

Follow Me

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[0 : 00] Risen Christ, you are our all in all. And this morning as we hear you call us to follow you, I pray that you would give us ears to hear that.

Hearts to respond. Yes and amen. I will follow you. God, would you do a work in us this morning in which those who've come into this room who have never responded to your call, Lord Jesus, today they'll respond.

And I pray for those of us who've been walking with you for some time that this call would renew our desire to give it all for you. Would you unite us together as a church who all together we are intentionally living for you.

You're worthy. Now we ask that you would, by your spirit, God, give us eyes to see, impress these words of Jesus onto our hearts afresh.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Children, you are now dismissed. And as you're going... If you'd open up your Bibles to Luke chapter 9, we're going to be looking at a passage from verses 18 through 26.

[1 : 40] I'm going to read that in a second. But this morning we're starting a series called 21st Century Disciple. Last week I preached a message on Jesus saying, go make disciples of the nations.

And we can't assume that we all know what a disciple is. And so we're going to start teasing out this morning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in the 21st century living here in the city of Kenosha.

So Luke chapter 9, verses 18 through 26. Now it happened that he was praying alone. The disciples were with him. And he asked them, who do the crowds say that I am?

And they answered, John the Baptist, but others say Elijah, and others that one of the prophets of old is risen. Then he said to them, but who do you say that I am?

And Peter answered, the Christ of God. And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

[2 : 53] And he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the glory or the holy angels.

Verse 27, but I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. You know what? It's amazing how two words can completely reorient your life. So for example, those two words spring forward, they're going to completely reorient our lives for a couple days. Or those two words, congratulations graduate, that can reorient your life.

How about this? You're hired. That will reorient your life. Or you're fired. That will definitely reorient your life.

[4 : 10] You're standing at the altar and you say the two words, I do. Just two words, reorient your life. But if you're standing in a courtroom and your former spouse is saying, it's over, that will reorient your life.

It's cancer. Reorientation. A doctor comes up and of your spouse says, he's gone. Just two words can reorient your life.

This morning, we're looking at two words of Jesus. Two words that must reorient your life. And they're the two words, follow me.

And this morning, I want us to understand who the me of follow me is and what exactly he means by follow.

It's a command. So this morning, in order to help us understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the 21st century, let's be clear on what Jesus means when he commands, follow me.

[5 : 28] So let's start off with the me. Who is this guy? In verses 18 through 22, we see a couple questions that Jesus asks.

He's kind of like taking a poll. We see it in verse 18. Who do the crowds say that I am? And basically what Jesus is doing is he's taking a first century gallop poll of the Jewish crowds and his disciples are the pollsters.

And so when they ask the crowds, who do they say? He asked them, who did the crowds say that I am? His disciple pollsters come back and they say, well, some are saying John the Baptist, you know, he was killed by Herod earlier.

He's come back. Others are saying, Elijah, he's come back. Others are saying that you're one of the ancient prophets of old who's come back. And so they're all kind of working out of this fear.

You're kind of some kind of prophet is what the crowds are saying. And to some degree, they were right. Jesus is a prophet. The greatest of all prophets.

[6 : 40] He didn't come just proclaiming God's word. He is God's incarnate word. He's the ultimate prophet. How about if we just sped that up 21 centuries to today?

Jesus asks to go to Kenosha and poll Kenosians on who do Kenosians say that he is. Be interesting. So we hop on 60th.

We go down to 60th and age. There's an Albanian mosque right there. We walk in and ask the imam, hey, who do you say that Jesus is? And you know what he would say? We believe that he's a great prophet. And then we say, well, we believe he's God.

He would say, no, he's not. We would say, he was raised from the dead. He would say, no, he wasn't. They believe he was a great prophet. Or let's say that we show up at one of the liberal churches around town.

Who do you say that Jesus is? And they would say, well, the Jesus of the New Testament was probably more of a fabrication than an accurate historical depiction.

[7 : 52] And if you actually believed he died, well, his death was a great example of loving people. But if you actually think that he died for people's sins, you must believe in some kind of cosmic child abuse.

He's an example, but did he pay for sins? Well, if it works for you. Or how about we go to one of the bars, Zazie B's, or Captain Mike's on a Friday or Saturday night, and we pull up to the bar and we start polling people who are patronizing the place, and we ask them, who do you say that Jesus is? Well, we get all sorts of different responses. I visited a church once, and I got the message loud and clear. Stay out! Bartender, do you let anybody in here?

The defiant, you and your Jesus. If you want me to be truthful with you, if you want me to tell you who I think Jesus is, let me tell you, he is just some convenient religious crutch for those who are simple and weak.

Bartender, can you give me another one? It's been a hard week. In that bar, we find people who are spiritual.

[9 : 12] Jesus, you know what? You want me to tell you? I'm religious. Well, I'm not religious, but I am spiritual, and I believe people are free to express their spirituality in any way they want. Just don't force it on me.

The crowds of Jesus' day definitely had an opinion of who Jesus was. He was some kind of prophet. In the crowds of Kenosha in the 21st century, there are all sorts of opinions out there. All sorts. It's more like first century Athens than first century Judea. But Jesus has another question. He moves from polling the crowds to polling the pollsters in verse 20. But who do you say that I am to his disciples? And Peter, as the representative leader of the disciples, says, you are the Christ of God.

You just don't come up with that on your own. To equate Jesus with the Christ requires a revelation from God in heaven.

[10 : 21] That's why in Matthew, when Peter makes this confession, Jesus responds by saying, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who's in heaven. And when Peter's talking about you are the Christ of God, he's saying, you are the Messiah, the anointed one, the

long-awaited king who would come and sit on David's throne, and you would reign forever, and the ancient of days would give you authority and dominion over all things.

After this confession, though, it quickly becomes apparent that Peter in the 11, they may get that Jesus is the Christ, but they've got a limited understanding of who the Christ is.

They've typecasted him. You know what it means to typecast? Let's say that we're putting a film together, an action film here in Kenosha, and we need a muscle-bound warrior guy who can overcome the odds to win a great victory, and he's got a really good smile.

Who would we select? Dwayne Johnson, The Rock. He is typecast for those kind of roles, isn't he?

The Jews of Jesus' day had an expectation of the Christ. They were expecting him to play a particular role, to deliver the nation of Israel from the rule of Rome and to liberate Jerusalem in order to reestablish a geopolitical dominance of ethnic Israel throughout the world.

[12:01] They thought he was going to be a conquering king in a militaristic and political sense. They had been culturally informed of who Christ is.

They kind of absorbed that from everyone around them. They had a similar expectation. If you were to pull the same crowds in first century Judea and you say, what's your greatest need?

They thought their greatest need was deliverance from a political oppression in Rome. And what Jesus is about to say is, no, that's not your greatest need.

your greatest need is a spiritual deliverance from the oppression of sin. Well, that was then.

How about now? How would self-professed followers of Jesus in the 21st century, how would they respond to Jesus asking them, well, who do you say that I am?

[13:04] If we pulled all the churches gathered this morning across America and we asked the individual Christians in those churches to answer the question, who do you say that I am?

Really? I think we'd get some pretty interesting answers. And what would it, it would reveal how culturally informed our view of the Christ is.

Here's some of the answers. Jesus, well, he's my ticket out of eternity in hell. Which is true. But is that it?

Jesus, well, he's helping me to be the best version of myself. Jesus, well, when I can't figure things out, I call in Jesus.

When I mess things up, I call in Jesus to be my fixer. When I'm down, Jesus reminds me of how special I am. Well, Jesus is my all of all.

[14:07] I don't need anyone else. I've got Jesus in the internet. I don't need the church. Jesus is my dream maker. He knows my dreams and he will make my dreams happen.

In our culture, Americans believe that our greatest deliverance, what we need most, is any deliverance from anything oppressing our sense of self-sovereignty, our sense of what is owed me. It's American individualism. And so, what can happen is we can have an Americanized Christianity that takes Jesus and makes him into what I really want and that is life all about me.

Americanized Christianity has a way of making Christianity about the followers of Jesus instead of the one who's calling us to follow him, Jesus.

Who do you say that I am? This morning, as we're talking about this me of follow me, we've got to be clear on who he is.

[15:31] We've got to be clear on it because what he's about to call us to is really hard. We've got to be clear on who he is. So, is your functional Jesus the real Jesus of the Bible or is he a version of Jesus for your convenience?

Have you typecasted him through a cultural lens? Jesus. So, this morning, just as Jesus asked his disciples about 2,000 years ago, who do you say I am?

He's asking you this morning, who do you say that he is? Really? In order to follow him in the way he commands us to, we must know who he is.

So, we've seen him ask a question of the crowds, we've seen him ask a question of the disciples, now let's us ask Jesus a question. Jesus, who do you say that you are?

And he tells us in verses 21 and 22, and he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, that he's the Christ. And he says, the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

[16:57] Now, this might surprise you a little bit because here we are, Peter just confesses him as the Christ that he is the king of all and it's kind of like, why would Jesus want to keep that under wraps?

I mean, doesn't he want the nations knowing that he's the king of kings and lord of lords, that he is the Messiah, the Christ? Shouldn't they be doing that? Why is he telling them to be quiet?

Well, they should be doing that provided that they know who the Christ really is and what the Christ has come and must do.

If they're going to go proclaim Jesus as the liberator of national Israel, they got it wrong. And so what Jesus does in verse 21 is he says, hey guys, before you start going to tell other people about me, get all the information about me first.

Make sure you truly know who I am as the Christ and what I must do as the Christ and then go proclaiming. Jesus is essentially saying, I am the Christ but not the Christ that you want me to be. [18:13] I have not come to liberate the nation, I have come to liberate sinners. And that leads us to verse 22. The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

You see that word must? The Son of Man must, must suffer, must be killed, must be raised. Jesus is clarifying who he is as the Christ.

This is the one that calls us to follow him. The Christ who suffered, was crucified, and raised. He recasts for his disciples and us what the Christ came to do.

He didn't come initially as a victorious warrior to liberate the nation of ethnic Israel. He came as a suffering servant to liberate sinners through his sacrificial death on the cross.

Now, this sounds good, but really, why does it matter? Who cares? Here's what's at stake.

[19:28] The goal of what Jesus died for. The purpose of his sacrifice. That's what's at stake. If you believe that Jesus has come and died just to make your life a little bit better, you are missing the depth and the beauty and the glory of what he did on the cross on your behalf.

If you're making Jesus' death on the cross something that is just to complete you in some way, you've bought into kind of a skim coat Christianity.

You know what a skim coat is? You just kind of fill a little hole by skimming some filling over it. It's just superficial. It's cheap.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer would say, it's a cheap grace. What we see Jesus talking about is a work that he's going to do on the cross that is not a cheap grace with a skim coat salvation.

What he does on the cross is a deep work of grace that brings about a costly salvation.

[20:44] Jesus paid it all. He gave his life for sinners and not just to forgive them but to call them to live for him. He didn't die to make you a better version of yourself.

He died on the cross to deliver you from yourself. Jesus didn't die for you to be an add-on to your life. He died to be your life.

Jesus didn't die for you in order to somehow add the missing piece to your life. He died for you in order that he would be the organizational center of your life.

I've shared this illustration before and so if you've heard it bear with me but I think it gets the job done. In the 16th century there was a mathematician named Copernicus Polish guy he loved math he loved economics he loved studying the stars and at that time the common belief was what's called a geocentric understanding of the solar system and the idea there is that the earth was believed to be at the center of the solar system in the sun and all the planets orbited the earth but what Copernicus discovered basically through math is that we don't live in a geocentric solar system we live in a heliocentric solar system the sun is at the middle of our solar system and the earth orbits the sun it was a complete reorientation of how people thought about our solar system maybe you know where I'm going with this when Jesus Christ died on the cross and was raised from the dead and when he calls someone to come follow him that grace that deep and costly grace that he poured out for sinners do you know what that does it moves you from a me centered view of your life into a Christ centered view of your life when Jesus died and was raised he did that to deliver you from a little life live for you to a huge life live for

Christ he died in the place of sinners sinners who are completely absorbed with themselves in order to move them off themselves and onto him and becoming completely absorbed and compelled by him do you know what's amazing about all this stuff we did not invite Jesus to do this he initiated this God initiated this he in his grace sent his son and paid a huge cost with huge ramifications in order for us to get off ourselves and get onto him so when we come to this part of Luke 9 and we're asking the question who is this guy he's more than a prophet and he's the Christ who was crucified and raised and what Jesus would say I am your salvation and what

[24 : 06] Jesus would say and I am a deep and costly salvation that radically reorients your life from living for yourself to living for me that is who is calling us to follow him he's worthy of it all he is the king of kings and lord of lords all things have been put under his feet and he calls us to follow him now that we've looked at the me now let's look at the follow verse 23 and he said to all if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me in this call to follow we see an invitation and then we see some commands and then he gets into some crossroads and if we have time we'll get there but let's look at this invitation in verse 23 he says if anyone would come after me if anyone would come after me remember that me is the crucified and risen Christ if anyone would come after me it's an invitation and notice it's a broad invitation if anyone

I'm not sure about you but I'm used to getting invitations that are limited in nature or I hear about someone going somewhere that I didn't get invited to we live in a world that puts limits on inviting people to things and what Jesus does here is he invites anyone to come after him so it doesn't matter how well educated or poorly educated you are Jesus says come after me it doesn't matter how old you are Jesus says come after me it doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman come after me it doesn't matter your race Jesus says come after me it doesn't matter your income it doesn't matter your address it doesn't matter your criminal record Jesus says if anyone would come after me there's none of those kinds of limits this is an invitation what's an invitation to an invitation to what if anyone would come after me those words come after me is an invitation to anyone to become a lifelong disciple of the crucified and risen

Christ to be a disciple of Jesus is to truly know who Jesus is crucified Christ and risen and to intentionally live for Jesus to become a disciple of Jesus is enter into a relationship with a living Christ in which you will learn from him you're going to enter into the Jesus school and you're going to learn from him in order to obey him and when you start to obey him you start end up becoming like him and when you start becoming like him you end up wanting things that he wants so to become a disciple of Jesus is to have your life completely reoriented off yourself and onto Jesus I'm no longer living for myself I'm living for Jesus now so what we see happening here in verse 23 is that the Jewish Messiah is throwing the door wide open for anyone to come after him and become his disciple but there's an interesting word here you can't pass if anyone would come after me you see that word would it's a really important word a better translation of it would be if anyone is willing to come after me if anyone is willing to come after me and at the heart of this willingness is a heart of humility a recognition of who

Jesus is and a feeling of the appropriateness to follow him in humility a willing response starts saying things like this I understand who Jesus is and I understand that to follow Jesus is to intentionally live for Jesus let's not surprise people with saying oh come to Jesus he's going to make you really happy and then they learn out three months later that they actually have to deny themselves to follow Jesus when we're invited by Jesus to say if anyone is willing to come after me Jesus doesn't strong arm anybody into the kingdom he he doesn't force people to follow him what he's calling people anyone to do there here is to humble themselves and to come after him to come under his gracious holy holy rain he moves from invitation if anyone is willing to come after me broad

God got to be willing and humble and now he's going to raise the cost what it requires in light of his deep and costly grace that he poured out on the cross he says come after me and for you to come after him you're going to have to obey him he gives us three commands if anyone would come after me if anybody is willing to come after me he must deny himself and he must take up his cross daily and he must follow me three costly commands and the cost is you we're going to deny ourselves in order to follow Jesus if you're willing to come after Jesus you must deny yourself it's a command it's not optional Jesus says if you want to follow me you got to deny yourself in order to live for me the costly grace that

[30 : 53] God poured out through Christ on the cross is a grace that totally reorients us to Jesus and so we no longer live for ourselves and we've got to deny ourselves so that we can live for Jesus now so here's what it means that word to deny yourself can it means to say no so a follower of Jesus one who follows him they're going to have to say no to their right to my where am I going to live my life self-direction I'm going to say no to that so that I can say yes to Jesus directing my life if I'm going to follow Jesus I've got to say no to my perceived right of self-preservation so that I can say yes to Jesus even if that means I'm being exposed to danger those who follow Jesus may they

must say no to self-glory thinking that it's all about me so that they can say yes to Christ's glory because it's all about him you know this self-denial boils down to we we renounce our perceived right to self determination so that I can follow my great God and King Jesus man this hangs Americanized

Christianity of individualism it puts it right out the door so this is what it means if you're unwilling to deny yourself in order to live for Jesus you can't be his disciple that's what he calls us to do you know what the real question is is he worth it that's the real question is this guy who died 2,000 years ago and was raised from the dead and apparently is raining on is he worth it to deny myself oh yeah let's keep going the second command if anyone is willing to come after me he must take up his cross daily he must take up his cross daily Jesus is just reference his death he's going to be crucified and we all know that's by the cross the cross is a symbol of death and when we think of the cross nowadays it is linked to Jesus death here's what

Jesus is saying we must do you must identify with Jesus if you're going to follow him you must identify with him to the point that you're going to be humiliated and put to shame in the eyes of the world you know how humiliating it was to be crucified on a cross and notice this is a daily taking up of the cross it's a daily dying out of being identified with Christ we must take up our crosses daily it's one thing to deny yourself in order to live for Christ it's another thing to suffer the consequences for living for Christ and that's what Jesus is getting at here to bear your cross is what Jesus he's making explicit that there is a unique suffering Christians will experience because they are living for Christ that they are being identified with him so every morning it would be very appropriate for you to get up and you say Jesus you're awesome so therefore I'm going to deny myself in order that I can live for you and whatever comes as a consequence for that let it come because I'm identifying with you if you're unwilling to experience the humiliation of being identified with

Christ on a daily basis you can't be his disciple are you willing to be the butt end of people's jokes because you're a follower of Jesus are you willing to be labeled the religious guy or gal in your family and be avoided are you willing to lose your position at work or be overlooked at work because you are unwilling to look the other way or somehow be unethical because you're living for Jesus now are you willing to be gossiped about and to be avoided by your neighbors because they think you're a freak living for Jesus and when it comes to our church are we willing as a church to suffer the fallout of being a prophetic voice of Jesus to this city for this city's good are you willing the question that we end up having to ask is is Jesus worth it is he worth it the first two commands to follow Jesus are designed to reorient us off ourselves you got to die to yourself in order to live for Jesus and now he comes and says the two words follow me follow me if anyone would come after me he must deny himself take up his cross daily and command follow me it's a present tense command which means it has this sense of ongoing action I am commanded to continually follow Jesus in other words not just one time following

Jesus or not just for kind of a spurt of three months following Jesus if I'm to follow Jesus I'm to follow him for the rest of my life when you become a disciple of Jesus Christ you enter the Jesus school he is our teacher and he teaches us to follow him in every area of our he gradually makes us more and more like him next week when we talk about a disciple is someone who is saturated with God's word will bring this out a little bit more but the call here is to follow him not to follow you you've got to deny yourself did not deny yourself call is to follow the crucified risen and reigning Jesus in every area of your life it means living for him so is this narrow and hard way of discipleship is it worth it is it worth it to deny myself daily to take up my cross daily to follow him daily is it worth it for those of us who know who Jesus is and we understand what exactly he has done in order to graciously call him to ourselves to himself oh yeah it's worth it he's the treasure hidden field he's the pearl of great price he's the one worthy of our lives in verses 24 and 26 after the invitation and after these three commands we see three crossroads and what it basically is it's

[39 : 00] Jesus Jesus lays out two ways to live there there are those who are living for Jesus and then those who are living for themselves and he says there are three crossroads that we will experience with everyone on the planet those living for Jesus and those living for themselves they will have very different perspectives on what it means to save your life whoever would save his life for his sake will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it in order to follow Jesus you must say no to a life lived for yourself in order to live a life for Christ and if you're wondering right now well that sounds awful it's no loss it's all gain Jesus is our gain

Jim Elliot said he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose the first crossroads is what it means to save your life those who are living for themselves think that saving your life means living for yourself and those who are living for Christ know that saving your life means living for Christ that's where life is the second crossroads is has anything to do with the world and I'm just going to skip that and move down to verse 26 the third crossroads of what it means of being ashamed in this age if you are living for yourself you are going to be ashamed of Jesus and his words the two are vitally linked see that in verse 26 for whoever is ashamed of me and of my words of him will the son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the father and of the holy angels to be ashamed of Jesus means to disassociate yourself with him to deny him and so if you're living today and you are disassociating yourself because you're embarrassed by him do you know what he says when I come back

I'm going to be ashamed of you I'm going to distance myself from you I'm going to deny you but for those of us who are living for Christ now we don't need to be ashamed we identify ourselves with him and his word we are living according to his word for his glory and so the prospect of his coming back that doesn't strike that doesn't strike fear into us that strikes joy into us come Lord Jesus come we want to hear well done good and faithful servant enter the joy of your master what this means is the way that we live for Christ now it's going to contrast with the way that people who are living for themselves now and there are eternal implications to it let me conclude by saying this what does it mean to be a Christian in the 21st century well you know what

Jesus hasn't changed we may have different cultural contexts from the 1st century to the 21st century but Jesus hasn't changed and his costly call to follow him hasn't changed it's a corrective for us becoming a Christian is far more reaching than simply asking Jesus to come into your heart to become a Christian is to have your life completely reoriented by the costly deep grace of Christ from living for yourself to live for Christ so this here's what this means for us we got to call people to follow Jesus as he called people to follow Jesus we invite them to come after him who gave himself up for them and the cost is high we don't diminish the cost we make it known and let God do his work and what we will see as we step out in faith is that God is going to call followers to himself men and women boys and girls who are willing to give it all up so that they can live for the one who paid it all it's amazing what two words can do two words follow me these two words must radically reorient our lives off of ourselves and onto Jesus that's where true life is let's pray

Lord Jesus you are worthy right now at the right hand of God the Father you are surrounded by elders and myriads of angels and the redeemed and they are worshiping you they are singing the glory and praise that are due your name Lord Jesus we ask that you would do a work in us where it's our joy to deny ourselves take up our cross daily and follow you you're worth it Lord Jesus we pray this all in your name amen