Martha, He wanted to spend his life with Christ and fellowship with Him, travel with Him, eat with Him, learn from Him, and follow Him. And yet in spite of this heart-felt promise, this disciple ultimately would not follow Christ.

Why?

Notice that his promise was conditional.

The Commitment

Luke 9:61, “**And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.**”

Many get tripped up by this passage on account of 1 Kings 19. Listen to the text.

1 Kings 19:19-21, “So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing

² Compare Matthew 27:55-57

with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.”

From this text it appears that Elijah was more generous than Christ. In His earthly ministry, Christ was overbearing and demanding. Yet this is to forget that Christ was God and thus KNEW what was in this would-be disciple's heart. “For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7b).

Psalm 139:2, “Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought.”

This is in reference to the psalmist. When his thoughts are still far from him, GOD KNOWS THEM! And thus that is the case with Christ. As the Pharisees grumbled against the Lord, we read, “And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them” (Mark 2:8).

See, as God, Christ knew the heart of man; their thoughts, motives, and desires. As such while there is nothing wrong with the desire to say good-bye to the people we love before we leave on a mission trip, if our desire arises out of a divided heart, a heart set on serving Christ AND Man, it is wrong. And that was the case here!

This disciple did not seek to say good-bye to his family because, like Elisha, he loved them enough to grant them this consideration. Rather he wanted to say good-bye to his family because his love for them was as much or greater than his love for Christ and that disqualified him from discipleship!

Matthew 10:37-38, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”

Matthew 6:24, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

See that is the issue here: Is your devotion to God conditioned by your allegiance to family, job, or friend? Or is your devotion to God undivided? Are you bound by God or man?

Now do not think that because you name Christ as your Savior and Lord the answer to this is obvious. Notice the very words of this disciple “I will follow you, **Lord**” (Luke 9:61). See unlike the other two disciples this last disciple called Christ, "Lord."

Now, we have to be very careful that we do not read into this expression any more than what this disciple meant. The title "Lord" was very much like our expression "Sir"- it was a title of respect and honor. Now while in some cases it is used as a reference of deity³ here we would be on shaky ground to ascribe this usage. Rather we conclude that this disciple used "Lord" as a title of respect and honor.

With that don't miss the point. Out of the three would-be disciples who approached Jesus in our text it

³ Compare Philippians 2:11

was this last disciple who demonstrated the highest reverence for Christ, and yet gave the weakest reason for why he wouldn't follow Christ.

The FIRST disciple failed to follow Christ because of the UNCERTAINTIES OF THE PRESENT.⁴ Where would he sleep? Would he have enough food to eat?

The SECOND disciple failed to follow Christ because of the UNCERTAINTIES OF THE FUTURE.⁵ “If I forsake my inheritance and Christ let's me down where will I sleep, and will I have enough food to eat?”

Yet THIS DISCIPLE refused to follow Christ on account of FAMILY PRESSURE. What would dad say? What would mom think?

In other words, there is no correlation between a high view of Christ and obedience!⁶ In fact, many times in Scripture it is just the opposite. At one point in Christ's ministry many of His closest disciples abandoned Him.

John 6:66, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

Having spent three intimate years with the Lord, Judas was convinced of His character. And yet he betrayed Him,

Matthew 26:48-49, “Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.”

James 2:19, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

See just because you profess Christ as Lord it is not necessarily well with your soul.

And thus we conclude that the pursuit of knowing Christ is meaningless unless we live in light of this knowledge! It affects our lives completely! See, it is irrelevant that you can outline a gospel presentation, quote Scripture, and debate theology. The question that we must ask ourselves is, “As I pursue my relationship with Christ is my life in submission to Christ's Lordship?”

Yesterday's Graces

You have heard the expression, "It ain't over 'till the fat lady sings." In a limited sense this is true of the Christian walk.

We CANNOT live on yesterday's graces. What we did yesterday is of little consequence as it relates to today. If yesterday saw a healthy walk but today finds you in compromise, your life proclaims the same words as this disciple.

Luke 9:61, “And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; **but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.**”

⁴ Compare Luke 9:58

⁵ Compare Luke 9:60

⁶ There is concerning a Biblical view of Christ on the part of the child of God!

Indeed we must evaluate our lives as it relates to the Lordship of Christ asking the questions:

- Have I subjected myself to His Lordship?
- Are the things I call my own Christ's or mine?
- If Christ called the "loan of my life" at any moment would I hesitate to pay?
- If obedience to Christ means the forsaking of my family would I obey?

Many ministries have been compromised. Many opportunities for God's kingdom have been lost. Christian development has been stunted. Why?

Because the "lord" calling the shots in their Christian lives was not Christ but family, friends, success, popularity, happiness, etc.

2 Timothy 2:4, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

See we must understand that the COST associated with following Christ is NOT sacrifice BUT the forfeiting of all that we have!

The Cost

Luke 9:62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Just like with Christ's response to the other two disciples here Christ quotes a colloquialism which most likely dated as far back as 800 BC. Thus the Jews of Christ's day understood well what this statement meant. The man who puts his hand to a plow and starts plowing forward but then as he plows looks back will inevitably plow a crooked row.

Likewise the man who sets his heart on something, and yet continually looks back to his past loyalties, cannot satisfactorily do his job! And neither can a disciple of the kingdom that is why Joshua called upon the people of God to "choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

1 Kings 18:21, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

Matthew 6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Hebrews 12:1-2, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

See the issue raised in our passage and the issue raised throughout all of Scripture — IS THE ISSUE OF DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS. The double-minded man is disqualified as a disciple of Christ for it will be impossible for him to serve God well. And that is why the double-minded man is NOT fit for the kingdom of God.

The term rendered *fit*⁷ in our passage is also translated as "useful" or "ready to be used."⁸ Indeed, the double-minded man is not "useful" in the kingdom. And why is that? To answer this, let me show you what the Kingdom of God revolves around.

Paul wrote that Christ's position as the HEAD of the body is such that "in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18b). THAT is the focus and standard of the Kingdom: The Preeminence of Christ in Everything.

- What HE thinks, not my family!
- What HE desires, not my friends!
- What HE wills, not myself!
- HIS delight, not mine!
- HIS standard, not the world's!

And this is what discipleship is all about! Our commitment to Christ must be total and unreserved or it is no commitment at all. In fact half-hearted devotion is a sign of unbelief no matter how many positive things you say about Christ.

And yet, it is at this very point that so many of us fail. I have heard it said of people in the Reformed camp, "They are quick to quote the sovereignty of God, but they are slow at living there!"

What an indictment!

What good is theology, Bible reading, prayers and tears, if we fail to live in light of Christ?

Don't ever forget, the demons profess the "Lordship of Christ."⁹ Indeed!

Luke 9:62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Ah but you say, "Herein I am condemned..." I have looked back. So often I am moved more by my parents/peers than the Lord. I do not live in submission to the Lordship of Christ!

Family of God you have spoken well and your tears and grief confirm it. For if you knew that Christ is Lord both of the dead and the living, then you would not simply grieve rather, you would rise from the dust, take your sin, sorrow, weakness, and humiliation — not hiding a thing — and bring it before the Lord who died on the cross for your sin. There you would confess it all as an act of SUBMISSION TO HIS LORDSHIP.

But you don't because in your living you have not submitted to the Lordship of Christ — and so you have done your own thing. In your subsequent dying on account of your sin, you are content to beat yourself

⁷ ευθετος euthetos

⁸ Compare Hebrews 6:7 and Luke 14:35

⁹ Compare Matthew 8:29

rather than submit to the Lord's cross whereby you might be healed!

Brothers and sisters, if you are condemned this day as one who is not fit for the Kingdom of God, do not flee from Christ. Flee to Christ — the Lord of life — and throw yourself at His feet as a broken individual. Truly, Christ's dealings with every disciple of the Kingdom are that they might offer to God the acceptable sacrifice of a broken spirit and contrite heart.

That is the starting place — the genesis — of true discipleship!

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on April 2, 2006. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.