

# Considering Commitment (Morning Service)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us pray. Thank you, Father, for making yourself known to us and sharing the way of salvation through faith in your Son.

We ask you now to teach and encourage us through your word so that we may be ready to serve you for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Commitment, a very important part of our lives. Most people have commitments of one kind or another. For instance, committed to a religion, a faith, a political party, a company, or to a partner.

Some people may claim that they do not commit to anything. But commitment to nothing is itself a commitment, a lifestyle that one chooses.

A state election is coming out in about two weeks' time. One of the main criteria we will use to determine our vote is the commitments of different candidates and their parties.

[ 1 : 07 ] We will consider not only their future commitments, but also their past performance. That is whether they have kept to their promised commitments.

However, even though we might rightly demand others to have certain commitments, it seems that nowadays we require less and less of our own.

That's why we hear people complaining about people today do not have long-term commitments. When I was young, I can still remember our family always bought our basic necessity from our usual store, the same store every time.

We consistently went to the same store, and we consistently bought the same brand. Maybe also because there was only one brand available.

And the best was that the price remained the same forever. But our experiences today are totally different. One of the reasons is due to the wide selections that are available to us.

[ 2 : 14 ] We can buy the brand that we want. Or we just try our different brands each time. Or even we simply buy according to our mood at the time.

This type of lifestyle unknowingly has impacted our life greatly. This try and see or change if you don't like attitudes affect our views on many areas of our lives.

University studies, career, hairstyle or hair color, marriage, which church to join, or even our work with God.

If we look at today's passage, which is Luke 9, verses 57 to 62, Jesus deals with the issue of commitment. He refuges any try and see or change if you don't like attitudes in discipleship.

But before we go into the details of this passage, let us look at the context in which we find Jesus' words in order to understand the significance of Jesus' words in this passage.

[ 3 : 24 ] Luke 9 is sort of the middle chapter of this Gospel of Luke. Luke 9, verse 18. The story of Jesus' ministry has come to a turning point. If you look at verse 18, Jesus asked his disciples who they thought he was.

And under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Peter confessed that he was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. And from that moment onwards, Jesus began to foretell his death and resurrection for the first time.

If you look at verse 21, He's thoroughly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Then in verse 44 again, while everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, Let this word sink into your ears. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.

And significantly in this pre-context, Luke also begins to record that Jesus set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 42 ] If you look at verse 51, When the days drew near for him to be taken out, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.

In the middle of 52, On their way, on their way to Jerusalem. And at the end of 53, his face was set toward Jerusalem.

And when we come to 57, which is belong to the passage we look at today, as they were going along the road, the road to Jerusalem, the road to the cross.

We know that the cross is always in view in Jesus' ministry. But now the cross is even more real as Jesus prepares to go up to Jerusalem.

And we should also know that as Jesus prophesies about his own destiny awaiting him in Jerusalem, he also tells his disciples what it means to follow him.

[ 5 : 44 ] That is, what would happen to them as his followers. So in verse 23, Jesus lays down the first rule of discipleship. If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take out their cross daily and follow me.

And in today's passage, Jesus continues to spell out the meaning and demand of discipleship. And in this passage, Luke records Jesus' encounters with three would-be disciples.

From these encounters, we come across three lessons of discipleship. Let's look at each one of them now. The first lesson of discipleship, verses 57 to 58, the costliness of discipleship.

In verse 57, Luke records that as they were going along the road, then someone came to Jesus and expressed his wish to follow Jesus.

He said to Jesus, I will follow you wherever you go. But Jesus replied him, forces have holes and birds of the air have necks.

[ 6 : 59 ] But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Before we spell out the meaning of Jesus' words, we know that Jesus here is not commanding on this person's action or his desire.

It seems that Jesus has thought regarding this person's wish to follow Jesus. And in Jesus' reply, he claims that unlike forces and birds, he doesn't have a place to lay his head.

What Jesus is saying is that even the wild animals have places to stay, but not for him. Therefore, even though the person is so eager to follow Jesus wherever he goes, Jesus doubts his readiness and points out the reality of following him.

That is, it may mean that you will become a wanderer and there is no place to rest. There will be no security, no comfort, no personal gain, no human glory.

If this is so, will you continue to follow me? A commentator on Luke rephrases Jesus' words in this way, he said, suppose I will to lead you towards work in which your income will be lower, your prospects, humanly speaking, more uncertain, and your accustomed standards of living non-existent.

[ 8 : 33 ] Or suppose I were to ask you to do something for me which according to most people of your class and background is simply not done. Would you even then come my way?

Clearly, this means that there is a price, a great price to pay in following Jesus. Yes, following Jesus sometimes is exciting and certainly there are positive experiences as a result of it.

But there is another side to the discipleship. it is costly. It requires a strong commitment. We're going to look at a conversation which you will see in the cartoon on the wall.

It's a conversation between a wife and a husband after the service which it may happen quite often even to our own family. As usual, the wife asks her husband, did you enjoy today's sermon? and the husband if you look at the next cartoon, the husband hesitates which we know that the husband is always very slow. I think it's okay to criticize the men because the men are away in the men's weekend away.

[ 9 : 54 ] He answered, well, sure, I guess. And then he continues the next slide. As much as one can enjoy the exhortation to deny yourself and take out your cross.

Though the man, the husband hesitated, he has rightly pointed out the reality of following Jesus. Yes, on one hand, we enjoy God's love and his grace.

But on the other hand, it's not that enjoyable, especially when your workplace is hostile to your Christian faith.

when you are called to give out what you have to leave your loved one to go to a strange new place to spread the good news.

Or when you prayed but didn't experience God's deliverance at once. During this trials period, if I may call them, will you continue to take out the challenge to follow Jesus?

[ 10 : 58 ] If following Jesus means that trials and sufferings will be awaiting you, will you still come? Just like Jesus experienced, he knows that there will be a cross awaiting for him at Jerusalem.

But he still set his face to go up to Jerusalem. What about us? What will be our response to this challenge, to this lesson?

The second lesson, verses 59 to 60, the urgency of discipleship. This second person is slightly different from the previous one. The first person and the third person took the initiative to follow Jesus.

While this second person was called by Jesus, I don't think there is any significant difference between the two actions in this passage, as they merely reflect different experiences of discipleship.

Some just came willingly, but others came reluctantly. Though this second person was called by Jesus to follow him, he, like others, also had his excuse.

[ 12 : 14 ] He said to Jesus, Lord, first let me go and buried my father. Most biblical commentators have commented that this person was not really saying that his father had died and he needed to go and bury his father.

Otherwise, at that point in time, he would not be there in the public, but already at home preparing for his father's funeral. Therefore, his father was alive, though maybe already old or ill.

And his response to Jesus' code was that he needed to go and wait until the time is right. That is, he needed to go and look after his parents until their death.

Then he would come and follow Jesus. Also, there is a background we need to know that for a Jew, the burial of the dead was a religious duty that took precedent over all others, even including the study of the law.

The priests who were not normally allowed to touch dead bodies as recorded in the law of Moses, could do so in the case of parents' death or relatives.

[ 13 : 34 ] And therefore, the burial of a father was a religious duty of the utmost importance. It seems to be an appropriate reason for this Jew to delay his response to Jesus' call.

However, in Jesus' reply, he didn't seem to accept this person's reason. Here, we should note that instead of seeing Jesus as unsympathetic to human needs, his reply actually tells us more about the type of discipleship that he has in mind.

Let the dead bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God. Jesus definitely is not saying that we should or should not leave the parents when they are old and ill. Rather, what Jesus is telling us is the urgency of discipleship. You must go right away, right now. Literally, Jesus is saying, if you think discipleship is something you can take hold on when you are free, or when it's convenient to you, you have mistaken.

[ 14 : 48 ] Go and proclaim the kingdom of God. It's something that you must respond to with urgency. And it is much more important than any other human duties.

In a way, Jesus is saying that every human will die one day. Therefore, let the dead bury their own dead, a human reality.

but as for you, you should go and proclaim the kingdom of God. That is the salvation. You should go and proclaim the salvation and the reign of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this message of salvation will ultimately save lives, save people from death. And it is the spiritual reality.

Here we not only see the urgency of discipleship, we also see the life of a disciple. It is a life that proclaims and manifests the highest spiritual reality, which is the Lordship of Jesus Christ in this lost world.

[ 15 : 58 ] In August this year, US Fox News featured a program titled Can Rick Warren Change the World?

We know that Rick Warren is a senior pastor of a US mega church, Saddleback Church, and is the author of the bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Rick is a visionary Christian leader. And under his leadership, his church attempts to move beyond the boundaries of the church and the nation to establish a global network of churches to tackle what he believed to be the five biggest problems facing the world today.

Poverty, disease, illiteracy, spiritual emptiness, and egocentric leadership. At the time of his interview, he was getting ready to implement his plan in the war-torn nation of Rwanda.

But the question was being put to him, can it really work? Can one man or one church or one network really save the world?

[17:10] At the very end of the interview, Rick Warren identified the four words that he would like written on his tombstone. They are at least he tried.

At least he tried. What a great testimony of a great Christian leader encouragement to others. At least I tried.

But if we look at today's passage, maybe I need to say that at least I tried. It's not good enough. It's good, but it's not good enough.

Jesus didn't tell that man, at least you tried to save the world. But he said, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

Go and proclaim are both imperative in Greek language. They are God's commands. Saving the world is God's agenda and his work.

[18:15] And our responsibility is to respond to him and to proclaim the message of this great hope. If I may so bold to suggest to Rick Warren, I know that compared to Rick Warren, I'm nobody.

maybe I'm so bold to suggest to him, maybe on his tombstone or even my own tombstone, it is better written, at least I went and proclaimed the kingdom of God and little words as directed by Jesus himself.

Or even at least I trust and obey. obey. I trust and obey.

It's not by my own strength, at least I try, but I trust his command, his words, his promise, and I obey. Will you respond to Jesus calling this way?

The third lesson, verses 61 to 62, the demand of discipleship. The third person, quite similar to the previous two, he wanted to follow Jesus, but there was something he must do first. He said to Jesus in verse 61, I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home. But Jesus said to him, no one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

[19:47] If you are familiar with the calling of prophet Elijah in the Old Testament, you may be partial with Jesus' reply. This is because when Elisha was called by prophet Elijah, Elisha also requested to go back and say farewell to his parents in 1 Kings chapter 19.

Why then? Why did Jesus forbid to go back and say goodbye to the Lord? Why did Jesus forbid this person to do the same? There may be two answers to this question. First, we need to note that Elisha's response to Elijah's calling was quite different from this person's response to Jesus.

Elisha was determined to follow prophet Elijah. His determination was reflected in his action to kill the cattle and to boil the animal flesh with the plowing equipment.

He was determined. He was determined to follow prophet Elijah. There was no turning back.

But as for this person in Luke chapter 9, it seems that his family ties has distracted him from staying focused in following Jesus. Maybe he was still uncertain whether he was doing the right thing.

[21:16] Whether he was so foolish to let go of what he used to have. That's what Jesus said. When you are plowing, you cannot look back.

It's obvious that during plowing, one must look straight to the front and cannot be distracted by anything else from that straight line.

You cannot look back. You need to focus. Second, the calling here is definitely different from Elisha's experience.

Because in Luke 9 here, Jesus stresses the urgency of his calling. That's why there was no more time for that would-be disciple to go back and say farewell.

After all, the lesson here is very clear. Yeah, discipleship requires undivided devotion. You cannot look back.

[22:15] Jesus cannot accept any half-hearted service. I believe here we can easily recall Jesus' words in Matthew 6 verse 24.

No one can serve two masters. For a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth. In a popular Chinese saying, a person cannot occupy two boats at the same time.

If you watch Hong Fania video show last night, you see that scenario. When the two boats start to drift apart, and that person, what will happen to that person?

Thus, following Jesus requires us to commit fully to him. We cannot be distracted. We cannot serve two masters at the same time.

[ 23 : 20 ] This morning, as we look at the three Ubi disciples and their brief encounters with Jesus, we see what it really means to follow Jesus. It is costly.

It's urgent. It's demanding. To be Jesus' disciples requires our full commitment. However, we must know that our commitment is based on Jesus' commitment and what he has accomplished for us. Not our own. No matter how determined or how enthusiastic we are in discipleship. Rather, we are to depend on him, on Jesus, on him.

We are to come to Jesus and to rely on him. As Peter said, we are to follow his full state and he will carry us through.

There was a great five student who had great difficulty with his max. Though his parents had tried all means to help him to improve, but all had failed it.

[ 24 : 32 ] Their last attempt was to send him to a private school, but not just a normal private school. It was a Catholic college. After first day at school, this boy came home and went straight to his bedroom to study.

After dinner, he went back again to do his homework until sleep time. And this pattern continued until the end of the term when the report card was handed out.

When the boy went back home with the report card, he handed the card to the parents and went back to his bedroom again to study. The parents quickly opened the report card and were surprised to find that their son had received an A for his max for the first time.

They were so happy and they rushed to his room and asked, is it because of the teacher? No, he replied. Is it due to the prayer before the class?

No. Is it because of the class timetable or the program that suits you? No, no, no, no. Then what is it? Finally, the boy answered.

[ 25 : 53 ] The first day I came to this college, I saw a man was nailed to a plus sign. I know they are really serious.

This boy has totally misunderstood the meaning of the cross. He thought that if his math is not good enough, he would be crucified.

But he did rightly see the death of Jesus as a very serious matter. And likewise, to follow Jesus, to be his disciples, to carry out our cross daily, is a serious matter.

Any try and see or change if you don't like attitudes are not acceptable. people. Please note that in this passage, Luke didn't recall any of these three would be disciples' response, whether they then follow Jesus or they left.

But the action of their response hints us that the decision is still open to us. It's up to us to make that decision.

[ 27 : 22 ] Whether we are to respond positively or negatively. What then is our response? If you look at the pre-context and the post-context of this passage, in verse 52, the Samaritans, they were not ready.

They were not ready to respond to Jesus. They did not receive him. If you look at chapter 10, verses 13 onwards, the cities, the people were unrepentant.

What about us? How do you respond to Jesus' call to follow him? How do you respond to the need of the church as a Christian?

How do you respond to the cry of the war? At least you try or at least I trust and obey.

Let us pray. Let's pray as the disciples have prayed. Lord, I want to follow you.

[ 28 : 44 ] I want to take out my cross daily to follow you. But my faith is weak. Please increase my faith in Jesus Christ.

Amen.