

Hello again listeners. Last week we learned from Luke 9:51 that Jesus is a Saviour who was determined to suffer! He was intent on going to Jerusalem where he would suffer and die for the sins of his people. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, displayed his extraordinary love for sinners by his death on the cross. He willingly suffered this agonizing death because of his love for sinners like you and I.

Last week we ended by asking the question: “how will you respond to this message? How will you respond to Jesus?” In order to receive the forgiveness of your sins, and in order to receive peace with God you must believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you believe in him your sins **will** be forgiven and you **will** have peace with God. That is the good news of the gospel.

But there is more to believing in Jesus than simply accepting the forgiveness of your sins. To believe in Jesus also means that you must follow him. The question is of course: what does it mean to follow Jesus? And what do you expect from following Jesus? Do you expect a life free from suffering? Do you expect Jesus to give you perfect health and wealth and happiness? What are your expectations?

In Luke 9:23 Jesus tells us what it means to follow him when he says, “*if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*” This is not an easy thing to understand or accept. Jesus says that if we want to follow him we have to deny ourselves, and we have to take up our cross. That sounds like it could be very difficult.

Today I would like to briefly examine with you what Jesus meant by these words. We will do that by listening to what Jesus has to say to a man who wanted to follow him.

Towards the end of Luke 9 we read that while Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem someone said to him, “*I will follow you wherever you go.*” And Jesus said to him, “*foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head*” (9:57, 58).

It seems that this man was particularly eager to follow Jesus: “*I will follow you wherever you go,*” he said. It seems that he knew something of the cost of following Jesus. But it's clear from Jesus' reply that this man had not really counted the cost of discipleship. It seemed he was not completely aware of what following Jesus would involve, otherwise why would Jesus give him such an answer: “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay his head.*”

It's as if the Jesus says, “Do you know what you are in for? Do you really know what is expected of you?” It really sounds as if Jesus is giving this man a reality check and even a warning: foxes and birds have a more permanent home on this earth than Jesus does.

The point is that Jesus has no permanent place on this earth, and neither do any of his followers! Jesus was a temporary resident in this world. He was only here for a short time. And it's not just that he did not own a home, but that he did not belong. He did not belong to this world (see John 8:23 & 17:16). Jesus told the Jews, “*You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*”

What Jesus meant, is that he did not come to set up an earthly kingdom. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. So when we follow Jesus we must keep in mind that this world, as we know it, is a temporary world. Life on this earth is temporary. And one day when Jesus comes back on the clouds of heaven this world will be purified with fire (II Peter

3:10). That's why it was not possible for the Son of God to have permanent home in this world.

Now the point Jesus wants us to understand is that if you are a follower of Jesus you do not have a permanent home in this world either. Followers of Jesus are temporary residents on planet earth in its present condition.

That doesn't mean we cannot or should not own property or have jobs and create employment, but there will come a time when we have to let go of this life and the things of this life when we go to our real home. Therefore we must never get too attached to our homes, and to the things of this life.

We are here for a limited time. That is how Christ looked at his life. He knew his time was short. He had set his face to go to Jerusalem because he knew he was bound for heaven.

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As a follower of Jesus, is that how you look at life too? When you sign a mortgage, or when you plan a career, or plan for retirement, do you regard these things as temporary? Do you regard these things as of secondary importance?

Of course Jesus is not saying that we may not do any of these things. Neither is he saying that we should all take a vow of poverty and give every last dime we have to the poor. Jesus does not tell us that his followers cannot have money or possessions. But the important question for us is: how much value do you attach to these earthly things? Do you love Jesus more than you love your possessions? Do you love Jesus more than your retirement fund? Do you love Jesus more than your yearly vacation?

You see, dear listeners, you and I are only passing through. Everything that we have today will be left behind when we die. You can't take it with you! And that knowledge should affect how you live this life as a follower of Christ.

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Being followers of Jesus means that we have to live without being permanently attached to anything in this life. It means that our focus is not on the things of this earth but on the things of the kingdom of God.

That's how the Old Testament patriarch Abraham lived as well. He was a sojourner in the land of Canaan, a land that God promised to him. He lived in a tent. He had no permanent home. Even though he was very wealthy, he lived like a pilgrim and a stranger in the land that was promised to him and his descendants. But he did so in faith, knowing that his true home was with God (See Hebrews 11:9ff).

And like Abraham we know that this present earth is not our permanent home. ***Our permanent home is coming***, on the next earth, when the followers of Jesus Christ will dwell with God forever. And the bible makes clear that the sacrifices we make today will one day be paid in full, when this earthly journey is over. Nothing can compare with the glories and the wonders and the beauty of the life to come, which we will experience on the new earth – **AND** we will get to enjoy the new earth forever!

Then we will know God like we cannot know him know, and we will know Christ like we have never known him before. We will see him, we will be near him, and he will be near to us, and God will dwell with us.

Listen to what Jesus told his disciples who **DID give up everything** to follow him: *everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life* (Mt. 19:29).

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There are so many people today who seem to think that the message of the gospel is that Jesus loves you and has wonderful plan for your life. The truth is, however, that Jesus never presents the Christian life as a life of ease, but always as a life of sacrifice. His message always is, "I love you and I have a plan for your life that **includes** difficulty on this side of eternity, so that you can enjoy a wonderful life on the other side of eternity."

And we all go through difficult times in this life. Many times we must do without good things – without good health, without financial security, without children, or without a spouse. And "*doing without*" is difficult. It can be discouraging.

But then let's remember that the Son of God himself was willing to give up many things to become a man and becoming our Saviour! Let's remember that Jesus knows what it means to **do without**: without home, without acceptance, without the understanding of his own family and people. And at the end of his life he did without friends and companionship. He even did without the care of his heavenly Father. He gave up all earthly pleasure because he was pleased to suffer for the sins of his people.

He knows what it feels like to "*do without!*" And while he does not promise his followers a life of ease, he does promise to be with us and help us in our struggles. Yes it is costly to follow Jesus, but the cost is temporary while the reward is eternal. And Jesus promises to help us obtain that reward. He has given his Holy Spirit to encourage us and strengthen us for the journey of this life. He promises to help anyone who asks. That's the kind of Saviour he is. I hope and pray this message encourages you to follow him.