

Vision Series 2017

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 0 0] I took this photo back in 2007. There's a bunch of photos of the only one I took in 2007. But this one, and there's another one there, it's Galatian National Park.

It's on the edge of the Canadian Rockies. I, Natalie, who was pregnant at the time, that little thing, and two other people, that little thing's now called Isabel, so we're about to go on a hike, and discovering it wasn't going to be an easy stroll.

We looked at where we'd come ahead, and we're like, it's going to be a little bit hard, I think. The trail was narrow, the trail was steep, the ground under our feet was standing loose. Now, I've done a little bit of hiking in my time.

I used to work for the National Parks and Wildlife Service in New South Wales. Many years ago, one of my jobs was to build, to maintain walking tracks, which meant that I had to walk among those walking tracks.

One of the principles I had in building a walking track was, if I'm going to make this thing, and I'm going to have to maintain this thing, they're going to make it easy to maintain it. So, which means it's going to be wide, I'm going to be able to ride cod bikes up and down this track, it's going to be as level as we possibly can, go the long way around to make it an easy terrain, rather than up the side of the hill.

[1 : 1 7] That kind of principle was a thing I even managed to convince, my immediate supervisor to buy a little bulldozer for me, so I could just drive through the bush, rather than having to use axes and stuff like that.

And, yeah, there you go, there's your trail. So, this day in Canada, when I looked at this, it wasn't so much the effort, even though I realised there was a little bit more effort involved in hiking this one, what worried me was the reading material that I had on the way to the hike.

As we drove to the head of the trail, I was reading up on some park information, you know, like a collection of National Park newspaper kind of thing that I picked up in the information centre.

And in the middle of this was a whole lift-out section on how to survive the many animals that are going to try and kill you as you go for a walk in the National Park.

And, you know, in Australia, worst-case scenario is a snake. You know, and they're trying to get away with an awesome, you know, rampant, you know, koala who's got some of their endeavor against people. Now, apart from that, there's not so many other worries in this country to go for a hike.

[2 : 2 3] But in this section, it's got advice on cougars. Be careful, cougars, mountain lions. What they do is they pick out their target, they stalk you for some time, and then they jump on you from behind and from above.

They, you know, wait for you to get through some sort of ravine, then leap on you from behind. It's like, before you know it, your face is getting caught off by some cougar. And it's like, fantastic. Okay, so leave the cougars aside.

There's the black bears. And it says, the advice here is, if it's a black bear you're confronted with, you've got to make yourself look really big and yell at me. Yell, yell, yell.

And that will generally freak them out and they'll run away, hopefully. But don't mistake the black bear for the grizzly bear. You do good to the grizzly bear, and the grizzly bear will assure it's a challenge on its territory and it will immediately attack you.

And so here's the advice being attacked by a grizzly bear. Now, it's really awful advice. You're meant to remain calm.

[3 : 29] Okay, that's the first tip. Right, tip. You're meant to lay down as if you are dead in a fetal position and you're meant to time the attack.

Hang on a bit there. Click. Go. Right, okay. If it gets to two minutes, if the bear's been chewing on your leg for two minutes, apparently that means it's a serious attack.

Okay, it's serious at that moment and it means that if it's still going for two minutes, then it's likely to keep going. And so right now is the time to, now that it's got your leg, now it's the plan to fight back.

Right, I reckon it's a bit late, that advice. But that's how you handle grizzly bears. Apparently they just get sick of you and eventually walk away. On most cases, except a lot of people are being killed by grizzly bears.

But anyway, now it says there you have to be particularly careful when there's a grizzly bear with cubs. They're especially aggressive when they have their cubs with them, something to do with sleep deprivation or something like that.

[4 : 42] And so, on this particular day, ask him, she knows what it's like. Ask him. On this particular day, you turn up to this track and you find this sign on the front of the trails where the female grizzly with two cubs on this track the day before.

And you're going, do we walk? Do we not walk? You know, what do we do here? Apparently, getting a bit of information like that means that you must be prepared.

You must prepare for what's about to come. And the recommendation to be prepared in this scenario is to have a can of bear spray with you. Now, I've got a can of fly spray in my office.

It's about this big. I've got a can of wasp spray in my office. It's about this big. So you can imagine the size the bear spray is. And it's some sort of pepper spray kind of thing. It apparently distracts it enough and blinds if you're going to run away or something like that.

But we didn't have any bear spray. All we had was some hair spray and seriously, that's all we can come up with. And so we had this hair spray and so my friend's going, let's make it a flame fry.

[5 : 53] So I had a box of matches. He's sprayed and we're trying to make this, you know, six matches we'd went out and spizzle with it. You know, we couldn't make this thing work into a flame fry. So instead I got a big stick and then we went.

We're not at high. But as we walked on that walk constantly looking around for cougars, wolverines, black bears, you know, grizzly bears and anything else that would make the grass and the trees rustle.

You see, it's crucial to know what to expect on a hike like that in order to be prepared. Which is what we're about to do for the next six weeks. We're going to have a walk with Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

That's the same way. We're going to have a walk with Jesus in Luke's Gospel because that's what Jesus is doing. In Luke, he is in chapter 9, he is starting a walk to Jerusalem.

And this walk, Jesus makes it clear to his disciples and to us, this is not an easy journey. This walk you're about to go on is a dangerous walk, it's a hard walk and yet it's a walk that he calls us on to with him.

[7 : 01] He calls us to come with him on this one. And this is a crucial one for us as a church, as I said, I look forward to Vision Series every year.

In watching Vision 2020, which is the ministry agenda which shapes us as a church, I did it back in 2009, I said then and I've repeated a number of times since 2009, my intention was to lead us as a church into a new era of significant personal sacrifice for the glory of God in the mission field in the chief spaces in our time.

And our Vision Series is a time every year when I call us as a church and I do it myself, I've been working on this myself for a number of months already, getting ready for this in its various forms and what God has placed in my heart especially in the last month realises what He's calling me to and the same He's calling you to is to die a little more in order to live a little more.

It's trying to give up some more. This is what we do every Christmas here to call us as a church to give up some more, to surrender some more, to commit to Jesus some more, to obey Jesus some more and to find more freedom and more joy in Him as you do that.

My call back in 2009 is the same as what it is today. May we as a church tremble, tremble not that the price is too high to pursue the glory of God in Chatswood but that our vision to do so is way too small.

[8 : 52] May that be our trembling. that our vision for God's glory is too small. I don't want to ever get into the presence of God and for Him to say, see what are you thinking?

If you ask for 10,000 I wouldn't give you a 10,000. Our purpose, our vision, our values and cause cause us to be radical disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Now the word disciple there which is deliberate, using the word disciple as opposed to Christian here. The word Christian has context in terms of our culture and I'm a Christian as opposed to a Muslim or my family and I'm just Christian.

It doesn't necessarily carry the way it used to but the word disciple does. It means that we are students of the Lord Jesus. More specifically what it means is we are under the discipline of the Lord Jesus.

That's what discipleship means. We trust him, we obey him. When he calls us we do what he calls us to do. We don't negotiate with him and my concern for myself my concern for you my concern for us as a church is that those who claim to be disciples of the Lord Jesus would not provoke him to say as he does in Luke 646 why do you call me Lord Lord and do not do what I say?

[10 : 25] I don't want to provoke Christ to utter those words again of us. The word radical comes from the Latin word radical which means a root it's a word that is applied to those whose ideas or attitudes or behaviours go to the core of the issue or to the root of the issue and it displays a thorough going commitment.

That's why we're using the word radical this year that's what the whole theme for this vision series is and we see it as we go into Luke chapter 9 so get the Bibles and the service sheets open we're beginning in Luke 9 this is a major turning point in Luke's gospel for the 10 chapters that follow Luke 9 Jesus is walking a trail he's on a hike he's heading to Jerusalem and Jerusalem the destination now looms large in Jesus thoughts it rises ominously over everything that follows for Jesus every word he owes it stands taller and taller and taller with each event from here to the middle of chapter 19 and so notice verse 51 as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem the rawness of Luke's words here communicate the intensity of this moment for Jesus it's quite literally he stiffens his face to go to Jerusalem he sets his eyes he will not be distracted he will not be diverted one bit

Jerusalem's the destination for him and along the way to Jerusalem Jesus educates his would-be followers on the demands of the road lessons on what it will mean to effectively set our face to Jerusalem with him and these chapters the next 10 chapters are fiercely radical they're scary actually possibly even discouraging even in the verses today you kind of think Jesus are you trying to discourage me from being a follower and so it is very important from the outset for us to resist the temptation to tame these chapters to make his teaching sound more reasonable to tone him down these are hard words but important words you see when I hear inexperienced

Christians confidently assert that they will follow Christ no matter what the cost I feel both pleasure and concern they've experienced new life in Christ forgiveness release from guilt expansive joy and so it's natural to say I know where I've come from I don't go back there and so for me as a Christian and as someone as a Christian minister such talk thrills me when I hear people make those declarations but it also fills me with a sense of apprehension because it's also naive a naive presumption that one can follow Christ by the simple assertion of the will invites a rude awakening I'm much more comfortable when I hear a believer say I know I can't do it alone there is a big big battle it's going to be a daily battle for me to follow Christ but by God's gracious enabling my history

I'm going to throw myself into it much more confident with that you see presumption is always dangerous for anyone who follows Christ many have fallen along the way because they have not understood what it means to be disciples of Christ they have understood the concept of picking out the cross and following him some have fallen because this is predominantly in the western world in the western church many have signed up to a distortion of Christianity a moralistic therapeutic deism in other words what that means is they believe that Christianity means that they should work hard to be good people they believe that Christianity or that God exists to serve them by helping them God's job for them in their life is to make them feel happy and good and secure and at peace and we know that's the case because every time God takes one of those things away from me or challenges me on those things I get angry with it so we just assume God's job in my life is to make things go well for me and they believe that even though

[15 : 31] God made the world he's only active and involved in my life when I need to resolve a problem for me the rest of the time you pretty much is to get out of the way and let me get on with life with my agenda and so it's essential for us to understand Jesus' mission if we understand what it means to follow him so let's take a look at that first what the journey to Jerusalem meant for Jesus he resolutely sets his face there so what is it about this journey what it means for him because if we can understand what it means for him we're in a better place to understand what it means for us to be followers of him now early in Luke 9 as Jesus prepared to set out for Jerusalem from Galilee he explained it to his disciples in verse 22 he said the son of man must supplement things and be rejected by the elders the chief priests and he must be killed and on the third day raised of life and then in verse 44 he told them listen carefully to what I'm about to tell you the son of man is going to betray in the hands of many and yet verse 45 tells us the disciples were still ignorant they did not understand clearly what they thought Jesus was on about was flawed their misunderstanding of his mission results in a misunderstanding of what it means to follow

Jesus he didn't understand first of all that Jesus mission was in fact about mercy and grace not about judgment notice verse 52 he sent messengers on ahead who went into Samaritan village to get things ready for him but the people there did not work in him because he was heading for Jerusalem he's only just started he's like the trailhead on his way to Jerusalem and he's already being rejected it is the only sign of what is about to come Jesus rejected all the way to Jerusalem and when he arrives in Jerusalem rejection is the pattern for Jesus and it's the pattern for those who have followed Jesus James and John however the two sons of the to discover see the rejection and so in verse 54 here's their response

Lord we want us to pull down fire from heaven to destroy them Jesus a few drones and smart bombs would wipe this village out be done with it and they would be sarcastic they would dare be serious they were not naive they were not joking you see they remembered 2 Kings 1 which records how the apostate king Ahaziah twice sent soldiers to take Elijah and the apostles saw Jesus as an Elijah figure and twice in 2 Kings the prophet Elijah said if I am a man of God may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men and it did twice and the disciples memories are great you think away here's an opportunity

Jesus here's an opportunity to get a fire come down burn this village and from here to Jerusalem everyone know don't mess with us Jesus is like a son see in there rush to call for God's judgment the apostles had chosen to ignore Jesus example and teaching Luke 4 reveals that both James and John heard Jesus say but I tell you who hear me love your enemies be good to those who hate you bless those who curse you pray for those who mistreat you and they had seen those words fleshed out in the life and ministry of Jesus in a thousand ways so as Jesus goes to five turns on your response just refutes them idiots you see a wrong view of what Jesus is on about is a wrong view of what it means to fight him wrong expectation of what it means to fight him if

Jesus had come to execute judgment and take up residence in the palace in Jerusalem then it would make total sense for the sons of thunder to call for judgment in that way but if Jesus had come instead not to judge but to save then a radically different form of following is in order and the answer of the whole new testament is that the surprise the surprise about Jesus is that he denied himself he came to live a sacrificial life dying service before he comes a second time to reign in the way he comes and divests himself gives himself puts his life and dies for his enemies and he reigns now the

[21 : 24] Lord resurrected reigns in glory you see Jesus' mission is one of mercy and grace and salvation for humanity and Jesus made it explicit when in Mark 10 he says for even the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many or there's John 3 16 17 for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him so what did it mean for Jesus he resolutely sets his face to Jerusalem in order to surrender his life for the salvation of sinners it was a death that was vindicated when he rose again on the third day and now reigns in glory and the surprise here for the disciples following

Jesus demands a life of denying self in sacrificial service before we with Christ reign in glory that's a surprise for the disciples what that means is for the disciples of Jesus walking with him following him what Jesus demands is a life of commitment a life of commitment for those who follow him you see what James and John had to learn what we must all learn is that Jesus path to Jerusalem is our journey to Jerusalem if he set his face to go there and die we must set our face to die to ourselves with him we die as he does that's why he calls us to take up our cross and follow him which he made explicit in Luke 9 23 24 if anyone would come after me he must deny himself take up his cross daily and follow me whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for me will save it we seek to secure our life through returning evil for evil or surrounding ourselves with luxury in the face of human need and the billions of lost people on this planet who don't know Christ are about to enter into a crisis with eternity as 55 million people do over here in feyed belt and eternal courses if we're blind to that need as we surround ourselves in luxury

Jesus says here really clearly you will lose your life when Jesus set his face to walk the Calvary road he was not merely taking our place he was setting our pattern he is not just our substitute he is also our case setter and so verses 56-62 are Jesus way of correcting James and John's misconceptions about the glories of following him three times here we read what it means to be a disciple of Jesus what it means to be a Christian three times the word follow as Jesus goes so we follow by him that's what it means to be a disciple and the first would be follow Jesus is there in verse 57 as they were walking along the road a man said to him

I will follow you wherever you go Jesus replied foxes of holes and birds in the air have nests the son of man has no place to lay his head for the first thing to be with Jesus is going to result in hardship at least for now it's interesting I think that our priorities often reveal an attitude that says I will follow you Jesus provide you give me a successful healthy luxurious secure comfortable life if you provide all that stuff then I follow you you ever stop doing the things that I expect you to do and then I'm going to get cross with you if I start with faith in you start turning back looking for alternatives so these here words are strong words for Jesus he meant that at times those who follow him would literally be homeless he meant it quite literally they would undergo immense discomfort

Jesus was saying that if you walk with him you by the power of the Holy Spirit will sense that the world is not your home there will be dissonance and discomfort and disharmony and unease and rejection no one who commits to following Christ and does so and follows Christ lives a life of ease no no exceptions if your Christianity has not brought discomfort to your life something is wrong the great John Stott wrote that in one of his books if there's no sense of fight no sense of battle no sense of hardship associated with your discipleship the Lord Jesus don't be too quick to call yourself a disciple the Lord Jesus there's something drastically wrong a committed heart knows the discomfort of loving difficult people the discomfort of giving until it hurts the discomfort of putting oneself out for the ministry of

[27 : 40] Christ and his church the discomfort of a life out of step with modern culture or even the traditional culture that I've been brought up in the discomfort of being disliked even the occasional sense of having nowhere to lay your head but Christ is greater Christ is greater than anything that we lose second we follow Jesus in verse 59 he said another man followed me the man replied first let me go and bury my father Jesus said to him that the dead bury their own dead but you go and claim the kingdom of God you see a follower of Jesus needs to really sense the urgency of what they're being called to again really tough words here from Jesus how could he tell a would-be follower to neglect the burial of his dead father now I understand that we need to take a little bit closer look at the text here the man did not say his father was dead but only let me go and bury my father you see if in fact in that culture the first city of Palestine if his father had in fact actually died he wouldn't even be on the road with Jesus in this moment he would be home tending the lengthy details associated with the funeral service so apparently this would-be disciple's father was getting elderly and the man was asking Jesus permission to delay following

Jesus until his father's dead the request here revealed that this man had no concept of the urgency or the importance of the task of which Jesus was called him to and Jesus famous answer he far from being hard-hearted exalted the importance and the urgency of his call let the dead that is the spiritually dead bury the physically dead but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God salvation of humanity in Christ you don't do that job and to neglect doing that job to neglect the proclamation of the good news of the gospel means that this man was blinded to his father's deepest needs not the first death that's not your biggest concern the second death rejection from God for eternity that's what your dad needs to know

Christ if we're really on the road with Jesus life is filled with this intense urgency we have the words of life and life is short and there is so little time and we have such good news to proclaim far and wide my desire for us as the church as we go through this series is that my prayer is that God will give us such a deep sense of that urgency of the gospel being proclaimed I've got to be honest I'm not sensing it at the moment my fear is this series is so important for us that we've settled in the comfort of us so one of my prayers is that we would live out a radically different dream a dream to do something radically loving with our possessions something radically loving with our money something radically loving with our time something radically loving with our families and our relationships sense the urgency of what

God has called us to the third would be to see that Jesus demands allegiance from those who follow him verse 61 still another said I'll follow you Lord but first let me go back and say bye to family Jesus replied no one puts a hand to the plow and looks back as fit for service of the kingdom of God simple point here is you cannot play out in a straight line while constantly looking backwards for those of you not familiar with agriculture you can't drive on the right side of the road for too long if you're constantly looking at the re-vision bearer it doesn't work I tried and I ran many years ago I was about 15 I think late one night driving a truck which should be growing and driving along this road which had big cotton stuff cotton modules pressed and you think cotton you think oh that's nice fluffy nice and soft but you get 14 tons of it and push it into a block it's a solid block and so

I'm driving along and I argued with the guy beside me about something it was late the afternoon we're looking out there's this machine up in the distance driving and I said what machines were and I said no it's not and I drove along and I just sort of thought I'm going to win this argument and I'm staring at this stuff forgetting I'm driving and what you do when you're looking in a particular direction you subconsciously start doing that you subconsciously start driving in the direction you should try sometime and next thing you know I drove back straight into one of these 14 tons of cotton which is unforgiving totally smashed this truck up big time don't know how anyone was killed I mean listen if you got straight into the industry you would land in the cotton maybe that's Jesus pointing you can't plough in a straight line by looking back you can't follow Jesus you can't make Jesus look great if you're always second guessing is he worthy is he most important the disciple must not condition their commitment to Jesus even on the most highest of obligations in this world such as family and other relationships oh my family's requiring me to do more here

[34 : 21] Jesus so let me just lower the bar with you just for a little bit a bit of a season while I need to attend to this Jesus doesn't negotiate with the level of commitment the call that Jesus makes here is that he must come first and must remain the focus of one's life those who pine after what's been left behind who are always remembering that comforts at home who dream about how life might be if they had not stepped onto the road with Jesus who keep looking over their shoulder and the reason you should be up do not last long on the road allegiance to Jesus is supreme over everything what are you saying here as you look through he's saying Christ I know you idols I know what you hold deep in your heart that is competing for affection with me he knows we love our possessions he knows we love our cultures he knows we love our families he knows we love our careers he knows that we primarily love ourselves we don't surrender anyone and when

Jesus responds the way he does he with these three will be followers he's making a radical call on their life he calls them very simple two words follow me but just think about who's calling us we have been soaking for 12 weeks in Galatians in the gospel of grace of what God has done for us and before that we did another five weeks on the solace from the reformation again focusing on the gospel this is the creator of the universe this is the king of kings the lord of lords the one who holds all things by the power of his word the one who is from everlasting to everlasting never had a beginning will never have an end born of a virgin as the holy one of God his perfect in obedience he's triumphant over sin and death and hell and demons in him are hidden all the treasures all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge the one who calls this earth his footstool mine's this bit because his earth his footstool the one who commands the wind and the waves the one who raises the dead he's the one who says you follow me he's offering himself for our fellowship and friendship and partnership there should be no question as to that he is worthy but he is challenging us here he's ready to call our life he's testing testing is that enough is his call follow me is he enough for us to follow he's not holding anything else out except him is he enough is he our treasure our joy our security our hope our friend in times of loneliness our home our father our mother our power to get out of bed in the morning

Jesus looks every single one of us in the face tonight and he sees right near our hearts and he's poking around in there by I pray he's poking around in there by his spirit to see who or what it is that we are living for please let him do that in your heart there's not a single person sitting in this room tonight that doesn't need that work in their heart or standing in this room right now doesn't need that work in their heart please let him do it you don't lose with Jesus William W.

Gordon he was the heir of a wealthy Chicago family in 1904 and 1905 he was 16 years of age and he traveled the world in the chaperone I suppose you can do that we've got lots of money but unlike most of us who travel the world at times of self intelligence he he's God used it in his life to give him a vision for mission God's purposes in the world what followed from that came back from that trip Britain education at Yale and Princeton and then also on to Princeton Seminary and it was when he was at Princeton Seminary he committed his life to seek to win the Muslim communities in China to Christ so in 1913 at the age of 25 he left for Egypt and he never looked back he put his hand in the plow and he didn't look back before he left

Borden gave away his inheritance \$800,000 that's equivalent to \$20 million today what he didn't know was that was the final year of his life in Cairo which he went to to get more language studies before he went to China to reach the Muslims he contracted cerebral meningitis and he died his mother was on the way from Chicago to Cairo to have a short holiday with him before he went to China she arrived just in time to bury him and it is said that she found his Bible and other small possessions he had and in his Bible were written the words no reserve and the date that he wrote that suggested it had been written shortly after he renounced his fortune and he gave the money and when he did that no reserve he wrote in his

[41 : 10] Bible later his mother discovered he had written no retreat in his Bible and the date that he wrote no retreat corresponded to his father telling him that he would never hold a position in the family business done with his dad wasn't a Christian his mum was done finally shortly before he died in Egypt literally days before he died in Egypt he wrote in his Bible no regrets no reserve no retreat no regrets that's the kind of radical attitude Christ is calling for in Luke 9 tender mercy and stealing to the thing friends it's my call for us in the next six weeks is for us to take whatever steps we need to take we're not all going to be written borders but don't sit here and not do anything call for us as a church will be to take greater risk for the cause of

Christ I have been inspired encouraged deeply as much as it's an enormous grief for me personally as it is for some of you to lose Sam and Sally from us but their decision at great risk to themselves to go and plan a church in another state is a risky gutsy decision so that people might be one for Christ that's their call what's yours what's ours what's God calling us to the cost of picking up our cross and following Jesus is steep it costs us everything we have to gain something that we can never lose but reward is so sweet that's what makes the reward so sweet we gain more than we ever had in the words of

Jesus in Mark 10 no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in his present age and in the age to come eternal life Amen