

Luke 9:57-62 – The cost of following Jesus

What does it take to follow Jesus? Have you ever been told “just say these words – just pray this prayer – just let me lay hands on you – then you will be saved.” Jesus never said such words. Nor did the apostles. In this part of Luke, we find something very surprising. Jesus turned people away! They wanted to follow him; but they were not ready! Jesus had to challenge them, to make them see the true cost of following him.

1. Count the cost (v57-58)

Jesus and his disciples were going to Jerusalem. The time for his death was coming nearer. As he travelled, many others went too – it was time for one of the Jewish feasts that every Jewish man was commanded to go to. As he travelled, a man spoke to him. He made a great offer. He said, “I will follow you – everywhere you go!” How wonderful to here these words. Few people seem to want to truly follow Jesus; and certainly not to difficult places. This man was a teacher of the law (Matthew 8:19). Most of those had rejected Jesus – but not this one. However, Jesus did not accept his offer. He told the man that he was not ready. Teachers of the law had comfortable lives. Jesus knew this man's heart. Even in nature, each animal has its place to rest. They may travel far, but in the end they go back to their homes. But Jesus had no life like that. He slept where people gave him a place. His life was full of danger and hardship. This man was not really ready for that. Are you ready to pay the cost? Actually, Jesus may demand everything from you. Often we do not know our own hearts. We speak fine words – but really we just want an easy life. Jesus tells such people that they cannot follow him. They must first count the cost and understand what he really demands. Following Christ can cost everything.

2. Put the kingdom first (v59-60)

Jesus told another follower now to go and preach the kingdom. He called him to a greater service. But the man was not ready. His father was dead, or soon to die. The man wanted to go and deal with his family first. Surely Jesus would not refuse him? But he did. There are times when we must choose between the kingdom and even our family. The time had then come for Jesus to die and rise. The kingdom was at hand. The man could not both return to his family, and complete his calling. He had to choose. Jesus says that he must come first above everything at such times. Those who are not spiritually alive can take care of other matters – but we must put the kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). Will you put the kingdom even above your family and clan and business? You must, or you cannot be Jesus' disciple.

3. Don't look back (v61-62)

Another man wanted to follow Jesus. He called him “Lord”. But first, he wanted to visit his family and put his affairs in order. But Jesus knew the man had other thoughts also. He wanted to retreat. The work of the kingdom can be hard and painful. The man wanted to step back from the heat of the battle. Often we can find excuses in life to step back from serving in Jesus' kingdom. In the army, after serving, you can be honourably released. But not in the kingdom. Jesus says that those who want to go back are not fit. Jesus himself set his face to the cross (v51). He totally offered himself up to the Father. He is worthy for us to do the same. He has purchased his people with his own blood. We must now give him total commitment, and not look back. We must press forward, with all the problems, until at last we arrive in glory and see him.