



“Discipleship”  
 Luke 9:21-26

**Idea:** The call to follow Jesus is a call to lay one’s life down for His glory.

**Intro:** Who is Jesus? We keep hearing in church about how He can and wants to transform lives. We have been reading through and studying different passages in Luke that show how He healed the sick, raised the dead, and stepped into the hard spaces of people’s lives. Who really is this guy that we are constantly being called to embrace as Lord and Savior? Have these been the kind of questions that some of you have wrestled with over the last week?

I hope you have been asking questions like these. Whether you are a seasoned follower of Jesus Christ or someone who has yet to surrender but is open and seeking, the Gospel of Luke has been leading us to consider and answer the ultimate question, “Who is Jesus?”. When Jesus presented the question to His disciples, Peter answered emphatically, “*The Christ of God*” (9:20). Matthew’s Gospel tells us that in response to Peter’s statement of faith Jesus said, “*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah!...And I tell you, you are Peter (Πέτρος), and on this rock (πέτρα) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matt 16:17-18). In this response, Jesus gives Simon Bar-Jonah a new name. He is now known as Πέτρος (Peter), which means rock or stone. Jesus names him after his rock-solid statement of faith. Today, most of us sitting in this room without hesitation would gladly affirm Peter’s statement, and we would be right for doing so. Jesus made it clear that upon this doctrinal conviction He would build His church.

Is it, however, enough to simply believe the right doctrine? Last Sunday, as we examined Luke 9:7-9, 18-20, we saw how important what we believe about Jesus is. The difference is between eternal life and eternal death. Therefore, what we believe about Jesus really is everything. Yet, in the next pericope, we discover that the gospel is not calling us to some sort of mental assent. It is not enough to simply verbalize that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God, as if salvation were obtained through some sort of incantation. Jesus’ words to His disciples who had just professed faith in Him as Christ and God called them to put their faith into action by following Him. They were not to simply make a theological statement about the deity of Christ. The demons of hell do that (James 2:19), and they are not following Him. Instead, the disciples were to put their faith into action by following Jesus. He makes a distinction here for both His disciples and the would-be disciples who were part of the crowd gathered around Him (Mark 8:34).

As we explore the next few verses in Luke 9, I want us to consider what discipleship involves. In doing so, I want you to see that the call to follow Jesus is a call to lay one’s life down for His glory. It is not a call to take a class or join a D-group. Those are good, helpful, and part of the process, but discipleship is a lifelong journey with Jesus.

Read Luke 9:21-26.

**Inquiry:** Following Peter's great statement of faith, we read that Jesus commanded the disciples to make sure they kept His true identity to themselves (9:21). Surely, this order seems strange to us. As we read this verse, more than likely our minds compare it to the Great Commission passages like Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8. Those two sets of verses command believers to go to all nations and bear witness to who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. It is important to keep in mind that at this point in the life and ministry of Jesus, the cross is still in the future. Jesus was moving toward Jerusalem and what awaited Him there, but the time had not yet come for it. If the disciples began to proclaim their great statement of faith throughout Palestine, it could have easily incited a political movement staffed with loyal but unregenerate people. It could also have sped up the resistance that was building against Him by the religious elite.

The disciples, and especially Peter, no doubt felt disappointed by the prohibition. If that were not enough, they were even more upset when they heard Jesus' shocking statement that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be resurrected (9:22). Again, today we look back with 20/20 historical vision, but for the twelve disciples this was a dark and unfathomable message. This prophecy was so completely foreign to their concept of the Messiah that when Jesus died, they were disoriented and devastated. They heard Jesus predict His death and resurrection, but they never accepted it as a fact. We know they did not accept it because both Matthew and Mark record Peter pulling Jesus aside to rebuke Him saying, "*This shall never happen to you*" (Matt 16:22). In response, Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "*Get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man*" (Mark 8:33).

The next set of Jesus' words that Luke records help us see the fuller picture of what our Lord wanted Peter and the others to understand. They make the connection between one's statement of faith and living a life of faith. You see, when we confess Christ as Lord and Savior, we embrace His death on the cross for us. We also are accepting the reality of a cross for ourselves. We are to put our faith into action by following Him. Following Jesus...walking in His footsteps is what it means to be a disciple. I want us to see three things in this call to discipleship.

## 1. A Requirement

There is always some sort of requirement when we join a new club, team, or group. You may have to dress a certain way. Some organizations require you to carry and show a particular badge. Usually, participation involves some sort of monetary investment. When I go fishing on the lake in my neighborhood, I am required to have a license plate visible on my little boat. For a long time after joining, I did not have the plate because it was never issued to me. I was asked a few times if I had authority to be on the lake. I had the authority and permission because I had paid my dues. However, I did not have the required plate that showed my membership.

Without any transition, Jesus quickly moved to explaining what the requirement was as members of His kingdom. The requirement was a cross. It was important for them to understand this, and it is equally important for us today.

Read Luke 9:23.

Discipleship requires a cross. It first requires the cross of Christ. Through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection we are made right with God by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). It also requires our own cross. Following Jesus is not easy. It was never meant to be. Jesus said, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master*" (Matt 10:24). In this passage, Jesus was sending out the twelve to preach and to heal. As He sent them out, He warned them about the persecution they would face simply because they were His disciples. He was calling them to bear their own cross.

We love the cross! We celebrate the cross! We rejoice in the cross! Many of you are probably wearing a cross on a necklace or bracelet. Maybe you have a picture of the cross tattooed on your body. It is good that we adore the cross, but let's not forget what the cross symbolizes. It is vastly different than the cross hanging around your neck. A. W. Tozer said, "The man in Roman times who took up his cross was not going out to have his life redirected; he was going out to have it ended." The cross was a bloody and putrid sight to behold.

This gruesome scene is where Jesus calls us to focus our attention. Why? Was Jesus' death on the cross not sufficient to pay the sin debt for everyone? Yes, it was. But the cross is necessary for believers' discipleship. It is not a call to physically offer our own atoning sacrifice. Instead, it is a call to die with Him as we die to ourselves. It is a call to humility as we put Jesus first in our lives, acknowledging Him as the One true King and we His redeemed slaves. It is also a call to daily put Him first as we die to ourselves. There are no holidays or summer breaks from carrying our cross. No, every morning we ought to awake with the understanding that today we get to take up our cross and walk with Jesus.

Discipleship requires a cross. Are you dying to self and the world daily? I love how Paul articulated his understanding of bearing his cross.

*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. – Gal 2:20*

*And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. – Gal 5:24*

*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. – Gal 6:14*

Discipleship requires a cross. It requires the humble, dying to oneself and the world. If you do not yet understand why this is necessary, Jesus clarifies it further in the next two verses.

## **2. A Reason**

Verse 24 reveals that life lies on the other side of the cross. We are tempted to believe that the things of this world and the things that we accomplish are what bring richness to our lives. Many things in this world are good and right. They are an enjoyable blessing. We are not saying that everything in this world is bad, but we are saying that nothing in this world can satisfy or give lasting life. As verse 25 points out, you can possess all the wealth the world has to offer and end up empty and lost.

The reason Jesus calls His followers to a cross is so that they learn to not live for lesser things. Nothing in the world – not even the entire world itself – is worth our souls. The love of the things destroys the soul. As we are called to life, we are called to abandon the things of the world.

Thankfully, the call to die comes with a promise.

## **3. A Reward**

As the writer of Hebrews explains, Jesus experienced the cross, and then He was given the crown.

*<sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

– Heb 1:3-4

In the Christian life, first comes the cross, then comes the crown. The reward for faithfully following Jesus is a crown, a kingdom. This Kingdom is a share in God's glory (vs. 26). Matthew tells us that as Jesus ushers in this kingdom, everyone will be repaid according to what he has done (Matt 16:27). In that moment, we will see His glory and also be transformed into His glory (2 Cor 3:18). All the self-denials and suffering endured during this life will be replaced with the reward of glorious joy and blessings of the life to come in the Kingdom.

For this reason, let's never be ashamed to lay aside our desires and the good and bad things of this world to follow Jesus. Instead, may we daily fix our eyes on He who is the "*founder and perfecter of our faith*" (Heb 12:2). You see, discipleship is a lifelong journey with Jesus. It is a call to follow Him by dying to self so that His life might come alive in you. Those who would experience His redemption and who desire to follow Him are not ashamed to do so. They have tasted His goodness, and they have determined it to be better than anything this world has to offer. Their reward is Jesus and the eternal transformation He works in their lives as His Kingdom becomes a reality in their lives.

Those, however, who are ashamed of Jesus and His gospel, He will deny. The people who might affirm Jesus doctrinally but deny Him by the way they live, He will be ashamed of them when He returns. There will be no reward for them because they are not His disciples. They were never on His team, so there will be no victory for them to enjoy. Oh, but those who have called on the name of Jesus, trusted in His cross, and followed Him faithfully will experience the great joy of His presence in the Kingdom for all eternity.

**Conclusion:** Who is this Jesus? Have you settled this ultimate question in your heart and mind? Peter did. He knew Jesus to be the Christ and the Son of the living God. Doctrinally he settled the question for himself, but he did not stop there. He put feet to his faith. His orthodoxy became orthopraxy. Now, we know that Peter was far from perfect. He was clumsy and rough around the edges. At times he was clueless, militant, and even fearful. Peter, however, despite his mess-ups loved Jesus (John 21:15). With all his heart and soul, he deeply desired to follow the Lord. He wanted to take up his cross and lay his life down for His glory.

Can you say that this is where you are today? Do you want to follow Jesus and lay your life down daily for His glory? Like Paul, is your deep desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10)?

For those of you who are in relationship with Jesus, how is your discipleship? Are you resembling more and more the life of Jesus or the things of the world?

For those who are not in relationship with Jesus, can you see your great need of Him in your life?

What would keep any of us from following after Jesus?