

Discipleship on Christ's Terms

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[0 : 0 0] A very good morning to you all. It's a pleasure again to extend a warm welcome to you from Stornway Free Church to this brief live stream service.

We trust that wherever you are today, that God will bless you and bless our time of worship to us together in this way. We're going to begin by reading first of all from the Bible and our reading is from Luke's Gospel, the Gospel of Luke and chapter 14.

And it's from verse 12 down to verse 24. Luke chapter 14 verses 12 to 24.

Jesus said also to the man who had invited him, When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

[1 : 0 6] When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

And at the time for the banquet he sent his servants to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, I have bought a field and I must go and see it.

Please have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.

So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servants, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

And the servant said, So what you commanded has been done and still there is room. And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled.

[2 : 1 7] For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. We pray God will follow with his blessing, reading that portion of his word.

We're now going to pray. So let's join together, give our minds to prayer. Lord our God, we give thanks for your great invitation to the gospel feast today.

We thank you that you invite all of us, that your word compels us, that you reach out to us, Lord, through the message of the gospel, so that today we will come to your feet, to your footstool, to submit ourselves to you, to surrender our lives again into your hands.

We thank you today, O Lord, for the gospel, the gospel that joins so many people together today throughout the world. And we thank you especially for its message that brings to us that great hope and that good news that is in Christ Jesus.

And Lord, we pray that in times of much distress and darkness throughout the world, that we will today know the shining of this great light of the gospel into our lives, into our communities, into our homes, into our governments, into our society at large.

[3 : 39] Let your light, we pray, shine forth amongst us today. Lighten up our own dark hearts, we pray. Show to us the corners that we are so reluctant to have.

have exposed. And so that we may come and confess our sins to you, as you bring them to light. Lord, we thank you for your forgiveness, for the way that it is so available to us through Jesus Christ, and for the manner in which you extend it to us through the gospel.

For it is your promise that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is our unrighteousness, Lord, that you make us aware of.

When you come to convict us by your spirit of what we are like. we bless you that, as you find us in our unrighteousness, so, Lord, your own will is that we should come, and have that dealt with, and come to appear righteous in your presence, with the righteousness of the Saviour himself, who died to make us righteous.

We thank you today, O Lord, for all that you have done in that regard, for the perfection of your work, for the glories of that work, and for the way that it abides forever as foundational and secure to all who come to trust in you.

[5 : 02] Lord, we bring before you today our circumstances in life. We know that many of us, O Lord, are perplexed by all that has happened in the world from a few months back, with this virus.

O Lord, we know that it is frustrating for us to continue, and to be restricted so much as we are. Yet we pray that you would give us the wisdom, and we will all to think of others as well as ourselves.

We pray again for those who govern us, need to take decisions, for those who advise them. We commit that to you, Lord, and ask that you'd continue to give them the necessary mind, and by which they will know what the best way forward for us is.

We ask that you bless throughout the world all the communities that have lost many people. We know, Lord, in our own land that many families today mourn the passing of loved ones, not only through this virus, but through other ways as well that loved ones have come to leave this world.

Lord, we ask today that you bless all who mourn, and you would show us, O Lord, that you are the God who understands our mourning, who has entered into our weeping, who has come to take your place, not only at a graveside, but within the grave itself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

[6 : 28] We thank you today, O Lord, that you speak to us out of that, that you assure us that you understand us, that you are able to do for us what no one else can.

So we pray today for your comfort and your strength, for your blessing to all who are in need, especially those whose hearts are heavy over the death of loved ones gone.

We pray for those, again, who care for us at this time. Bless our doctors and nurses and surgeons, medical staff at large, those who are volunteering to help them.

Bless those who care for us in our communities, in our care homes. Lord, we commit them all to you, and all in the emergency services, and others who have vital roles at this time, in the well-being of the nation.

Lord, our God, we thank you for your goodness in providing such resources for us. Help us, we pray, to see that it is your goodness that has provided it for us, and not our own ingenuity.

[7 : 30] We thank you for the gifts that you have given to people, so that they may come through technology to make advancements, even in the treatment of illnesses. We pray that that will advance, O Lord, during this time as well.

We pray today that you would bless too those who are ill, at this time in hospital and hospices. We pray for those we know ourselves as a congregation, those families today who have loved ones ill.

We pray that you bless them, whether at home, or in hospital, or in hospice. Remember them, Lord, we pray. We ask that you would bless, especially those who are seriously ill, those who have been diagnosed as terminally ill.

Lord, bless them, we pray. Help them to prepare, as we all must, for that great step out of time into eternity. And Lord, we pray that you would bless too those who give counsel, advice, and pastoral care to them at this time.

We pray too that you would bless those recovering from illness, from whatever kind of illness has necessitated, they're being given treatment or laid aside for rest.

[8 : 45] Lord, bless them, we pray. And continue to bless us as a people. Bless our children. Be with them, Lord, today, whether they are watching or taking part in online services, or otherwise.

Bless our families. Bless us in our homes. Bless the young ones at this time, we pray. When they have many questions about what is happening, we pray that you would watch over them, that you would give them your loving care to draw them to yourself.

Enable them, Lord, to understand increasingly the things of the gospel, the things of eternal life, and help them, we pray, to walk in your ways, and not to be drawn aside to those evil ways that so often seek to draw us away from you, and from our safety in you.

Receive us, we pray now. Continue with us, and bless us freely. And we ask it with the pardon of all our sins. For Jesus' sake, Amen. Well, children, today we're coming again to think of one of the birds of the Bible, and today we're actually thinking of the dove.

The dove is mentioned quite frequently in the Bible. I'm just going to read some verses from Genesis chapter 8, where the dove is mentioned, in regard to Noah, when he was in the ark after the flood had come upon the earth.

[10 : 06] And in verse 6 of chapter 8 of Noah, of Genesis, we read about Noah, that he opened the window of the ark, and sent forth a raven, and then he sent forth a dove, and the dove found no place to rest her foot, so she returned to him.

So he put out his hand and took her in. Then he waited another seven days, and again he sent forth a dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf.

So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent forth a dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

So the dove there was the way by which Noah came to know that the waters had gone down, and the third time that they had actually gone down, sufficiently for the dove to find a place to rest, or even to nest, and she didn't come back.

So that was the way that God showed Noah that it was time now to leave the ark himself, and his family as well. So the dove there became to Noah, a sign of hope.

[11 : 16] The world had been flooded by God in his anger with the awful sin of the world, and as that flood represented the anger, the wrath of God, so this was God showing Noah.

He had been protected in the ark, but the dove now showed him that the waters had gone back, that he could leave, that there was a new beginning for the world. And so as we think of the dove, we think of that hope that the dove represents.

The dove represents the hope that God gives to us in Jesus to rescue us from the flood of his wrath, the flood of his anger, to rescue us from sin, from everything to do with our sin.

And the dove is such a beautiful bird to look at. It's a very gentle bird, and if you look at the eye of a dove, the eyes of a dove, all the different kinds of doves, of course, in the world, but if you look at their eyes, their eyes are very soft, and they look really very placid and calm.

And the calmness and the beauty, the soft beauty, if you like, of the dove really fits in with it being a symbol of hope, a symbol of how God has provided for us, in Jesus, this wonderful salvation.

[12 : 40] And as well as that, the dove, of course, came down upon Jesus at the time of his baptism. The Gospels tell us that when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.

And a voice came from heaven which said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. That was God the Father speaking. So the dove, there as the dove came down upon, or as the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus, it's really interesting that he came down in the form of a dove, in the shape of a dove, a form that could be seen, although the Holy Spirit can't be seen, but it was really to show that the dove, as the symbol of hope, and of gentleness, and of peace, was coming to rest upon Jesus in the way that the Holy Spirit came to rest upon him and give him all that was needed for him to be our saviour in the world, to face death on the cross at last.

And so the dove, again, is important in that regard. And when we think about the gifts that Jesus gives to us when we come to trust in him, one of the gifts, the great gift that he gives us is the Holy Spirit.

He gives us the Holy Spirit to live within us, and that's how we actually have the strength in the Christian life to face the things that we must face in the world and to prepare for heaven.

It's the Holy Spirit that does that. And when you think of the gentleness of the dove and the beauty of the dove, and you think that's representing the Holy Spirit, you can see how wonderfully gentle the Holy Spirit is in our lives to carry us, to comfort us.

[14 : 25] He's known as the comforter, the counselor, in John's Gospel. And when you think of the dove, think of the Holy Spirit. Think of the gift that God has given to his people.

Think of the power that he places in our hearts. Think of this symbol of hope. Think of the way in which the dove represents. The wonderful hope of salvation, which you have when you have Jesus himself.

He gives you the Holy Spirit. And I hope today that all of you children will come yourselves today to ask Jesus to send the Holy Spirit into your life, to keep you under the control and the care of the Holy Spirit so that he will teach you and guide you and comfort you and strengthen you and prepare you every single day of life until you're ready to go to be with Jesus himself.

Let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[15 : 51] For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Let's continue to read in Luke chapter 14.

We're reading from verse 25 through to the end of the chapter. Luke 14 at verse 25. Now great crowds accompanied him and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.

Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

[17 : 05] And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile.

It is thrown away. He who has ear to hear, let him hear. And I would like now, seeking God's help, to look together at verses 25 to 35, the passage that we've just read.

It's safe to say that nobody ever saw or listened or observed the way Jesus did.

He looked around him in the natural world and took many of what he saw in the natural world, many of the things he saw as illustrations either of his own ministry or God's work or other ways that he applied it.

[18 : 12] You'll see it in many of his parables. But he was also very much one who observed and listened to and saw people because ultimately it was people that Jesus was interested in.

And you can just imagine him from this passage itself. You can imagine him one of those days on his walks with the disciples passing a building that was partially finished, that had been left unfinished.

As he walked past, you can just imagine Jesus' mind looking at that and actually analysing it and observing it and now using it in this passage to illustrate what discipleship entailed.

That's what he's actually doing here as he took what he saw with an unfinished building sometimes and those days as today people would try and actually build in a way that matched the bigger buildings that other people were able to afford and then ran out of money and they just couldn't finish it.

It must be something like that that Jesus saw and is now using in the passage here to illustrate what discipleship is about. Notice it says here in verse 25 great crowds accompanied him.

[19 : 25] There were lots and lots of people accompanying him walking with him with the disciples on his journey and he turned aside and said to them to the crowd. In other words Jesus as he often did wanted people to think about what following him meant and what he's really doing in this instance in this event is just turning to this great crowd and saying why are you following me?

He didn't say that in as many words but that's what the passage really means. That's why he actually said this to them. If anyone comes after me then this is what it's about.

That's what he said. So it's really discipleship on his terms. He's making sure that those people who are following him you might be saying that outwardly disciples many of them they're following they're listening to him teaching they're actually saying this is a great teacher we need to keep following him but he's asking well what's that about?

What is following me? What is discipleship? Why are you following me? What's your motive? What are you looking for? What are you getting out of this? What's your rationale for doing this? And when you look through what he's saying here as we'll see the terms that he places before us are really very challenging and it might seem at first sight that what that is going to do is really put people off from following him but of course that was never Jesus' intention he's not saying this so as to put us off from being truly his disciples in fact it's the very opposite what Jesus is concerned for is that following him being his disciples will be something that is secured for us that we will have a secure position in following him as his disciples that our discipleship will be well grounded that it will be founded in the right way upon himself so that it will be something that continues something that comes to completion and how do you do that?

Well he's saying here you don't do that by an unthinking following by just deciding well I think it would be a good idea to be a disciple of Jesus so I'll just join those who are following him no he's saying you have to think this you have to think through this not so that you don't begin to do it or don't continue to do it but so that you'll understand the reality of it what he's saying is you have to count the cost of discipleship what does it take?

[21 : 53] What does it mean to be his disciple? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus in the way that he would have you to be his followers today? Let's look at that then what does it take?

What does Jesus say discipleship is about? What are the terms of it that he himself lays down? How do we understand it from this passage?

Two things First of all we must give Jesus first place discipleship is giving Jesus first place hugely challenging but these are Christ's own terms remember and in verse 26 notice what he's saying if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers yes and his own life he cannot be my disciple now that looks just at first sight that looks just simply unacceptable how can Jesus be saying to be his disciple involves hating your father your mother your wife your children your brothers and sisters well obviously the word hate there does not mean hate literally or hate absolutely Jesus would never demand such a thing that you would literally hate your father your mother your sister your relatives or yourself in order to be his disciple because Jesus himself is the supreme example of fulfilling the fifth commandment honour your father and your mother and we think of himself in chapter 2 and at verse 51 there having been found in the temple teaching the experts in the law and having a greater knowledge than they themselves had his mother

Mary and Joseph were annoyed that he was there he began to question what he was doing there and after saying that he had to be about his father's business the next verse says that he went home with him and was subject to them you see there is the supreme example of what it means to be a child to be a son to be under parentage to fulfil the fifth commandment and as well if you go to chapter 6 you can see there Jesus twice saying there that you must love your enemies that is not enough just to love your friends I tell you he says love your enemies do good to those who despise you Jesus is saying to us love your enemies he cannot possibly mean hate your father and mother literally no what this actually is is Jesus way in a very challenging way in a way that really groups your mind so that you have to ask the question what is this about he is saying this is actually a question of loyalty it's a question of priority it's a question really of who's number one who's number one in your life because number one in the life of a disciple must be

Jesus himself that's what he means when he says if anyone comes to me if anyone comes to be my follower I must be number one in that person's life if he's going to be my disciple then I must be his master I must be in that primary place in his life in his experience in his daily life in his walk now Jesus knew of course that conversion that coming to commit one's life to him would bring tension sometimes into homes in his own lifetime on earth and it's still the case isn't it that coming to be converted coming to know the Lord coming to have a changed life coming to have different priorities coming to have Jesus to have God especially as the priority of course that introduces tension in relationships in homes and families and Jesus knew that very well when he said this but he still meant even then even though you know that's the case

[26 : 04] I must have the first place I must have the primary place I must be the one that you love above everybody else we must give Jesus the first place over everyone else but we must give him the first place over self as well what he's saying here is whoever comes after me and follows me does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers yes and even his own life he didn't just mean his life in the sense of maybe perhaps having to lay down his life at some points though some have had to do that what he means by his life is really our own personal self our own selfdom if you like when you go to chapter nine and you see how he speaks there in terms of discipleship similarly to here you can see that in chapter nine and at verses 23 to 25

Jesus is actually speaking there of the conditions or the way of discipleship as well verse 23 he said to them 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 loses or forfeits himself you notice the connections that he makes there he first of all says if anyone would come after me let him deny himself what is this self what is this thing called self that we have to deny what is this thing called self in us that Jesus is dealing with here and says that's something that you must put beneath me you must put it under my authority well our self ultimately is really our sinful urge to manage our own life that thing which lies at the root of our being as sinners where we want to have control where we always think we know what's best where we have the drive to manage our own life and try and fit all the parts of it together as we would like it to be where we manage our present and our future where we think we have the wherewithal to do this so to deny yourself is to give that to

Jesus it's a total surrender in other words to Jesus you're taking this this self this sinful self this sinful heart this thing that is true of all of us and you're saying to be a disciple of Jesus Jesus is saying to be my disciple you must bring all of your life to me and surrender it to me and that's hugely challenging because you see he's saying there in chapter nine it isn't just something you do when you come to Jesus first for the first time when you come for the first time to surrender your life to him when you come to actually begin your discipleship no he's saying he must deny himself daily and take up his cross daily and follow me that's for me today hugely challenging and it's something I need to think about each and every day because that's what Jesus is saying you see he's saying here as we'll see in a minute that the person who is going to build he has to first sit down and count the cost the person who goes out this king who goes out against another king must sit down first and deliberate you see he's saying you have to think it through you have to calculate what discipleship is about you have to daily give your mind to this self is it surrender to Jesus is it something that he has himself control of willingly on our part that's why he adds there in chapter 9 bearing our cross he didn't just say we have to deny our self he's saying also take up his cross daily and follow me the two things of course are closely tied together to deny yourself he's describing in the terms there of taking up your cross now in those days to see somebody carrying a cross as indeed ultimately eventually they saw

Jesus himself carrying his cross to see somebody carrying their cross meant that person's going to die that person is going to a place of crucifixion sometimes very often the Romans made those that were going to be crucified to carry their own cross as happened with Jesus and when you saw somebody carrying a cross what you could say for sure about that person is that person is going to be crucified that person is going to die it's a symbol of death and when he's relating that to denying our self when he's using this imagery of bearing our cross what Jesus means is this self has to die this self has to be put to death this self has to be crucified this self has to be dealt with in a way that brings it completely under submission to Christ the surrender to Jesus that discipleship is about of course you remember that Jesus himself again in chapter 9 and verse 58 you find a reference to the way that Jesus himself paid the price required to be our saviour and it's interesting that it's very much in similar terms

Jesus there was going along the road and verse 57 of chapter 9 somebody said to him I will follow you wherever you go Jesus said foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head in other words Jesus is saying you're going to be a follower of me well that's easy to say and you might just have it in mind that that's a good idea that that is something which would be a good thing to do well Jesus is saying if you're going to be my follower think of what it means because this is to say what it means for me I have to deny myself my will so that my people will be saved and when he came to Gethsemane that's precisely what you see father if it be possible let this cup pass from me yet not my will but thine be done and in that sense though not a sinner though not having self the way we have self the sinful part of us the sinful aspect of our being

[33 : 10] Jesus didn't have that yet he still put others ahead of himself and especially those for whom he went to die we must give Jesus first place and I have to say to myself today in your life as a Christian as a Christian minister as a husband as a father as a grandfather are you putting Jesus first and you're surrendering to Jesus all aspects of that and I would have to say very frequently when I'm pulled up short by Jesus himself to realize well I'm sorry Lord I haven't denied myself forgive me for not denying myself help me to surrender more fully to you is your life today surrendered to Jesus is it your concern as a disciple to keep surrendering your life to him to keep him in control of your heart to deny yourself to take up your cross today and say this is another day when I must put self to death for Jesus sake that's the first thing we must give

Jesus first place but second thing we must give discipleship careful thought and we've alluded to this already but if we look at it in more detail from verse 27 through to the end of the chapter we must give discipleship careful thought and I want to just focus on three things that Jesus emphasised in these verses first of all Christ's emphasis on finishing you might say Christ's emphasis on persevering to a finish as he's saying here this first illustration he uses of somebody desiring to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost otherwise if he hasn't done that he'll find he's not able to finish it and people then begin to mock him and say look this man he didn't enter into this project thinking about it calculating the cost of it so he's now not able to finish it there's an embarrassment and a sense of truly feeling sorry for himself in all of that and notice he's saying here he doesn't first sit down and count the cost that's again an emphasis on the careful thought the analysis that must go into discipleship and must keep being applied to discipleship remember this is not just about starting the

Christian life starting the life of a disciple this is something that Jesus wants us to do every single day so that we are looking at his emphasis on persevering on actually seeing it through to the end the importance of finishing this because that's what being saved is about whoever is saved he said elsewhere whoever is persevered to the end the same shall be saved so what he's really saying to you and to me today is I have to look at my discipleship if I become his disciples if not then there's no reason why you can't begin that now why you can't begin it today why you cannot surrender your life to Jesus and then go on surrendering your life to him every day but if you've already done that you have to think through the importance of perseverance and of finishing what do I need for that think of what it is you require in order to push on with your Christian life with your disciples what resources do I need what challenges will I meet how am I going to overcome the challenges the difficulties of the way what he really saying like I said to the children what it really entails is he's bringing us to see the need of greater resources than we have ourselves because discipleship basically isn't just surrendering your life to

Jesus you have to say well what is that about it's actually then bringing the power of Jesus through the Holy Spirit into your life that's essentially what conversion is where God comes into our lives where the Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts and so when you come under the direction of the Holy Spirit you're guaranteed that that Holy Spirit will keep filling your life with the energy you need but you need to think about this every day so do I don't think about discipleship as what your ability can bring about your will is involved in it your commitment is involved in it but underneath it all you must have that energy that Holy Spirit to keep feeding your soul with the strength with the energy the spiritual vitality you need to see this through to the end to meet the challenges to overcome them to be the kind of person that disciples should be in the world you remember that great illustration in John

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and where on his journey Christian came to a place where he saw a fire against a wall and there was somebody that was pouring water onto it all the time that's the imagery of an image of the devil who was trying to put out this fire that God had begun illustrating the fire the life that goes on in the life of a Christian well here's the devil he's pouring all his water onto this fire trying to extinguish this fire and yet the fire actually didn't just keep burning it seemed to be burning even more the water went on it the more it burned he was taking Christian was taking around the other side what did he see there he saw a man there he was pouring oil into the fire he was bringing oil to channeling oil onto the fire at the same time as the other person was trying to extinguish it that's Bunyan's way of illustrating how the Holy Spirit the oil of the Holy Spirit the energy of the

[39 : 11] Holy Spirit God working in our lives outdoes the attempts of the devil and we have to think through this every day that that's what we need to depend upon that that is what is available to us that that's really what a disciple is somebody who in reliance on the Holy Spirit perseveres in the Christian life difficulties challenges lapses failures all of that is the experience of discipleship but to go on persevering is to depend upon the Holy Spirit and to keep surrendering to Christ daily so there's Christ's emphasis on finishing that we need to give careful thought to in discipleship the second thing is Christ's emphasis on surrender now we mentioned this already and I don't want to repeat it too much but it's important because the second illustration there really brilliantly brings it out there's somebody a king who is going to encounter another king in a time of war will he not he first of all says sit down you see the same emphasis again calculation consideration will he not do this deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000 and if not while the other is yet a great way off he sends a delegation and asks them for terms of peace that's really the calculation that's sensible isn't it here's the king who's got the smaller army the other larger army is fast approaching he has to sit down and calculate what am I going to do am I going to chance it am I going to try and bring the resources

I have much smaller than the person who's coming to me am I going to try and defeat him with what's likely to be insufficient no he says I'll just send the message to him I'll send the delegation I'll sue for terms of peace and that'll be it we'll finish it at that that'll be an end of it well discipleship is precisely that it is accepting Christ's terms of peace it's accepting Christ's terms of discipleship on surrendering to him and giving our will to him and daily surrendering to him accepting his will is greater than ours you see when you come to be confronted as many of you know with God and his terms when you realise the Bible is true when it says that the fleshly heart the heart of flesh the heart which self rules is enmity against God and when you come to face God and meet with God and realise through the gospel that God is confronting you with his terms and that God wants to take over your life and you're resisting that and you know the enmity in your heart against that what do you do well self will say hold out hold out just don't give in yet just keep on resisting just keep on doing your own thing live by your own terms whereas the renewed soul surrenders to Jesus and says to God

I've laid down my arms of rebellion all my resources in resisting you I give them over to you Lord take control of my life because I know your will is best your terms are best and so that's what we do but you see that's challenged every day by the circumstances we're in because as we said earlier surrendering to Jesus is not just about doing it once and for all we do that when we begin the life of discipleship discipleship is an ongoing set ending to so when you're challenged as you will be and as I am with instances where for example just to take one example you have something to forgive or you have to go and ask someone for forgiveness whichever way it is whether it's somebody that needs to be forgiven or you need to ask forgiveness of someone self will say well hold on hold out you can't just go to him or to her just now they don't deserve that and you're in the right so just leave it at that mind the person just leave things but surrender to Jesus means you have to forgive when forgiveness is required and you have to receive forgiveness when forgiveness is offered and that's just one example of how surrendering self or surrendering out will to Jesus is something that's constantly required of us as his disciples there's his emphasis on persevering and finishing there's Christ's emphasis on surrender that we have to give careful thought to every day and thirdly and finally there's Christ's emphasis on protecting our usefulness now verses 34 to 35 somewhat unfortunately in the translation we have here it's not the translation as such it's the division there of paragraphs the headings that you find in the ESV and other modern translations are very very useful because they very often give a summary of what the verses under these headings actually contain but unfortunately sometimes the heading tends to actually make an unnecessary break with what goes before and when you find here salt without taste is worthless gives you the impression doesn't it just looking at that as if that's just tacked on or doesn't really have a very close relationship with the previous verses but it very much does it's still part of what

Jesus is saying in terms of defining discipleship on his terms so he's talking here about an emphasis on protecting our usefulness you see in those days salt rock salt especially that would be used mostly but it wasn't 100% pure salt it had other elements in it and quite often you'd find as it was stored somewhere that the sodium chloride would leach out of it and you were left with something that was totally useless I mean you couldn't use it for preserving you couldn't use it for flavouring you couldn't use it on the land as he says here it's just thrown away it's no use for anything and this is really Jesus emphasis on saying you need to actually daily give careful thought to protecting your usefulness don't let the vital spiritual elements of your life leach out under the influence of worldliness or of worldly considerations don't lose your usefulness you might be saying today

I'm not very useful I'm not very useful in the service of God I'm just a very tiny little cog in the horn machine well the cog doesn't really the size of the cog is not really what matters you don't have to be at the forefront of the gospel service or gospel ministry in order to be useful many of the most useful people in the world down through the history of Christianity of people nobody ever knew about whatever your role is in your home in your workplace in society at large in the church doesn't have to be a very big one to be an important one but what Jesus is saying is whatever it is protect your usefulness and how do you protect your usefulness well again quite simple to say and it's the same profound thing you keep surrendering your life every day to Jesus that's how you keep your usefulness that's how you keep your effectiveness whoever would be my disciple he's saying must first of all give me first place

[47 : 42] I must have number one place over everybody else I must have number one place over self whoever will be my disciple must think through the implications of being a disciple must daily attend to perseverance to surrendering to Jesus to protecting your usefulness remember what I said at the beginning none of this is designed to put you off designed to discourage you that's not what Jesus was about all of this is designed to tell us the reality of what discipleship means and there are few more important things than to know what discipleship really entails what it's about what does it take it takes Jesus himself to be put first it takes careful thought about continuing to surrender to him to persevere to protect your usefulness and as

Jesus said on another occasion if you do these things you shall be my disciples indeed and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free God bless these thoughts on his word to us let's finish with prayer Lord we pray that you bless to us your word today towards making our discipleship effective and more effective day by day forgive us Lord for all our failures in regard to surrendering our life to you forgive us for the way that we so often give place to self rather than to you for the ways that we so often lose sight of the need to think through what it is to be your disciple we ask your blessing Lord today to follow your word not only here with ourselves but whatever else throughout the word your word today is proclaimed and heard and used

Lord we pray that this will be a day when many people will come to be your disciples and a day when your disciples will be themselves encouraged and enriched and strengthened for a life of usefulness to you receive us we pray for giving your sin in Jesus name amen we're going to conclude now by singing some verses from psalm 63 in the sing psalms version of psalm 63 you'll find it on page number 80 if you're using the usual blue psalm books and we'll sing verses 1 to 8 to the tune wear him oh god you are my god alone i seek your face with eagerness my soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness and so on down to verse 8 in psalm 63 oh god you are my god alone i seek your face with eagerness my soul and body thirst for you in this dry weary wilderness i sing your way your holy place your power and glory held my gaze are better is your love and life and so my lips will sing your praise i'll bless you lord throughout my life and raise my hands to you in prayer my joyful lips will sing your praise my soul my soul is fed with richest fears upon my bed i lie awake and in my thoughts remember you i meditate i meditate throughout the night and keep your constant love in view because you are my help alone in shadow in shadow of your wings i'll sing you hold me up with your right hand to you oh lord my soul will cling now may the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and always amen thank you once again

for taking part in a short service i pray that god will bless you throughout the day please join us this evening as well at 6 30 when ben kenny i mcleod will be in charge of the service thanks thank you films models Thank you.