

# No Turning Back

by Anton Bosch

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**Scripture:** Luke 9:51, Luke 9:57, Luke 9:59, Luke 9:61, Hebrews 12:1, Matthew 8:19, Philippians 3:13

**Topics:** "Commitment to Christ", "Counting the Cost of Discipleship"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the commitment and sacrifices required to follow Jesus, as seen in Luke chapter 9, verses 51-62. Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem, emphasizing the determination needed to fulfill God's will. The encounters with three individuals highlight the challenges of following Jesus, testing their resolve and willingness to prioritize Him above all else. The message stresses the importance of counting the cost, making genuine commitments, and avoiding distractions or looking back when following Christ.

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## Transcript

Let's turn to the Word, and we're in Luke chapter 9, and we're going to be finishing off on Luke chapter 9 this evening. Luke chapter 9, and verse 51 through 62. Luke chapter 9, verse 51.

Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for him. But they did not receive him, because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did? But he turned and rebuked them, and said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to him, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Then he said to another, Follow me.

But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God. And another said, Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid farewell to those who are at my house.

But Jesus said to him, No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. So we have two accounts here, the Samaritan situation, and then these three people who wanted to follow Jesus. I think that the verse that we start with, verse 51, is a very significant verse, because this marks the change.

And remember for the last couple of weeks we've been speaking about the fact that Jesus is going to begin to move towards Jerusalem. And this is the point at which this now begins to happen. And so there is a marked change between the first nine chapters, and then the next ten, and then the final four.

So the ministry of the Lord Jesus, Luke divides it up into these three phases of his ministry. And they are obviously not time-related. The first nine chapters that we've been in, that is about two years in his ministry.

It's going to take him about ten months to get to Jerusalem, and then the last four chapters happen very, very quickly over a matter of weeks. So Luke is not, as much of the Scripture, is not in chronological order. It's not giving us a time frame, and you can say, well, this has happened here.

And what Luke is doing is he is grouping things together that belong together topically. And so in these next ten chapters, Jesus is now going to Jerusalem, and he is preparing his disciples for the cross, and for their ministry. So he is now focusing less on the crowds, and more on the twelve, who would then take on the ministry.

Not just the twelve, but also we'll see in chapter 10, the seventy, the next group of disciples that follow him. And so verse 51 then tells us, or gives us this marker that things are changing. Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up.

So this is speaking about his ascension. Now obviously, as I said, Luke is not dealing with things in a sense of time frame. When would Jesus be received up? Well, it would be after the cross.

And so, in fact, forty days after the cross, he would be received up. So this is ten, eleven, twelve months away from this particular point. Not quite twelve months, maybe ten or eleven months.

The only way we can time these things is based on the passovers. And as we put these three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, remember John is very different, as we put them next to each other, or on top of each other, in fact, we can find where the passovers happened, and that gives us, those are the only markers that we really have in terms of how Jesus' ministry develops. That's also how we figure out that his ministry was three, or just over three and a half years long, based on the passovers.

And we know that he would be crucified on the final passover of his ministry. So Luke is not saying he's about to ascend. It's another ten, eleven months before he's going to ascend.

But that is the ultimate, that is where this is now leading. Everything has come to this point where Jesus has been popular, he has been proclaiming the message, thousands are following him, and now he is getting ready to go to the cross, and to leave this earth, and to return back to the Father. And so it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to

Jerusalem.

He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. In other words, he had made up his mind, he was determined that Jerusalem was his, not his next stop, but Jerusalem was his intermediate goal. Remember, and obviously Jerusalem is speaking about the cross.

And so he is now, and this, so Luke just inserts this here, he doesn't give us more information, but we must pay attention to this verse, because Jesus has now got his face set on Jerusalem. He's made up his mind, this is it. And obviously he's not just making up his mind, he's being led by the Father, by the Spirit, but he knows that this is the final stretch.

And so now he's getting ready for Jerusalem. The statement that he steadfastly set his face to Jerusalem is a fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah chapter 50 and verse 7. And I'm going to give you verse 6 so that we can get the context. Isaiah 56 is obviously a messianic prophecy, speaking about Jesus and speaking about his suffering.

And he says, I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard. I did not hide my face from shame and from spitting. So we can see that this is the cross, this is the trial and the beating, and ultimately the cross.

And then he says, for the Lord God will help me, therefore I will not be disgraced, therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. So you can see different words. Luke says he set his face towards Jerusalem.

Isaiah prophesies he set his face as a flint. Remember flint is a rock, probably the hardest rock that they knew in those days. He sets his face, we use that term stony-faced.

We say someone is stony-faced. In other words, their face is rigid. It doesn't move, it doesn't change, it doesn't show emotion.

Now Jesus has set his face to Jerusalem, and he's put his eyes on the goal. Remember for him the goal is the cross, well that's the intermediate goal. But the goal for him, the immediate goal, is the cross.

And he set his face towards that cross, and nothing was going to deter him. He was focused on this one thing that God had called him to do. This was the purpose of his whole life.

And in the article this week, I speak about the centrality of the cross, and the fact that that was what it was all about. And the book of Hebrews says that a body you have prepared for me, quoting from the prophets, a body you have prepared for me. I have come to do your will, O God.

What was Jesus' body prepared for? Well, it wasn't prepared so he can perform miracles. It was prepared for the cross. Everything was for the cross.

And you may remember that sometimes at Christmas time, we speak about this beautiful baby born, and we remember the beautiful pictures of this baby in Bethlehem's manger. But in fact, he was born to die. He wasn't born to live, but he was born to die on the cross.

And so now he sets his face, and he says, I'm going to fulfill the will of the Father, and I'm going to lay down my life. Now, this is very important that we remember this, because when we get to the last part from verse 57 onwards, this is going to come back. So again, we have Luke drawing these contrasts.

The contrast here is between Jesus and those who would be disciples. All right. So verse 51 then, it came to pass when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Now, I think I mentioned it's going to take 10 or so months to get there, but he is journeying now. And if you look at the other gospels also, you'll see that he is constantly working closer and closer and closer to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was probably three days, four days journey from Galilee.

He could have got there in a few days, but he is preaching all the way down. And remember, he is up in the north, and now he's going through Samaria, which is between Galilee and Jerusalem. Jerusalem is down in the south.

And so he's going from the north down to the south, and he is preaching all the way, and he's going to take these 10 odd months to do that. And so he sent messengers before his face. There's no connection between this and the previous verse, which said that he set his face towards Jerusalem.

It simply says that he sent an advanced party. Now, remember, Jesus is not traveling light, if you will. He is traveling with hundreds, maybe thousands of people following him.

So if they were to overnight in a town, that would be a major event and a major issue. Where's everybody sleep? What's everybody going to eat? And all of these kinds of things. And so Jesus sends an advanced party.

It's not just for himself, and he's 12, but it's so that everyone can understand, in fact, Jesus is coming, and he's coming with this crowd, and you need to get ready. You need to prepare for him and for those who are with him. So he sends messengers before his face, and as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for him.

Now, remember that while there is a city called Samaria, which is the capital of the area of Samaria, it is a big area and consisted of a number of towns, not just one city, but a number of towns in this area. The Samaritans, of course, didn't like the Jews, and the Jews didn't like the Samaritans. Now, there's a connection between this and the previous section that we dealt with last week, where there's sectarianism that we spoke about.

And of course, there is this sectarianism going on here. For those who don't know, the background to the Samaritan problem is that when the 10 northern tribes were taken in captivity to Assyria, remember there are two captivities. The northern tribe was taken first, and then, I've forgotten now, 40 or 50 years later, the southern tribes are taken to Babylon.

So there are two separate. One goes to Assyria, and the others go to Babylon. When the 10 northern tribes are taken to Assyria, Assyria sends their own people.

Not just Assyrians, but other people that were part of the empire to Israel. So they'd taken all the Jews or most of the Jews away and carried them to Assyria. Now the land is vacant.

And so they bring people in from the surrounding nations and from other parts of the empire to take the place of the Jews. And so these are Gentiles now living in that area. And in that process, they marry Jewish men and women.

So there's intermarriage. So that is the first problem. So they are a mixed race.

They are not Jews. And remember that there were specific commands in the law that Israel was not to marry foreign nations, specifically because of the danger of those mixed marriages resulting in idolatry. And that, in fact, is what happens.

And so the Samaritans bring their religion, and they mix it with Judaism, and they form their own version. The other problem was that at this time, the temple is still standing in Jerusalem. It had not been destroyed yet.

And so the other problem is that they can't go to the temple in Jerusalem because they are impure, because they are not pure Jews. And their doctrine is suspect because it's been mixed now with idolatry and all sorts of other stuff. And so the answer to that was for them to build their own temple.

So they developed their own version of Judaism. They built their own temple in Mount Gerizim. You remember Jesus comes to the woman at the well.

She's in Samaria. She's a Samaritan. And she says, where should we worship? On Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem? That's this problem.

So they had their temple in Gerizim. The Jewish temple was in Jerusalem. And Jesus says, you don't even know what you're talking about because the true worshippers worship in spirit and truth.

But you see where that comes in. So they built their own temple. The Jews, about 140 odd years before Jesus comes, attacked the Samaritans and destroyed their temple.

They felt that it was their righteous anger, their right to destroy it it was in competition with the temple of the true God. And of course, this creates even more animosity. And so the two groups of people really hate each other.

And so it is to them that Jesus comes. Now, it's interesting that most Jews who would travel from Galilee in the north down to Jerusalem in the south would bypass. They would take a detour around Samaria so that they did not have to deal with the Samaritans.

Some of those Jews who were very, very legalistic would even regard themselves as ceremonially unclean if the shadow of a Samaritan fell on him. That is how much they hated each other. So they would normally take an extra day or so to go around that area.

But Jesus obviously doesn't have these prejudices. And I think that that's one of the points of this passage. Jesus is preaching the gospel, and his gospel is not just for Jews, but it is for Gentiles also.

And it is for half-breed, whatever you want to call these people, half-Jews, half-Gentiles. It is for them also. Also, just by the way, they had rejected most of the Old Testament.

They only kept the first five books, the law. And a modified version of the law, and rejected the prophets and the poetic books and so on. And so Jesus then sends messengers in, and he says, you know, get ready for us.

And it says, they did not receive him because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. So obviously these disciples, you go and prepare, and they explain who Jesus is, and they say, well, you know, what's

he going to do? And they say, well, he's just passing through, he's going to Jerusalem. And he's intending to get to Jerusalem by the time of the Passover.

Now, notice that they did not reject him because he was a Jew. Remember that Jesus had ministered to Samaritans on different occasions. And remember the woman at the well particularly.

And many were saved as a result of that incident. Because of her testimony, and because of his word. So it doesn't seem that they're rejecting him because he is a Jew, but they're rejecting him, it says specifically, because he had set his face to Jerusalem.

So what had offended them? Well, that's why I told you the long story about the background. What offended them was that he was not going to celebrate Passover with them, but he was going to celebrate Passover with the Jews in Jerusalem. And obviously, as I said, it's a long time off still.

But this is the problem. So it seems that they would have received him because Luke says specifically, they did not receive him because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. So if he wasn't going to go to Jerusalem, it seems that they would have received him.

Now, I think, can you see the problem? That they want Jesus. Obviously, he's entertaining. He's performing miracles.

He's healing people. He's blessing people. He's feeding people.

He's speaking great words of wonderful wisdom. But they don't want him on his terms. They want him on their terms.

They want him on their terms. And of course, this is a problem we've seen before in Luke. And this is a problem that we have even today.

Many people want Jesus. They want his miracles. They want his great, wonderful words.

But they want him on their terms. And Jesus says, no, I'm not going to play your game. I have a mission to fulfill.

And my mission is at the cross of Calvary. And so he sets his face to Jerusalem. And because he's not willing to do what they want to do, they reject him.

Now, remember I said this is the beginning of this next phase. It begins. And it's interesting that it begins unlike the beginning of Luke.

At the beginning of Jesus' life and the beginning of ministry was marked with great acceptance. People flocked to him. And they loved to hear him.

And thousands followed him. But as he now sets his mind and his heart towards Jerusalem, rejection begins to happen. And remember that this was even amongst his disciples.

It wasn't long before this that Jesus said, who do men say I am? And they said different things. And he said, you know, who do you say? And Peter says, you're the Christ. And then Jesus reveals the cross.

It's the same chapter, chapter 9. Peter in Matthew says, far be it from you, Lord. So immediately when he begins to reveal the cross, rejection comes. And that is the heart of the article that I wrote this week.

And I trust that you, if you haven't read it, that you will read it. The moment the cross comes into the picture, rejection is real. People will accept him.

The Jews will accept him without the cross. The Greeks will accept him without the cross. But the cross becomes a point of rejection.

And so they would not receive him. And when his disciples, James and John saw this, they said, Lord, you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them just as Elijah did. Now, you remember in 1 Kings chapter 19, a king sends a group of men, soldiers, to Elijah the prophet.

And they're wanting Elijah to come and speak to the king. And Elijah calls fire. He says, if I'm a prophet, well, then let fire come down from heaven.

And fire came and consumed the 50 men. And the king sends another 50 men and commands Elijah to come and stand in his presence. And Elijah calls down fire again.

And so this is the event that they are referring to. Now, remember that Jesus had been preaching for two years. And he is preaching a non-violent message.

He is preaching a message of peace. He is preaching a message of grace and of mercy and of love. But the interesting thing is that they had forgotten what he's been preaching for two years.

But they remember what suited them that went back hundreds of years. And that's just human nature, is that we seem to have an amazing ability to retain in our minds the things that suit us, that suit our personality, that suit our agenda, and forget those things that he has just said to us. And even if we come into a meeting and the Lord speaks to us through his word or we're reading his word, sometimes we forget that the moment we stand up, the moment we leave, because we have other stuff that's going on that's not part of the will of God.

Now, when I say this was part of their nature, of course, remember, this is John and James. And they were brothers, and they had a nickname. And I'm sure you can remember that.

I hope you remember their nickname. They were called the Sons of Thunder. The Sons of Thunder.

Why are they called the Sons of Thunder? Well, the scripture doesn't tell us, but you don't have to be very clever to figure out why they were, because of exactly this kind of thing. They were fiery, fire-breathing zealots for the truth. And they were quite happy to bring fire down from heaven.

That was their nature. But Jesus was trying to change them. He was trying to teach them a different message.

And remember that the penny eventually drops, because when you read the Gospel of John, the same John, and the epistles of John, he is known as the Apostle of Love. Brethren, love one another. You see the change that happened because of the Gospel, because the penny eventually dropped.

And he changes from a fire-breathing zealot to an apostle who preaches, brethren, just love one another. And so that is the power of the Gospel. But at this point, the Gospel had not yet penetrated into his hard heart.

So they said, Lord, we'll bring down fire. Now, obviously, they couldn't bring down fire because they could only do what the Lord would permit them to do. He had given them great authority to cast out demons and to heal the sick.

And all of those kinds of things. And they thought, well, we have unlimited power. We'll just call down fire.

And Jesus, of course, is not happy. And he rebukes them. He turned and rebuked them and said, you do not know what manner of spirit you are of.

I think this is important for us to understand the change in the message. Unfortunately, there are many, not many, but there are New Testament Christians who want to live by Old Testament rules. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Who want to exact vengeance and judgment. When in fact, there has been a clear change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Doesn't mean that there will not be vengeance, that there will not be judgment, that there will not be hellfire.

Of course, that's going to happen. But that's not where we're at right now. Right now, we're at the point where we're preaching the Gospel of grace and of mercy.

Obviously, warning that there is judgment to come. But it is not up to us to bring judgment upon people. Unfortunately, some Christians feel that that's their job.

There are some preachers, we call them hellfire and brimstone preachers because they want to bring down the hellfire and brimstone on people. That is not where we're at. And while we preach a clear and a straight message, at the same time, it is the time of grace and God is calling men to repentance.

And he says, you don't even know what your spirit's like. And he says, the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them, to save them. Remember, again, the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament could not give eternal life. It could only prescribe a penalty for sin and the penalty, the soul that sins, it must die. So the Old Testament could only minister death.

It could not minister life. The New Testament, Jesus comes and he ministers life and he comes to seek and to save that which is lost. And then it says they went to another village.

Now, is that familiar? Yeah, at the beginning of the chapter, remember Jesus sent them out. And he says, if they don't receive you in a village, then shake the dust off your feet and go to another village. Now, that had happened a few days, a few weeks before.

And they'd forgotten what Jesus had taught them. And so Jesus does what he taught. He puts into practice what he had taught.

And he simply moves to another village. And of course, that village lost, that town lost the blessing of God. What a sad situation.

Now, we need to move on. Otherwise, we're going to run out of time. In verse 57, it happened as they journeyed on the road.

So they're working their way south, that someone said to him, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. Now, remember, different people following him for different reasons. And we've spoken about the inner circle, the 12, and then there's the 70.

Then there's sort of increasing circles with less and less commitment to the Lord Jesus. Matthew says that, in fact, this man was a teacher himself. And he wants to follow Jesus.

He is a scribe. And so he wants to follow Jesus as one of Jesus' disciples. Remember, rabbis those days, just like Jesus, had the 12.

Most rabbis would have a group of disciples. That was their form of university. And so the same way as today, where did you get your degree from? Oh, from Harvard or from Yale or wherever.

That determines the quality, if you will, of the degree in human thinking. And those days, it was the same. The rabbi that you studied with, that determined the quality of your education.

And remember that Paul says, I was taught by Gamaliel. Gamaliel was the top rabbi at that time. So he had studied in the top university.

So this man recognized that Jesus had something that other rabbis didn't have. And he wants to follow Jesus. He wants to learn from Jesus, but he also wants to get a little bit of the shine that comes from being one of Jesus' disciples.

So he says, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. Notice he's not just saying, Lord, can I follow you? He says, I will follow you wherever you go. Now, where is Jesus going? He's going to the cross.

He's making a commitment. He doesn't even understand what the commitment is. And remember that the other disciples didn't even keep that commitment, that all of them except John failed when it came to the cross.

They all ran away. And so he says, Lord, I'll follow you wherever. Folks, it's so easy to make these promises to God without any substance, without any ability to do what we say we're going to do and without an understanding of what we're actually saying.

And of course, he didn't have a clue what he was saying. He thought that Jesus was going to go to Jerusalem and he's going to become the king or he's going to become a great rabbi or whatever it is. So Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

Now, what does that got to do with what the man said? He said, I'll follow you wherever you go. Jesus says, I don't have anywhere to sleep. And of course, that is true.

Jesus received hospitality from different people at different times. It seems that he lived in Peter's house for a period of time. He stayed in other people's homes at other times, but he did not have a permanent place to live.

And as he is on his journey, we can see he was rejected by the Samaritans. He moves to the next town. Who knows where he slept? Maybe in a house, maybe in the town square, maybe out in the field.

So what does this got to do with this man following Jesus? Well, what Jesus is saying is, there is inconvenience connected with following me. There is inconvenience connected with following me. Now, there are three incidents that Luke groups together.

They don't necessarily happen at the same time. And with each of the three, all of three, sorry, it doesn't tell us what the conclusion was. But we can assume based on the rich young ruler who expressed the same desire when Jesus told him the cost, he left and he was very, very sorrowful.

And so Jesus is saying, do you understand that it is not convenient to follow me? It is hard. It is hard. Now, he's not even revealing the cross.

He's simply revealing the temporary inconveniences of not having a fixed place of abode, a fixed place where you can call home. Literally, he's moving from one place to the other. He has his clothes on his back and that's it.

He has nothing more than that. And so Jesus is telling this man, you better count the cost. You better count the cost.

And remember, Jesus teaches this in another place. He says, no man starts to build a house without calculating how much it's going to cost. Lest he start and he can't finish.

No general goes to war, he says, without counting the cost. Do I have enough men to embark on this war and to win this battle? Then the next one, then he said to another, follow me. So you see the difference between the first one and the second one.

The first one says, Lord, I'll follow you. Jesus reaches out to this one and he initiates the conversation and he says to him, follow me. But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

Now, we understand that this didn't mean that his father was dead and that he needed to bury his father. The reason for that is very simple because the Jews would bury on the same day that the person died. And if you were touched a dead body, you would be unclean for seven days.

So if this man's father had died while he was there, it's likely that he would be out there following Jesus. And certainly he would not be able to be out with other people. So what we assume he is saying is, well, you know, I have a responsibility to my father.

And of course, that's right. The fifth command requires that your father and mother must be honored. And part of that honoring father and mother was the responsibility to take care of them in their old age.

That was not just a custom, but that was part of the law. And so he's saying, I have responsibilities and his responsibilities are legitimate. So Jesus says, well, you know, you better go and fulfill your obligations.

No, Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and preach the kingdom of God. Now, Jesus is not encouraging the breaking of the law.

He is simply testing the man's resolve, the man's decision to follow him. Are you really willing to follow me? Are you willing to forsake your earthly responsibilities in order to follow me? So he says, let the dead bury their own dead. And obviously he's not meaning this literally.

He's meaning spiritually. Let the spiritual dead bury the spiritual dead. He is involved in life.

He is preaching eternal life. And so he says, well, you know, that's dealing with the dead. I'm dealing with life.

Go and preach the kingdom. What's the message of the kingdom? Eternal life. And so you can see the contrast again.

And then he comes to the third guy or another one also said, so this one initiates it. He says, Lord, I will follow you. But let me first go and bid them farewell, who are at my house.

This seems to be a reasonable request. Lord, I'm all in. I'm going to be with you.

I'm going to follow you. But, you know, I just need to go and say goodbye to my family. And Jesus doesn't permit him to do so.

In fact, if you look at verse 62, Jesus said to him, no one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. I'm not sure if this young man understood or I'm assuming it's a young man, but this man understood what Jesus was speaking about. But remember that we spoke about Elijah.

Now, when Elijah came to the end of his ministry, he is moving through an area and he finds Elisha. And Elisha is plowing. The scripture is very specific.

He's plowing. And he's plowing with 12 yoke of oxen. So it seems that there are six or 12 different plows going at the same time.

And he is in the back plow. And Elijah throws his mantle over Elisha. And that's a sign to Elisha that he needs to follow Elijah.

And Elisha says, well, you know, I'll follow you, but let me go and say goodbye to my parents, to my family. And he is permitted to do that. And he comes back and he kills the two oxen and he sacrifices that to the Lord and feeds the men.

And he then follows Elijah and he never looks back again. So the fact that Elisha was plowing at the time, this is the connection. This is what Jesus has in mind when he says to him, no one having put his hand to the plow.

Now, why, again, did Elijah permit Elisha to say goodbye? And Jesus will not permit this man. Well, again, because he's testing. You see, it's not a matter of him saying, well, you've got to give up your family in order to follow me.

He may ask that. That is a possibility. But that is not a condition.

But there needs to be a willingness to count everything loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, as Paul said. And so, again, it's this test that comes. And you'll see that the test is on relatively minor things in the grand scheme of things.

It's about sleeping somewhere. It's about saying goodbye to your parents. It's about burying your father or waiting for him to die so that you can maybe get the inheritance, whatever was involved in that.

But it's on these small things that they stumble. And it's on the small things that the Lord asks of us that we stumble. Lord, I'll follow you all the way.

Lord, I'll die for you. Well, I want you to go to the meeting tonight. Lord, it's a little cold, and I'm not feeling too good.

No, I know there are folk who are genuinely sick tonight, and my sympathies are with them. But how easily do we skip the meeting for the Dodger game? The reason I didn't want to go there is not because I'm afraid to say that, but I don't want you to start thinking about the game. But folk, this is serious.

We say, Lord, I'll follow you. But when it comes to giving up the game, when it comes to giving up an hour, when it comes to the inconvenience, and folk, there are many, many, many people who are not in church today or tomorrow because of the inconvenience of being outside of an air-conditioned building. That's how deep our commitment goes.

And I think that there's a real parallel between that and Jesus saying, I don't have anywhere to go and sleep tonight. I'm going to sleep wherever I can find. We'll follow him if we can meet inside of an air-conditioned building without the noise of the traffic, without the cold, without the hot, without the other inconveniences, without the hard fold-up chairs and sit on the plush pews.

We'll do that. But endure a little bit of inconvenience? No, that's just too much. How easily are we dissuaded? And I think that part of the reason Jesus doesn't want this man to say goodbye to his parents is because he knows the man's heart.

And he knows that if the man goes to his family and says, well, you know, I'm going to follow Jesus, they'll dissuade him. They'll say, well, where are you going to get food? What are you going to do? What about your job? What about your house? What about this? What about that? And that he could possibly change his mind in the process. And folk, how easily do we change our minds about serving the Lord because of pressure from family or pressure from peers or from those around us? Now, remember where we began this evening.

I'm almost through. Jesus sets his face as a flint and he says, I'm going to Jerusalem. I'm going to fulfill the will of God.

And in order for him to get there, he has to go through the whipping post. He has to go through the plucking of his beard as we saw from Isaiah. He has to go through Gethsemane.

He has to go through all of these things and ultimately die on that cross. But for not for one moment was he dissuaded. Not for one moment did he falter.

But he said, I'm going to do the will of God. And yet here's three people and he's asking them to make small sacrifices. And they can't make those sacrifices.

Now, Jesus says, no one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. Obviously, what Jesus has in mind here is Elisha. Remember, he's plowing.

If you plowed those days, you would never see it here in America. But maybe in Mexico, you may see it in third world countries where they still plow with oxen. The plow has one shear and it has two handles.

And the oxen or the horse or whatever it is, pulls the thing in front and you have to steer it. So you steer it and it's very hard work. And so you have to guide the oxen or the horse and you have to steer the plow.

Now, the moment you look back, the furrow is going to be crooked. And remember, we see this even in mechanized farming, that they lay the furrows one next to the other in straight lines. Otherwise, you're going to miss a patch and there's going to be a hard patch where the seed won't grow.

And so each furrow needs to lie next to the other. If you're going to be looking around, if you're going to get distracted, the job is going to be badly done. And Jesus says it's not just a matter of doing a haphazard job for the kingdom and saying, well, you know, I just didn't do a great work.

He says you're not fit for the kingdom. And obviously, in looking back, he's talking about second guessing your decision to follow Jesus. And folks, there are people right now maybe watching the video.

There may be some in this audience this evening who are second guessing their commitment to Jesus Christ. Looking back at the world, remember Israel kept looking back. Oh, it was better in Egypt.

And then let me remind you of the second shortest verse in the Bible. You should know it by off by heart by now. What is it? Remember Lot's wife.

Three words. Remember Lot's wife. What was the problem with Lot's wife? She looked back.

She looked back at where she had come from and she was turned into a pillar of salt. Folks, there can be no looking back. We need to determine and I pray that we would determine and you would determine in your own heart tonight.

And you'll notice that Jesus is not making things easy for them. Unfortunately, in modern forms of evangelism, we make it easy for people. We say, well, you know, just, you know, just pray the sinner's prayer, you know, just put up your hand, whatever, you know.

No, Jesus doesn't make it easy for them because there is a cost. And he says you better make sure that when you make this commitment, it's a genuine commitment. And having made the commitment to follow him, there can be no looking back.

And if you're looking back right now, I urge you, get your eyes on the prize. Get your eyes on the goal. For Jesus, the goal was the cross.

For us, the goal is the resurrection. Remember where we were in Peter. And again, it's not coincidence that these two passages run together.

On Thursday night, we spoke about Peter. And Peter says there is the danger of stumbling, of not making it. But he says, no, I want to get in there with an abundant entrance.

If you're looking back, you'll stumble. And there won't be an abundant entrance. Father, we thank you for your word.

Lord, these are hard passages. And Lord, we'd much prefer to speak and to think about easy things. But Lord, the whole message of the cross is not easy.

And Lord, you're asking men and women to follow you. And Lord, there may be someone watching the video who's not a Christian. Maybe someone here this evening.

Lord, I can't see everyone because of the lights. But Lord, there may be someone here who's making decisions about following Jesus. I pray, Lord, that those decisions may be weighty decisions, may be decisions that are made counting the cost, being willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary in order to follow Jesus.

And follow Him all the way, even to the cross of Calvary. Lord, I pray for those who may be here this evening, or those who are watching, who are faltering, whose faith is failing, for whom the temptations of this world has become too big, for whom the way has become too hard, for whom the fight has just become too wearisome. I pray, Lord, that you would cause them to have their eyes fixed on Jesus.

Lord, the verse that we've been preaching this whole year, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Lord, I pray that you'd help us to get our eyes off our troubles, to get our eyes off the politics, to get our eyes off whatever it is that's distracting us, and that we may get our eyes on Jesus. Lord, that we may make it, not just scraping in by the skin of our teeth, but having an abundant entrance into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, Lord, I pray that you'd help us. I pray as we depart from one another now, that you'd go with us, keep us, and protect us, and bless us, bring us together again safely on Thursday. Pray, Lord, for those who are not well.

I think particularly of Henry, Lord, that you would just touch his frail body in his old age, and just strengthen him. In Jesus' name I pray. So, Lord, I pray that you'd go with us now.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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