

Jesus Never Comes Next

by Vance Havner

Jesus demands absolute allegiance and prioritization in our lives, and we must surrender everything to Him in order to follow Him.

Duration: 33:15

Scripture: Malachi 1:8, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:34-37, Luke 9:59-62, Luke 12:16-21, Luke 14:25-27

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on three accounts from the 9th chapter of Luke. He refers to them as the peril of the uncounted cause, the peril of the unburied corpse, and the peril of the unversaken circle. The preacher specifically discusses the last two accounts. In the first account, a man asks Jesus to allow him to bury his father before following him, but Jesus tells him to let the dead bury the dead and to go and preach the kingdom of God. In the second account, another man says he will follow Jesus, but first wants to attend to his worldly desires such as eating, drinking, getting married, buying and selling, and planning and building. The preacher emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God above all else and warns against becoming consumed by worldly pursuits. He also references biblical passages that highlight the need for absolute allegiance to God and the dangers of idolatry.

Transcript

Tonight, my subject is, Jesus Never Comes Next. There are two texts with three words in each. In Luke 9, 59, the first text, and he said unto another, follow me.

But he said, Lord, suffer me first, to go bury my father. Suffer me first. And then in Matthew 6, 33, Jesus said, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

In the first one, man is speaking to the Lord, and in the second, the Lord is speaking to man. And both have to do with priority. Life is a matter of priority, and the quality of our living is determined by those things to which we give first place.

But with too many of us, the first has been last and the last has been first. And the biggest business most of us have is to rearrange our priorities. In the last six verses of this ninth chapter of Luke, three men suddenly appear and then just as suddenly disappear, and we wonder what happened to them.

Sometimes I call these three accounts the peril of the uncounted cost, the peril of the unburied corpse, and the peril of the unforsaken circle. I am concerned with only the last two tonight, and I read some of that a while ago, beginning with verse 59, and he said unto another, follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first, to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home in my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Now, this sounds like a rather harsh reply that our Lord made to these two men. The first one said, Lord, my father is old, and daddy really wasn't dead yet. He wanted to go home and stay with his father until he did die and then bury him.

My father is old and I must take care of him, you know, we have these responsibilities and bury him. I've got to do that first, and then you'll be next. I'll take care of my responsibility to you next.

And Jesus didn't approve of that, because he said in one of the translations, let the dead bury their own dead. You go and preach. I come first, or not at all.

I don't come next. I don't play second fiddle. And then the second, I will follow thee, but, Wilbur Smith says that's one of the greatest texts in the New Testament.

That's exactly where a lot of people are, I'll follow you, Lord, but let me first take care of something else. Jesus said, No, no man having put his hand to the plow, looking back, spits at the king. The kingdom of God is no place for a man with his face pointed one way and his feet the other.

I'm not taking people to heaven backwards. If you're going with me, well, let's face forward. Over against that you have Matthew 6.33, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things, all what things? Well, what we wear and what we eat and all the common concerns of life, will not be subtracted, they'll be added.

They have their place, but it's not first place. Now, there isn't anything wrong with taking care of your folks and burying them when they die. In fact, the business is, 1 Timothy 5.8 says, If you don't do that, you're worse than an infidel.

And there's a place for telling the folks goodbye. But Jesus Christ does not come last, after all else has been set in order. He doesn't even come second.

He demands more allegiance than any dictator who ever has lived. Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Hitler, no dictator ever demanded the absolute loyalty that Jesus demanded. But he had the right to.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands what? My soul, my life, my all. We sing it, and I get a little nervous about the easy way we sing some of these songs. We're usually unconscious when we sing.

We'd come to, we'd never make it through the first verse, choke up before we got to the chorus. I get bothered about it. Savior more than life to me.

Now, hold everything. Is he? Now, let's level tonight, level with me on this. What do you mean? Is Jesus more than your life to you tonight? Jesus is all the world to me.

Is he? Thou from hence my all shall be. Oh, happy day, you sing. Happy bond that seals my vows.

Now, that's a marriage expression. A Christian is married to Jesus. Romans 7, verse 4 says it.

Oh, says I have, I'm jealous over you because you're married to the Lord. I don't like to see you living in adultery. Jesus made this business, the fallen hymn, a very stern business.

Matthew 10, verse 34, think not that I'm come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword, for I'm come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foe shall be they of his own household.

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. Now, that's pretty strong.

And then he said in Luke 14, he had a big crowd and he gave them three camels in a row. And that's enough to thin out any crowd. Negative, three camels, if any man come to me and hate not his father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea, and his own life, oh, so he cannot be my disciple.

Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Whosoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. Now, I don't hear much preaching about that.

We sort of play that low key, you know. Might scare some folks from joining the church. Now, what does he mean? Dr. A. T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, says that this is the language of exaggerated contrast, but it's not to be watered down, he said, until the point is gone.

It either means an awful lot or it doesn't mean anything. I know how the preachers explain it. They say we must love the Lord so much that all other love is as hatred in comparison, and that sort of lets us off the hook, we think.

But this is pretty severe. I don't care how you water it down. Jesus Christ demands utter and absolute allegiance.

God is a jealous God. Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua all say that. In the 24th chapter of Joshua, he was saying farewell to the people, and he told them how good God had been to them, what he had done for them, and he said, I don't know what you're going to do, but as for me and my house, we'll serve the Lord.

Everybody said, we will too, and it sounded great, but Joshua threw cold water all over that dedication meeting. He said, you can't serve God. I know you, I've heard you say that before.

You said it out in the wilderness, and the next thing I knew, you were dancing around a golden calf. You don't mean it. God is a jealous God, he said.

You see, the marriage relationship in the New Testament, in the whole Bible, is a figure of Israel and Jehovah in the Old, and Christ and the Christian, and Christ and the Church in the New. Jesus said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, I would have you know the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.

I don't tell the women to live that, but that's what it says. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Now, don't look at me like that, I didn't write it. But it says, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

So woke men to love their wives as their own bodies, he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord of the Church. We are members of his body, of his flesh and his bones.

For this call shall a man leave father and mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, he said, that I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

And James wrote in James 4, for ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, whosoever therefore be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. A worldly Christian is living in spiritual adultery, because you've broken your marriage vows to Jesus Christ. When some other man comes first, and the husband second, that's adultery.

When some other woman comes first, and the wife comes next, or further down the list, that's adultery. And when anything else comes ahead of Jesus Christ, when this old world comes ahead of Jesus Christ, and it does with thousands of our church people, that's adultery. He's not just talking about physical adultery here.

Family life in America is breaking down, and this country is a disaster area from Maine to California, as far as our homes are concerned. We have discarded the biblical stand on marriage and listened to crackpots, and authority has given way to anarchy, and man is no longer the head of the home, and woman is no longer the heart of the home, and when you've got anything that's got two heads and no heart, you've got a monstrosity. And by the same token, the church has taken the cross out and put in cushions and made it comfortable to be a Christian, and the Lordship of Christ doesn't mean anything.

Church started out as a sheepfold, and it's become a zoo. Got all kind of animals in it now. Anybody can get in, nobody ever gets out, and church membership is just a credit card.

It didn't cost you anything in life and won't be worth anything to you in death. When the husband is no longer the head of the home and Jesus Christ is no longer the head of the church, friend, we're in trouble. Now, no wonder Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11, 2, I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

You see, all the way through, they mix up the marriage relationship with our relationship to Christ. It's pretty hard to take it apart sometimes. Every pastor ought to be jealous about his people.

He's got no right to be a pastor if he doesn't get jealous for them when he sees them beginning to flirt with the world, because that's adultery. I don't believe there is such a thing as a worldly Christian. Old Billy

Sunday used to say, you might as well talk about a heavenly devil.

He came to be bold. What woman would ever say to a prospective husband, I'll marry you after I have discharged my responsibilities to my relatives. You will be next.

If he's got any backbone at all, he'd say, sister, you've had it. I know a man married to a woman who loves her mother more than she does him. Is that brother ever having a rough time with her? She's married to her mother.

He's number two. When husband and wife start out together, each of them should be number one to each other, above all other human relationships. That's why the marriage ceremony says, forsaking all others, will you cleave unto him or her only as long as you both shall live.

It's not a matter of being the top man on the totem pole, that's not it at all. It's just that way, friend, whether you like it or not. God ordained that no husband or no wife should be number two, and he ordained Jesus Christ should not be number two.

There are a lot of things worse than not being married, and one is to be next in the affections of the husband or the wife. Whether you're surprised to marry a man or a woman, or being married to Jesus Christ, the principle is the same. If your love for your dear ones, or your own life, or anything else hinders God's will, then God comes next.

But he doesn't come next. In our Lord's parable, a man that didn't go to the supper because he'd bought land, the land was first, and the Lord was next. Another fellow had bought oxen, the oxen were first.

Another had married a wife, that wife was first. In that case, there's only one other thing that ever comes ahead of a husband and wife, and that's the Lord. We marry in the Lord, but we're number one to each other, humanly speaking.

But he's number one in the overall picture. We just can't push God around. Our Bible says, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Jesus is saying, Do you love me more than these? These what? Well, anything, everything, anybody and everybody. And not only ought Jesus to be first, he ought to be last. He's Alpha and Omega.

He's the first and the last letter in the alphabet. And when you get that straight, then all the others will line up where they belong. Then you have order.

Don't you have disorder, and you have plenty of trouble. I don't take much to this Christ-first business that some people talk about. They say, Well, I give God a dime out of my dollar an hour at church on Sunday.

I put the Lord first. And some of them just mean that they're given that dime, and they think the ninety cents is theirs. Well, you haven't got a thing in this world.

If you're a Christian, it all belongs to the Lord. And all your time, your time, you haven't got any time. It's all God's time.

Everything's God. Some of these folks think they're putting God first, but they're not. They're just getting rid of him.

I give him a dime, and I go church hour. Some of these Baptists come to this where they have food services on Sunday. They come to early mass, you know, 8.30, so they can go golfing or fishing or to see grandma or something.

And they think, Well, I put Jesus first. You didn't do any such thing. You just got rid of him.

Oh, you can't fool God like that. Some of these tithers. I don't like this business telling everybody, If you were tithed, you would get rich.

Because God will make you rich if you give him a dime. Well, he may and he may not. You don't tithe because you love the Lord.

God's not going to give you any credit for it anyhow. When Billy Graham was a young preacher, he and Ruth went somewhere to a meeting, and he meant to give a dollar in the collection. He made a mistake and put a ten dollar bill on the plate, and he didn't have much money.

And Ruth said, Well, God won't give you credit, but for one dollar. He said, You're just out nine dollars. Because that's all you meant to get.

So watch it. Oh, we got too many church members sitting smoking in the congregation on Sunday. Some come to close the eyes, and some come to eye the clue.

That is it. And there are twenty-five other things ahead of Jesus Christ in their lives. Jesus is just a minor concern.

God is just a casual interest. They give a little money, come when they feel like it. Some of them love a dog more than they love Jesus.

I'd hate to let a poodle get in the way of Jesus Christ. God spoke to Abraham and said, I want you to give up Isaac. Abraham had two sons.

Ishmael was born out of the will of God and born of the will of the flesh. God took Ishmael, and he never did come back. All the errands came from Ishmael.

Then God said, I want Isaac. Isaac is that miracle boy. Because he was born of parents that were way past the age of parenthood.

Every Jew on the face of the earth is a miracle. Because he wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for a miracle. He was born, his ancestry dates back to a man and woman that were old people.

God gave him a son. Then Jesus came along, virgin-born, so the church is a miracle, too. The Jewish nation and the church are both miracles.

That's why I have to take my hat off to a Jew, because he's something different, something special in this world. And also to a Christian, because a Christian is something special. You had to have a new birth to get in the kingdom of God.

So Abraham took the miracle boy and started climbing that old mountain. That was the most precious thing in this world to him, was that boy. But God came first.

So he got him up there and fixed the old one and laid the boy on it and raised that knife, and God said, Holy. You're not going to kid him, you're willing to, and I'll take the will for the deed. And he did.

But God came first. And it says in Isaac, shall thy seed be corn. Of course, that means in the genealogy, that's true.

But we perpetuate our testimony in what we surrender, beloved. We gain what we give and we lose what we keep. You remember how it was over in Malachi.

He thundered out against the sins of that time. If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor. Will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, except the Lord of hosts? Why, if the governor came to see you, he said, you'd get out the best lamb you had and kill it, fix it for him.

But you don't treat God that way. You give God the crumbs and you eat the cake. God gets the scraps and the leftovers of your time, your money and everything.

I'd hate to think that God's lower on the list than golf or the boat or the club or the career. Then there was that rich farmer in Luke 12, and he was a smart farmer. They always called him the rich fool.

Well, he wasn't a fool as a farmer, because any that can make a success out of it is no fool. You've got to have good sense, and a whole lot of it. I heard of a farmer some time ago, one of these old boys in North Carolina that used to just knock out and exist.

I grew up on that kind of a farm. Knocked sparks out of rocks trying to raise a little cotton and corn and what have you. He had one day he was driving an old jalopy, and the thing just went dead right smack in front of an insane asylum.

One of the inmates was standing in front of it, well-cared-for, you know, didn't have a trouble in the world, and he told this horny-handed son of a toad with that wrecked jalopy down there, he said, What do you do? And the farmer said, I farm. He said, Where do you live? Down the road. He said, You ever been crazy? And the farmer said, No.

The farmer said, Well, it beats farming. And I've thought that a good many times in the past. So you have to have good sense to be a farmer.

But where that farmer missed it was, he said, I'm going to fill these old barns, I'm going to get rich as a farmer, and then I'm going to say, Now look what came next. I'm going to say to my soul, Take it easy. In the first place, that was the wrong thing to say.

Don't you ever tell your soul to take it easy. Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve and press with vigor on. Tell it that, but don't tell it take it easy.

He said, Thou hast goods laid up for many years. And God said, Wait a minute. This night, thy soul, your calendar's wrong.

You haven't got many years. This night, your soul will be told. Now, let me ask you, and I'll be sure you've got the right cloth for him and the right calendar.

You haven't got the assurance of the many. Oh, this figure, I'm going to do this and that. Say to my soul, No, you're not.

God will say to your soul. You've got more idolatry in America than anywhere else on the face of the earth. I don't have idols in Africa, anything like ours in numbers.

The Bible says there are a lot of idols that Christians today have. The God of this world. You don't hear many sermons on worldliness anymore.

We call it secularism. Now, nobody knows what that means, so that lets the preacher off the hook and everybody feels comfortable. The same old thing, though, it's always been.

Jesus said before he comes back, it'll be like it was in the days of Noah and Lot. Have you noticed what he said then? He didn't say they were gambling and getting drunk and living in adultery. He said they were just eating and drinking and marrying, getting married, buying and selling, planning and building.

Well, nothing wrong with that, is there? Not if you keep it in its right place. But if it's all you live for, it becomes worldliness, something of this age. The man just lives for any of those things.

He's just as worldly as some young blade on a dance floor at two in the morning. The Bible speaks of those, and old King James puts it bluntly, whose God is their belly, their lower nature. I've quit saying civilization is going to the dogs.

I've quit that out of respect for dogs. Plenty of dogs today, plenty of people today doing things beneath the dignity of any dog. I heard of a hog that got a hold of some liquor and got drunk, and after he sobered up, he called the other hogs together and said, if you'll excuse me for acting like a man, I never will do it again.

Love of money. Do you know that money is more dangerous than liquor, more dangerous than sex, more dangerous than anything I can think of, because the love of it, you say, well, that's the love of it. Yes, but if you didn't have the money, you wouldn't have the love of it.

It is the root of all things. And then lovers of their own self. And we used to have a silly little old song, I love me, I love me, I'm wild about myself.

A lot of people are wild about themselves. And then it says they feared the Lord and served their own God. Go to church on Sunday and sing, my Jesus, I love thee, but they don't.

No other gods before me, the dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me to tear it from its stone and worship only thee. Now, where are you tonight? Are you saying, Lord, I'll follow you, but are you saying, suffer me first, or are you listening to him when he says, seek me first? If you've got a problem, it's because your priorities are out of order. And he's not first and last, and therefore other things roll out of line.

He must be first, because he never comes next. But look at what you get. No man or woman would think in terms of sacrifice to get the one they love.

No little country girl would hold on to her trinkets if she could marry a prince, and all for Jesus Christ. I get sometimes sort of embarrassed begging people to come down and take Jesus, like I had him standing there with his hat in his hand, begging to be accepted. I don't find anywhere in the Bible where it says to accept Christ.

It says believe and trust and follow, and a whole lot of other words. The big question is, will he accept you? Said he would, him that cometh to me, I know what is cast out. I get awfully tired of begging a lot of stubborn people to come down and say, I'm ashamed of myself.

Well, they ought to run down the aisle to let Jesus be everything. No mortal can with him compare among the sons of men. Fairer is he than all the fair who fill the heavenly throne.

To him I owe my life and breath and all the joys I have. It makes me triumph over death and save me from the grave. That's worth coming down the aisle for.

That's worth giving everything you have for. He deserves to be the first and the last. Don't you say, I have to bury my father first.

But say instead, I will not wait till I've said goodbye. I won't wait till I've built bigger barns. I won't wait for a more opportune time.

I won't wait till I feel like it. He's worth it now. But it costs.

And I'm not wearing myself out going up and down the country trying to get people to make a cheap little acceptance of Jesus Christ, a Savior, when they won't have him as Lord. You can't get to heaven by taking Christ as Savior if willfully you refuse to have him as Lord. Because it says that thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord.

You'll be asked you tonight, is Jesus first and last? Have you got the other things in line? If you haven't, you're going to have trouble because the things out of line. Nothing on earth is important enough to get ahead of Jesus Christ. There are plenty of church folks that have put him in the second place or way down the line.

It's not perfect. Have you ever done it? I'll do a little thinking. Isn't there something else that gets most of your thought and time and attention you love most? Oh, I love Jesus, yes, but it doesn't show up much.

I'm getting awful tired of these cheap little invitations. Everybody comes running down the aisle and you can't tell the difference after they've come. I'd rather get three people come down the aisle and mean business with Jesus Christ.

I'm not trying to work up a crowd. At my age I've seen all kinds of tricks and schemes and so on. I'd rather have a few people come down and say, I'm not coming down for the walk tonight.

I mean it. I confess before God and men tonight that Jesus hasn't been number one. But from here on, I'm not going to say, Lord, suffer me first, let me first, and then you'll be me.

Because that won't work. Would you walk down this aisle tonight with everybody looking at you and say, yes, I want him to be first and last? I don't believe in these sneaking confessions that Christ said, whoso shall confess me before man. That's public, public, public.

I was in a church some time ago where the pastor says man and his wife back there have made a profession in their home. If they won't come down now, I don't believe in that. But Jesus believed in a public confession before man.

I confess him before my Father and say it. I've got to be before man. Perish every form of ambition, all I've sowed or hoped or known.

Yet how rich is my condition, God in heaven still mine. Now, I'm not going to beg. I don't think people ought to have to be begged to say Jesus Christ is going to be Alpha and Omega in my life.

I don't think they ought to have to be begged. I'm going to stand here. I'm not coming down.

I'm going to stand here. I'd like to know how many of you fellows and girls would be honest. I get a better response usually than young folks.

I haven't had 60 years of preaching. I don't like all this lambasting the kids today. I know some of them are bad, but they get on the TV and they get the publicity and the good ones don't.

And I know a lot of good ones that mean business with Jesus Christ all over this country. And they'll generally move when some of the rest of us won't beg. I wonder if we've got any fellows and girls here tonight.

We're going to walk down here. I don't think you'd come for the walk. I don't want you to.

And it looks like a mile down here from the back row back there. I know that, and the devil said he wouldn't bother about it. I wonder.

You older folks, oh, my soul, the older, the faster you ought to come if you can and say, I've got my priorities all out of line. Business and other things have gotten ahead of Jesus. And I'm coming down here just to stand tonight, and I'm going to have a prayer with you.

And you're going to say, Jesus Christ, I restore by faith Jesus where he belongs in my life. Thou from hence my all shall be. I could ask you to stand, but I want to make it as hard as I know how to make it.

If you mean it, you will come. If you don't, it wouldn't be worth anything anyway. You're going to remain seated, and I want you to bow your head and think, think, think reverently.

And if you mean business, I just want you to come and stand here and have a prayer with me. I'll take your word for it that you mean business.

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