

What Jesus demands from his disciples

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Preacher: David Skull

[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to the morning service of Sunday 21st June 2020 of Calvary Church! My name is Chris Fry and I'm one of three elders in the church. On a Sunday morning we would normally be a group of about 80 adults and children meeting in premises in the heart of Brighton.

But under virus lockdown we need to meet in this way via YouTube or other links that you can find on our church website details of which are now on the screen. Please feel free and we really invite you to make contact with us via the website links. Now here's a plan for the morning's meeting. We're going to do what we would normally do on a Sunday and indeed what Christians throughout this country and throughout the world have done for hundreds of years. We're going to welcome God into this meeting. We want his presence to be with us. We want to know that he's near. We're going to bring praises and prayers to him by song, by bible reading and by a message from the bible. We're very pleased that David Skull, one of the pastors of Grace Church Guildford in Surrey, will be speaking. And we're also thankful that we're having help with the songs this morning from members of that same church. We've got to know David because of his involvement in a substantial initiative to bring help to see the kingdom of Jesus Christ grow in this city. Let me give you a couple of statistics that demonstrate why there is such a need. Brinehove is a population of approximately 250 000. It has a big student body of probably 35 000 and it's a growing city. People want to come and live here. House prices are high in the centre and there's been a good jobs market available. So in so many ways many things going for it. But it's been suffering like every other place in the country from the virus and all the anxieties, concerns, upsets, fears and worries that are affecting people in this country and the whole of the world has come into our city as well. We're not immune.

There's another statistic I want to bring to you which is part of the reason why we're so encouraged that there are people who want to come to Brighton and Hove and bring the message of Christianity to this city.

[2 : 53] It's hard to be clear what the figures really are but it seems that approximately three to four percent of this total population are practicing Christians. That seems a tiny number. And yet Christianity is offering the only true and real solution to the helplessness of this land and to the need of this city.

Because Christianity offers clear answers not just to the questions that we think of automatically, the more physical and emotional issues that we face today, but also those deeper ones that we have in our life anyhow, but seldom bring to mind. Why am I here? What's life about? What is death? What does death mean? Is there anything beyond death? Well, Christianity has solid answers to these questions.

And in these days, these are the questions that will be coming into people's minds. Well, the government's doing its best, isn't it? It's committed 300 billion pounds in this fiscal year to help people. But it won't be enough. And every country in the world will find it will not be enough. Life will be changed forever. On the other hand, of this time of fragility and weakness, Christianity has so much to offer.

It's especially appropriate because whilst human help is going to be inadequate, God offers mighty inexhaustible help to us, even though we've mainly ignored and sometimes ridiculed him.

[4 : 52] Yes, that's the situation generally in the Western world and getting worse and worse, as we would see it. We've turned our backs on God. We don't want to follow his ways.

We've torn down his laws. We've chosen our own paths. We've not looked to him. We've not called out to him.

He's forgotten. Now this attitude, this way of life, this self-reliance, this is what the Bible calls sin. And our sin leaves us in a perilously confused and dark place because we have no relationship with our Creator God. We're just not in need of just a bit of help. We're actually completely helpless. We need God's help. And despite our choice to live apart from God, here's the wonderful thing. God has sent his son Jesus who came to this earth 2000 years ago to save us from our sin and bring us into a loving relationship with God now and forever.

[6 : 02] And here's an even more astonishing fact that Jesus Christ, who lived and died 2000 years ago, was actually raised from the dead and is alive today in heaven to help all those who want to follow him.

I'd like to bring you a few verses from the Bible. It's going to be on the screen now. It's in the book of Hebrews, which is towards the back end of the Bible in the New Testament.

It's from chapter 4 and verses 14 to 16. In this passage, it talks about a priest.

A priest is a person who is appointed to represent people before God, like an intermediary.

And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been given this title. Not just any priest, but the high priest.

And not just a high priest, but a great high priest.

[7 : 08] He is the perfect priest. The one who can properly represent us to God and plead our cause. So here's a reading. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. But we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin.

I just want to pause at that point before reading the final sentence and say, here is an astonishing thought. That Jesus, the Son of God, God from all eternity, was sent by his Father from heaven to earth, became a man, and lived a life just like the life that all of us have to live.

That's why he's able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Because not only has he lived life, but he's been tempted in all the ways that we are in our lives.

Jesus was tempted in that way. And yet, unlike us, he went through all of his life without sin. He maintained a 24-7 relationship with his Heavenly Father.

[8 : 45] Well, now he's in heaven, and he's on a throne of grace, and that is significant as well. A throne of grace, which we're going to read about in the final sentence, means firstly authority and power, and grace means undeserved mercy.

What a combination. Authority and power, and gracious mercy, is offered to us, sinners, because Jesus has stood in our place, and he is the great high priest.

Let us then approach the throne of grace. Here's an invitation. Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Do you see that word again? Help. Jesus Christ, the risen Saviour, King of kings, and Lord of lords, offers us grace and help in our time of need.

And when is that time of need? It's actually every time, all our lives, every situation and circumstance. Well, that's a great thought, isn't it, in this time of our helplessness.

[10 : 11] And if any of this resonates with you, please keep listening. But now we'll sing a song reminding us of that help. Really, it's a kind of a song that springs out of these verses of the Bible that we just read.

It's a song of adoration, affirmation, gladness, strength, that Jesus Christ offers us his mercy.

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea, a great time feast, his name is love.

Whoever lives and peace for me, my name is present on his hands, my name is risen on his heart, I know the falling heavenly stands, no tongue can live me thence, deep heart, no tongue can live me thence, deep heart.

When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, of words I look and see in there, who made an end of all my sin, because the sinless Savior died.

[12 : 08] Thy sinful soul is counted free, from God the just is satisfied, to look on him and pardon me, to look on him and pardon me.

Behold him, never risen land, my perfect spotless righteousness, the great unchangeable I am, the King of glory and of grace.

For with himself I cannot die, my soul is purchased by his blood, my life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ my Savior and my God.

my God. With Christ my Savior and my God. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, what a blessing it is for us to come together today this way. we're not seeing each other physically, but we know that you can see everyone, you see every heart, you know what is in us.

[13 : 42] And we desire to come before you today, with hearts which are clean and pure and right. And so we start by asking that you would take away our sin, you would cleanse us again of the things that have been wrong in our lives during these past days.

Perhaps the way we thought, the way we've reacted, the things that we've said, hardness in our hearts and distance from you, all these things are wrong.

And we pray that you would once again cleanse us of these things. because of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for us upon the cross. He was not only the high priest interceding for us, but he was also the sacrifice, paying the price for our sin.

The penalty that we deserve has been put upon him when he died on the cross at Calvary. And Lord, we thank you so much.

You have opened our eyes to this. And we come to this unique and wonderful Saviour. And we want to praise and adore you for giving us life from the dead, light from darkness, hope for now and for eternity.

[15 : 04] a way to live, a way to die, and a way to be in heaven with our perfect Saviour. For this we thank you.

And we pray that many, many more people would come to know you. Many more people would have their eyes opened to this wonderful reality.

And we pray, Father, that you would do this, especially in the city of Brighton and Hove. We ask our prayers in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. I'd like to introduce you to another song that we're going to sing this morning with the intriguing title Oh for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.

This song was composed by a man called Charles Wesley who lived nearly 300 years ago and was involved at a time when this country went through a remarkable period of spiritual awakening.

[16 : 13] when people realised their need of God in their lives. They were just like us. They were living life without God and then something remarkable happened in the land.

The Bible was being preached and as the Bible was being preached God began to speak powerfully to people so that the issues of being a Christian of having our sin forgiven of having hope in life and following God they suddenly became very important to people and people would read the Bible and people would come and hear preaching and they would want to sing the songs sometimes songs of mourning because they needed to be cleansed from their sin but when they came to know new life in Jesus songs of vast thanksgiving and this is such a song in this song Charles Wesley tells us about the transforming work of God that changes our lives as we come to follow Jesus Christ and he starts by saying I would love to have a thousand tongues to sing about this I've only got one but I would love to have a thousand tongues to sing because God is worthy of praise and thanksgiving that's a great thought it's a rousing song and I hope you'll find something that will challenge you as you sing this song this morning hope for a thousand tongues tongues to sing my dear Redeemer's praise my dear Redeemer's praise the glories of my God and King the triumphs of his grace the triumphs of his grace the triumphs of his grace the triumphs of his grace Jesus the name that charms our fears that bids our sorrow cease that bids our sorrow cease tis music in the sinners ears tis life and health and peace tis life and health and peace tis life and health and peace tis life and health and peace he breaks the power of cancel sin he sets the prisoner free he sets the prisoner free his blood can make the foulness clean his blood available for me his blood available for me his blood available for me his blood available for me he speaks a living to his voice he likes the dead receive unite the dead receive the mournful broken hearts rejoice the humble poor believe the humble poor believe the humble poor believe the humble poor believe hear hear him he death his praise he down your loosened tongues employ your loosened tongues employ he blind behold your saviour count!

and leave he lain for joy and leave he lain for joy and leave he lain for joy and leave he lain for joy my gracious master and my God assist me to proclaim assist me to proclaim to spread through all the earth abroad the honours of thy name the honours of thy name the honours of thy name the honours of thy name the honours of thy name let us pray our father we thank you that we can come to you today not just with our praises and thanksgiving although that is absolutely necessary and

right but also with our cries for help in specific ways some of them very large some of them small but all affecting us and it's a marvellous thing that you see every life and you hear every prayer and we want to come to you today and ask that you would help us in our time of need you know what each one of us who is listening to this online is facing today you know the anxious thoughts the things that disturb us in our sleep the things that we worry about that may happen in the future because we don't know what that future may be like but we thank you that we can come to you because you know the past and the present and the future and you read our lives exactly and you know the detail of everything and you have compassion and mercy to help people people like us we pray father for this city which has such spiritual blindness and darkness upon it and we pray again that you would bring your light into the lives of people they would recognize their need and turn to jesus christ please do that in the lives of our families our children our relatives our work colleagues the people that we meet oh lord please do this wonderful work in this city just as you did in the days of charles wesley 300 years ago you're the same god and you can do this again now and we pray father that we as christians would be able to show by our lives and by the message of jesus christ what a wonderful thing it is to belong to you to be followers of you so that other people would want to know what we have experienced as well our father we just pray in a moment of quietness now that we can bring our own particular needs before you you know what those are and we just bring these matters to you now and father we pray for your mercy for this whole world because this pandemic is affecting the whole of the world and we thank you that your love extends to all and we pray for your mercy and compassion upon all the nations of the world we pray for the many people who are grieving the many people who have lost loved ones the many people who are in a state of distraught and upset so troubled in heart and mind so needing so needing help lord we pray that you would bring that help to them please hear our prayers and we ask for a special help as we go through the rest of this meeting that you would speak to us through the word of god through the bible that revelation of yourself and revelation of ourselves that brings truth into our lives please will you grant us this today that we may hear your voice in the midst of this confusion in jesus name amen now that's a hand over to davis gull who's going to help us with a bible reading and then be speaking from that passage of the bible well good morning calvary church in brighton it's david here one of the pastors of grace church in guildford bring you greetings from the church although we are scattered like you we're longing for the day when we can gather again as the people of god in the meantime we're making do aren't we thank you so much for inviting me to come and speak to you it's the easiest visiting preach i've ever had to do i'm standing here in my own pulpit here in guildford but i'm praying this will be a blessing to you as it has been to me to bring you this passage this morning well the first thing we're going to do is to read the scriptures together so please turn in your bibles to luke chapter 9 luke chapter 9 and we're going to read together luke chapter 9 verses 51 down to 62 luke chapter 9 51 to 62 as the time approached for jesus to be taken up to heaven he resolutely set out for jerusalem and he sent messengers on the head who went into a samaritan village to get things ready for him but the people there did not welcome him because he was heading for jerusalem when the disciples james and john saw this they asked lord do you want us to call down fire from heaven to destroy them but jesus turned and rebuked them and they went to another village as they were walking along the road a man said to jesus i will follow you wherever you go jesus replied foxes of holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head he said to another man follow me but the man replied lord first let me go and bury my father jesus said to him let the dead bury the raindead but you go and proclaim the kingdom of god still another said i will follow you lord but first let me go and say goodbye to my family jesus replied no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of god such demanding words said by jesus let's pray for god's help as we come to this passage shall we father god in heaven thank you so much for giving us your son jesus christ who walked the path of salvation for us who went to the cross and lay down his life so that sinful people like us can be brought into your kingdom thank you that this is all by grace not by works thank you lord for the truth of this passage here where jesus calls us to follow him and places great demands upon that lord help us to understand that in the context of the gospel to be serious about our salvation and working it out today we pray we pray that in this time of the pandemic [28 : 52] where we are more isolated in our homes we will be able to seriously consider what it means to personally follow jesus please strengthen us today help me as i preach help the church as we ask build us up in the name of jesus amen well coming up above my head should be the outline of the sermon this morning from luke chapter 9 so you can follow it along with me just a few verses

yet very very challenging and demanding by jesus for us as his followers so today we're thinking about our own personal discipleship we know that the christian life is normally and should be lived out in the community of god's people the local church that's why we're desperate to gather again in our churches aren't we we need each other to sit around the word of god together to strengthen each other to keep going in the christian life but our local church is made up of individual christians or disciples who have committed to each other in the lord and so jesus's teaching here is primarily about our own personal discipleship so this is something very personal between you and the lord actually from these verses and as we're in this season of pandemic where we are unable to gather i believe it is a season where the holy spirit is dealing with us individually about our own walk following jesus christ i don't know you i can't even see you in this um sermon but the lord knows you he knows your heart he wants to strengthen you and encourage you and to move you towards radical hundred percent commitment in following jesus as lord these are verses that have been very um uh meaningful for me just a bit of context here just over two years ago one of the brothers of our church here in guildford uh was asked to preach we he was considering his call we were discerning that in terms of a specific country and serving overseas in in missions taking the gospel to the nations and uh he he preached from these verses verses 57 to 62 and i one of the pastors of the church leading the service sat there and listened to our brother preach and as he preached it i i could see that he had been worked on by the holy spirit in terms of saying yes to jesus not perfectly but yes to jesus i will follow you wherever you go i will put you first in my life and as i listened to him preach the holy spirit really did take a hold of me and say david you are one of the pastors of this church you're leading this church but are you doing the same are you saying lord wherever i am at your disposal lord you first not my material possessions not my family not not the things of the world but you first and and through that the lord shook me up and through other kind of passages of scripture and other circumstances he is continuing to shake me up and lead me upon that joyful path of obedience to him as lord may he do that for you never to squash you these demands but but to build you up to strengthen you to lead you along that path of joy which is full on discipleship following jesus as lord well that's just a bit of context for me personally why i'm passionate about these verses but it's true isn't it that that to be a christian to become a christian is always to commit to following jesus as lord and as our master that's what the early disciples did

you read the beginning of luke's gospel luke 5 for instance you find peter and james and john those early disciples giving up everything to follow jesus leaving it all and literally following him along that path so radical discipleship shouldn't be that radical at all it should be the heartbeat of every christian yes we're in different contexts we're in different journeys as the lord leads us down different paths but we are to give ourselves 100% to jesus as lord and our churches as we come back from the pandemic will be healthier and stronger and more vibrant as a result if the lord is working in your heart through passages like this during this season this call to discipleship and the radical demands of jesus are never there to squash us or to make us earn our salvation no jesus has fully paid it for us he's walked that path he's gone to the cross he has ascended to the right hands of the father after his resurrection all that has been done for us and in the context of his grace and his love for us we are called to turn to believe and to walk to follow jesus as lord and saviour in our lives that is a joyful costly path to walk well what does jesus demand from us from his followers this is what we're looking at this morning in the first part of our reading verses 57 to 62 jesus and his disciples are clearly on that journey towards jerusalem because that in verse 51 that's the bit earlier jesus is on a journey to to greater rejection and to suffering and death upon the cross but he's also on a journey to resurrection and ascension and that's the funny thing about the christian life there is both a cost in walking that path and following jesus but there is also a great comfort isn't there because of the finished work of christ it is a joyfully painful path and as jesus walks along that path with his disciples there are three different people from verse 57 who look like they want to follow him as well and you think wow that's just great compared to the previous few verses this is great news isn't it these three people are keen to join jesus on his journey either because they came up to jesus and say i want to follow you or because jesus himself says to them and calls them follow me and that's a massive improvement isn't it from the entire samaritan village that we read about earlier the whole village didn't want to welcome jesus because he was on his way towards jerusalem!

but what is so surprising in this passage and so important for our personal discipleship remember that peter and james and john the other disciples were with jesus as he had these conversations

what is so surprising here is just how jesus responds to these three people in verses 57 to 62 he pushes back on their seeming desire and enthusiasm to follow him and he says tough things to them three times he demands huge things from these potential disciples and sets the bar really high and you think well what's going on here surely jesus you should welcome these people who are enthusiastic about you far better than the samaritan village and yet jesus is teaching his disciples something and he's lovingly pushing back on these three people to say that their enthusiasm their interest is not enough jesus requires everything not just partial interest in our lives could it be today that you are listening in and you attend calvary or you're just listening in from a different context and a different background and you're interested in jesus you're interested in him i believe there is a guy growing interest in jesus at the moment and in our church here in guildford we just know a very simple thing we've put out different different crates wooden crates at the front and the back of our church building here and the other building that we have in in the town as well and in those crates we've been putting just three things we've been putting a bible we've been putting a copy of a book by john lennox where is god in a coronavirus world and we've been putting copies of a leaflet by roger carswell called hope beyond coronavirus and as we put those things in those crates just left them outside when when it's not raining we found that people have just been walking past and they've been picking up the bible and taking it with them believe there is an interest quietly there is an interest in the gospel in interest in the good news of jesus and if you're one of those people who maybe you've been caused to think about jesus during this season can i ask you to take seriously what he says here because to be a christian to find hope and life in jesus calls you not just to have an intellectual interest in jesus but calls you to give your life and everything to jesus this is what jesus demands of his disciples not to earn your salvation freely one for you at the cross but what it means to follow jesus means to give your all to him let's consider what what these things mean shall we first thing that jesus says in verse 57 is that he demands that if you want to follow me you must be willing to sacrifice your comfort for me here we come the difference between the man's interest in saying i will follow you wherever you go with jesus saying do you really mean that do you really mean that let's look at verse 57 as they were walking along the road that's jesus and the disciples a man said to him i will follow you jesus wherever you go but jesus pushes back he says well foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head everyone has homes says jesus even the animals i don't if you want to follow me you need to be willing to let go of the comfortable security that you hold on to even your homes for the sake of the gospel now you've got to understand what jesus is saying here he's pushing back because the man hasn't truly understood what discipleship means jesus did have a home growing up his hometown was nazareth in galilee and for a while he lived in the town of capernaum but mainly his ministry up to this point had been one of traveling to the towns and villages around galilee proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of god that people should should repent should turn to him and believe this message that the kingdom of god has come there at your security your future lies and now jesus is going on to jerusalem we see that in verse 51 and so he says to this man you say you want to follow me wherever i go but you need to realize that to follow me is going to be costly in earthly terms to journey with me will be journeying where there will be no place to lay down your head and no place to call home now what jesus is saying here is that for the christian those who commit themselves to following him as lord we must remember that our home is never to be primarily associated with earth there is a home in heaven before us jesus is going on his way home verse 51 he's going to the cross and through the cross he would then be taken up ascended back to the father's side and so to journey with jesus is to journey on a journey where we're saying that our home lies before us in heaven there is a great security there for us but but the journey there following jesus may mean the sacrificing of our comfort and the letting go of some of these things that we hold on to because heaven is not here heaven is ahead so for those who want to follow jesus he demands that we really do mean those words wherever when we say them to him he demands that we be willing to let go of the comforts of this world even our own homes to put him first in all things now calvary i don't know the context as well as i do here in guildford but i do know in terms of my own heart and in terms of our setting here in guildford that one of the biggest things that holds us back from full-on discipleship of jesus is that priority of saying my home my house comes first it's not to say the houses are wrong of course they're there they're right but that that sense of materialism and that sense of possessions and and the comfort of our own home and house and building that up rather than saying truly wherever to jesus can be a stumbling block to us one of the questions i've had to ask myself as i heard that

those words preached to me those couple of years ago and even today is am i saying those words meaningfully to jesus today lord i will follow you wherever you go i'm at your disposal to be led wherever you choose to move my house to go without a house for the sake of the kingdom of god friends let us not allow the comforts of our home or our elevated lifestyles hold us back from truly saying to jesus wherever wherever jesus demands the wherever from his disciples friends if you're not a christian you need to realize that when you become a christian you lay your entire life and your future at the disposal of jesus and that is the best thing you could ever do in the christian life you give him your wherever we had a book group at church recently we were reading through john piper's really challenging book called coronavirus and christ i commend it to you at calvary if you want to be kind of thoughtfully shaped by what the lord is doing through this coronavirus season coronavirus and christ by john piper the first half is about the kind of the truth about who god is and and to help us understand what god is doing but the second half is it's is all about what could the lord be doing through this season it's hard to kind of rediscern that but there are principles in scripture and i was particularly struck by the last chapter because it deals with that question of saying wherever to jesus in the last chapter john piper says this what is the lord doing what in the coronavirus god is loosening the roots of settled christians all over the world to make them free for something new and radical and to send them with the gospel of christ to the unreached peoples of the world god is loosening the roots of settled christians that their lives are kind of turned upside down as they have those seasons of reflection and prayer in terms of their discipleship as i said those verses came to me very powerfully um a few a couple of years ago when i that that question of wherever i had to say lord am i really saying wherever to you i lay it all down before you again lord i want to be wherever for you and today is a day of saying that again brothers and sisters at calvary wherever lord i'm not going to hold on to the comfort maybe that i've been holding on to before but i will say wherever for you wherever for you of course to say wherever for jesus is one of the safest things to say isn't it to be in the hands of jesus and to follow him along the path that he's called you to do it's a safe and comforting and exciting thing to do well following jesus means sacrificing our comfort saying wherever to jesus playing all in the line for jesus secondly look at his second demand following jesus means prioritizing his mission it means saying jesus first jesus first in my life from now on look at verse 59 jesus said to another man as they were walking to jerusalem follow me remember that that jesus calls you very personally to follow him but the man replied lord first let me go and bury my father jesus said to him let the dead bury their own dead but you go and proclaim the kingdom of god now i don't think this means the man's father has just died funerals happened very quickly in those days often within the same 24 hours in which someone had died and the man would most likely be found sitting by his father's body if this had happened not meeting jesus on the road to jerusalem but what the man is saying as he pushes back on what jesus said to him is lord i would like to follow you i see that that you are lord but at this moment i have something that is taking priority in my life there is a but first before you so i needed to delay my yes to you until the the day the month or the year ahead when my father dies and after i have buried him then i will follow you

[47 : 40] jesus there's something first before following you now friends we need to learn from this that those two words lord and first cannot coexist truly unless it means lord you first if jesus isn't lord of all as we seek to follow him then he isn't truly in our eyes lord at all so jesus's words his pushback against the man in verse 60 although strong and shocking are there to show the man lovingly that he really must be lord of everything in his life he must be first if the man is to follow him remember he's teaching the disciples about this as well so if jesus is lord then his priorities his mission and that's the great mission he's on to go to the cross and be resurrected and ascended and then the mission of of being involved in and the local churches proclaiming the message of the gospel and bearing witness to jesus that priority comes first says jesus so let the dead bury their own dead but you go and proclaim the kingdom of god now we mustn't get jesus wrong here because responsibility towards our families is good and right and honors god in fact as we know honor your father and mother is one of the ten commandments isn't it and jesus was very happy to challenge the pharisees in his day who are allowing this to slip even out of devotion to god we must love our families we love the elderly we care and respect those amongst us but according to jesus here even good things and priorities like that can turn into excuses not to follow jesus as lord not to put him first even families can become but first to jesus friends we must never delay our discipleship we must never say let me do this first and then i'll be serious about following you no we're called to be serious about following you in the context of all the ups and downs opportunities and challenges of

life aren't we Jesus first it's very easy isn't it to have that mindset but it's very destructive me first Lord I would love to follow you but first just let me get through school and my education you know then I'll follow you I've just got to prioritise that you can love and serve Jesus as Lord through your education to be known as a Christian well Lord first let me finish my degree it's got so much work to do and then then I'll be serious about serving in your kingdom Lord let me first have some fun in life you know this kind of putting you first in everything it just seems a bit of a drag you know let me put you first in life let me have some fun then I'll serve you then I'll be serious about your kingdom a bit later on in life Lord first first let me get married I'm just I'm so desperate to pursue that that right relationship if I can just get that done then I'll truly be able to serve you Lord first just let me get on the career ladder please let me get that house that that mortgage and then I'll maybe want a bigger house bigger mortgage save up the pension pots Lord let me let me do that first

and then and then I'll be serious about you serious about about being part of the church and and serving and and but first Lord Lord first let me get the kids through school that that this their education is so important and I I just need to get the right amount of money to get them through that that perfect school if I can just prioritize that Lord and and and then I'll be serious about serving you and putting you first Lord I'm so close to retirement now just just just let me retire and and then I'll be serious about serving you I I I promise not to play too much golf I I I'll serve you then Lord first help me to look after my elderly parents then I'll be serious about serving you do you know what if you live life saying but first but first but first but first to Jesus you'll find the day will come when you don't have strength at all to serve Jesus to put him first because there is a way in all of these contexts in all of these situations scenarios to say Jesus first at school Jesus first at university Jesus first in my social life Jesus first am I seeking a spouse Jesus first as I set up home Jesus first as I seek a career Jesus first as I consider getting a house or mortgage or whether to rent what what to do here Jesus first in my family Jesus first in my child's education Jesus first in my retirement Jesus first as I care for my family and my elderly parents Jesus first all my days from now until the very end friends that is the path of joy that is the path of discipleship but to put Jesus off to put Jesus off to put Jesus off is the path of fake discipleship friends that this this pandemic it is a season you know some of us are more busier than ever some of us are less busy but it is a season for us personally to to kind of lay ourselves again before the Lord and and to say Jesus you are you are all in all you are the Lord you have the greatest authority given under heaven at you you walk that path to the cross you suffered and died for me you you rose again you're ascended to the father's hand you've called me to follow you follow me you said and and therefore from the day I heard that call to this day I have laid my all at your feet but now Lord please work in my heart please show me if there is a but first to you at this moment that is stealing me of my joy that is that is robbing you of the devotion that you deserve but first to Jesus no Jesus is first you first not me again I think as Jesus kind of pushed back against this man he was such a demand wasn't it but he's saying him to him in love saying so what is it that is but first in your life I must be first no other man can say that apart from Jesus Christ so following Jesus means sacrificing our comforts wherever Jesus following Jesus means prioritizing his mission Jesus first his priorities his gospel his work for the church first in all the seasons of our lives and finally following Jesus means sticking with him all the way the verse 61 still another said I will follow you Lord but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family but first now this these couple of verses 61 and 62 sound familiar because in the context here I think really is in one Kings chapter 19 where

Elijah the great prophet of the Old Testament was soon himself to be taken up to heaven like Jesus was going to be ascended remember he went up in a whirlwind and in one Kings 19 he calls Elisha to follow him Elijah and to take over from him in that work of proclaiming God's message a bit like Jesus was calling his disciples to carry on the message of proclaiming the kingdom after he had ascended to heaven so listen to these words from one Kings 19 so Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat Elijah was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen and he himself was driving the 12th pair Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around Elisha and Elijah then left his oxen and ran after Elijah I will follow you and what did he say let me kiss my father and mother goodbye he said and then I will come with you literally then I will follow you let me say goodbye to my family then I will follow you go back Elijah replied what have I done to you so Elijah left him and went back he took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them he burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people and they ate then Elijah set out to follow Elijah and became his servant what a radical response to following the man of God Elisha cuts up his yoke he barbecues the cattle and he

sets out giving his all to follow elijah in god's service but you know what when when jesus pushes back against this man in luke chapter 9 verse 62 jesus demands more than elijah jesus says in verse 62 when the man says first let me go back and say goodbye to my family jesus says no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of god you choose now you choose delay today and you follow me without turning back demanding thing to say compare the two passages one kings 19 and jesus here jesus demands more than elijah of course that can only mean that jesus is greater than elijah the great prophet of the old testament he's the messiah he's the son of god he has all authority in heaven and earth and his mission of proclaiming the message of the kingdom of god of joining the church of being part of the great commission is more urgent so when you start plowing with jesus we start going along that follow following him along that furrow and serving with him and for him in the kingdom of god it means when you begin you stick with it you don't start one day and then give up the next you stick with jesus all the way so a man plowing or with oxen when he looks back at the very least veers of course in that line that he's going but he may even stop plowing altogether and jesus demands here that once someone says that they are going to stick with him that they repent that they believe that they keep looking ahead with him keep walking along that furrow of service in the kingdom of god and serve and journey in that same direction with him all of their lives now of course for each individual the direction of that furrow the direction of that journey will be slightly different we all have slightly different paths to walk but the principle is the same once you begin you don't turn back you follow me says jesus all the way from the day you said yes to the day you reached the end of your destination so should we love our families of course but even our families should never divert us from following jesus as i said earlier one of the great challenges to our discipleship here in guildford is is the comfort of our homes we get so bound up and caught up with with with getting the perfect home and and and getting caught up in that way that we lose the kind of wherever radicalness of following jesus but here in this verse the connection with family is important as well the good thing of taking care of our family or for us parents or or maybe of my generation it's our children these good things can actually become a but first to jesus some of us are are kind of hampered in the radicalness of our discipleship because we are over prioritizing the education of our children don't get me wrong we love and care for our children but our children will benefit and be blessed as we say jesus first no turning back jesus first jesus is lord and master and my kids need to know that that jesus demands that we plow a straight furrow that we stick with him all the way and friends surely that the service in the kingdom of god that you've been called to do that i've been called to do in in my context these things show that these things are urgent aren't they in god's work the sense the sense of urgency in jesus here surely the needs of brighton as i've been hearing about recently are just too great and god's love for your city his desire for the kingdom of god to come and grow in brighton through the gospel these things are just too great and deep for us to be happy with superficial discipleship in which we get distracted and diverted from service in the kingdom of god it's not to reject that the wonderful doctrine of creation and all the good things god has given us but we say jesus first jesus first in all things and we throw ourselves into the life of the church for the blessing of our communities and the blessing of our city so friends if you just step back from these radical calls to discipleship sacrificing our comfort prioritizing his mission sticking with him all the way saying wherever jesus and and jesus first in these different contexts then you see that jesus ultimately demands of us everything everything and such radical discipleship we know can never crush us it's a path of joy to follow jesus in this way such discipleship can never replace his work upon the cross it can never pay for what jesus has done for us or paying back no salvation is a gift he alone walked that path that lonely path where he alone was rejected and suffered and died at the cross he alone left the comfort that he had the comfort of heaven and walked the path of heaven and walked the path of the cross for us he sacrificed his comfort in a way that we'll never fully be able to do he alone prioritized his father's mission in walking that path to the cross he alone was willing to say yes not my will but don't be done but yours be done i have decided to follow the path of the mission the father has given me no turning back no turning back and he alone therefore suffered and died on the cross in the place of sinners like us so that by the work of the holy spirit as happened to those disciples we can hear the call of jesus come follow me as your king your lord and messiah and we leave everything to follow him so friends in the finished work of jesus although the call to discipleship is tough it is also full of comfort and joy all the comforts of heaven all the blessings of salvation are ours in christ jesus and so from the world's perspective uh to to sacrifice your comfort to say wherever to

jesus and and to say jesus first above my family jesus first above my career jesus first above my my leisure jesus first in those things the world says that that is a ridiculous thing to say but when you understand the gospel in the context it is the most sensible thing to say and is the path of joy and it's the path of future it's the path of hope friends whether at this moment personally in your discipleship you are at the beginning of your journey with jesus or whether you're in somewhere in the middle of your life or whether it seems that you're coming to the end of that journey of discipleship and who knows the lord knows where at what point we are all in at this moment friends whatever point you are in can i say to you that now today is the time to recommit your life and your future to jesus as lord to say lord wherever lord you first and with god's help with the joy of the gospel the blessings the comfort it brings to step forwards from now on on that path the path towards heaven have you committed yourself to jesus christ yet listen to his demands submit yourself to him and follow him joyfully as lord he says these things in love we learn from them as his disciples we hear the call as those who are not yet in the kingdom of god and they could be the very means by which the holy spirit is calling you to turn from your sins to believe in jesus today and to follow him as lord from this point on if that's true please do get in contact with friends at calvary evangelical church help them explain to you more what it means to be a christian they would love to do it contact them through the website i have decided to follow jesus no turning back no turning back let's pray lord it's very easy as i know on these sundays to sit on our sofas to treat your words the same way that we would treat a series on netflix and for it not to truly penetrate our hearts and shape and direct our futures but lord such radical words from your son the lord jesus christ can only truly have an impact upon us as your holy spirit takes them and applies them deeply to our lives and our souls and lord we are sorry because we do know that our discipleship our following jesus is truly not as radical as jesus calls us to here at times we lose our way at times we lose our joy thank you so much that jesus walked that path for us thank you that he has earned salvation for us

[67 : 55] and that we do not walk that path alone but lord we just commit our futures to you wherever lord we mean it and we also commit our priorities to you jesus first help us to mean it we pray pray for calvary church that it would flourish and become a church of radical disciples who continue to love each other and live radically for you and the growth and extension of your kingdom through the gospel message please bless the leaders of the church please give them great joy in you please bless their fellow members please bless those who come amongst them every sunday and they'll be long and pray for the day when they will meet again and display the gospel to the watching world around them in brighton hear us we pray we ask for your help and your strength in the name of jesus our lord amen as we come to the close of our meeting we're going to sing a final song and here's the title from heaven you came helpless babe this reminds us of christmas time this reminds us of the well-known story of this helpless babe born in a stable in bethlehem who was he well for all tens and purposes it looks like he's just another person born into a poor family without prospects without much to offer in life he'll live he'll survive he'll die but how wrong that is because in fact he is the son of god come from heaven sent by his father and remarkably becoming a human being made man and this helpless babe is going to grow up he's going to be a one who speaks the truth about the kingdom of god he's going to show miracles demonstrating who he is and then he's going to die on a cross not because of anything that he had done wrong but because he is both our sacrificed and our high priest and he's going to stand in our place and die a death that we deserve as the penalty for our sin and he's going to do that in such a wondrous way without sin that although he dies death can't hold him there because death is the penalty for sin but god his father is going to raise him from the dead resurrection day easter day and on that day he will return to his father yes he appeared to his disciples many of them many witnesses saw him after he was raised from the dead demonstrating that was a real thing and now he's in heaven and in heaven he is praying for us and pleading for us as we've already said and this song reminds us that throughout his life he didn't behave like a king he didn't behave like a commander of armies he didn't behave like a dictator he didn't do all the things that a god might do but instead remarkably he had a servant heart he served people he helped them and we're going to worship the servant king as we sing this song from heaven you came helpless me and did all

world your glory veiled not to be served but to serve and give a life that we might live.

This is our God, the servant King. He pulls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as the daily offering.

O worship to the servant King. There in the garden of tears, my heavy load He chose to bear.

His heart with sorrow was torn, yet not my will, but yours He said.

[73 : 06] This is our God, the servant King. He pulls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as the daily offering.

O worship to the servant King. Come see His hand and His feet, the scars that speak of sacrifice, and that flung stars into space.

Two cruel nails surrender. This is our God, Lord, the servant King.

He pulls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as the daily offering of worship to the servant King. King. So let us learn how to serve, and in our lives enthrone Him, each other's needs to prepare.

[74 : 41] For it is Christ we're serving, this is Christ we're serving. This is our God, the servant King.

He pulls us now to follow Him, to bring our lives as the daily offering of worship to the servant King. King. Let me lead you in a closing prayer. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.