

Jesus' Forbearance With Unbelievers and His Expectations of Believers Luke 9:51-62

by David Servant

Jesus' forbearance with unbelievers and His expectations of believers reveal His merciful and longsuffering nature, and the sacrifices we must make to follow Him.

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "True Devotion"

Description

David Servant preaches on the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, highlighting Jesus' love for all people regardless of race or background. He emphasizes Jesus' rebuke of James and John for their desire to call fire down on a Samaritan village, showing that God's mercy and longsuffering give sinners time to repent. In the second part of the sermon, David discusses the importance of true devotion to Jesus, using examples of individuals who wanted to follow Jesus on their own terms but were not willing to make sacrifices or fully commit.

Transcript

When we read the story of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, we learned that Jews and Samaritans generally hated each other. Samaritans were a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles, considered impure by other Jews. Jesus, of course, was a Jew, but He loved everyone because He was also God. And, unlike most Jews who traveled from Galilee to Judea by taking a long route that bypassed Samaria altogether, once again we read of Jesus journeying right through the heart of that region.

On His way, an entire Samaritan village refused to accommodate Him and His disciples only because they were Jews on the way to Jerusalem. This infuriated the two brothers, James and John, who consequently asked Jesus if they should call fire down from heaven on that Samaritan village, just as Elijah had once done upon a band of enemy soldiers. They felt the Samaritans should die for their offense.

Jesus rebuked both brothers for their attitude, saying (according to some manuscripts), "You don't realize what your hearts are like. For the Son of Man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Like James and John, we sometimes think that God should immediately kill sinful people, and wonder why He doesn't. The reason is because He is so merciful and longsuffering. God is so merciful that He wants to give them plenty of time to repent. He knows that their fate is permanently sealed at death, and that hell awaits the unrepentant. Certainly Jesus wasn't pleased by the hatred of the people in that village, but He

knew that they were acting just like most Jews acted toward Samaritans. In fact, His own disciples were no different than the unaccommodating Samaritans. If the Samaritan villagers deserved to be burned with fire for their prejudice, so did James and John!

In the second portion of today's reading we learn that, just like today, there were many people in Jesus' time who wanted to follow Him on their own terms. And, like today, those people disqualified themselves from being Jesus' true followers. Luke related three examples of such people.

The first man claimed he would follow Jesus no matter where He went. Jesus warned the man that he was making a vow that might be difficult for him to keep, because He had no place of His own to sleep each night. He and His disciples slept out in the open or relied on the hospitality of sympathetic friends. Of course, followers of Jesus today don't need to literally follow Him from place to place, but they, too, should first count the cost before becoming His disciples. Too many people want to follow Jesus as long as it doesn't inconvenience them. Consequently, they may think they've become His disciples, but they really haven't.

The second man agreed to be Jesus' disciple, but requested that he first return home to bury his father. It seems unlikely that his father had just died and that he just wanted to attend the funeral. More probable is that his father was elderly and could die at any time. So he wanted to delay his decision to follow the Lord. But the decision to delay following Jesus is a decision not to follow Jesus, because Jesus is calling everyone to follow Him now.

The third man also agreed to follow Jesus, but requested that he first say good-bye to his family. There is, of course, nothing wrong with saying good-bye to your family, but it seems Jesus knew this particular man was actually hesitating to follow through on his decision to become a follower and wanted to think about it for a while with the help of his family. The man had "put his hand to the plow" in the field, about to begin plowing, but was looking back toward his home, asking himself if he really wouldn't prefer to head back there and rest. Jesus expects that people who pledge allegiance to Him will follow through with their commitment.

Q. Jesus obviously expects us to be more devoted to Him than to anyone else, even our family members. What does this tell us about Him?

A. It tells us that Jesus is God, because only God has a right to expect us to be more devoted to Him than to our own families! It also tells us that we had better be more devoted to Him than to anyone else.

Application: All three men we read about today verbalized a commitment to follow Jesus. But the real mark of a follower of Jesus is not what he says, but what he does. Those who aren't willing to make any sacrifice for Christ's cause, or who indicate that they will follow Him in the future, or who hesitate in following through with their promise are fooling themselves.

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