

Discipleship and Non-discipleship

Luke 9:23-27

Over the course of this morning thirteen people will be baptized. Four/Six/Three of those will be baptized in this service. In a few minutes we will watch a video in which each person being baptized expresses their faith in Jesus and their desire to walk with him throughout this life. In other words, they will express their desire to be disciples of Jesus himself. After watching the video we will have the actual baptisms.

In preparation for these baptisms, I want us to consider briefly a passage of Scripture in which Jesus talks explicitly about discipleship. He talks about ***the cost of discipleship*** (following him) and ***the cost of non-discipleship*** (not following him). The passage is Luke 9:23-27.

In the previous verses the disciples confess that Jesus was the Christ. Afterwards Jesus told them that he would be crucified in Jerusalem as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin. In that context, Luke records Jesus' teaching on the cost of discipleship in verse 23.

23 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

To "come after me" is shorthand for "being my disciple." He tells anyone who is interested that there are three intertwined things that define a disciple.

First, a disciple must "deny himself." To deny is the "polar opposite" of to confess (see Liefeld, EBC, *Luke*, p. 923; see also John 1:20, 9:20, 12:42). A disciple is one who confesses "Jesus is my Lord. He is my master. Since he died for me, I will live for him." If you confess Jesus as Lord, you are no longer master of your life; Jesus is your master. Confessing him will necessarily mean denying yourself, renouncing that you are lord of your life, denying any desires and plans that are at odds with his desires and plans for you.

Second, a disciple must "take up his cross daily." Remember that Jesus had just told his disciples that he would suffer and be killed (crucified). Therefore, since he would soon take up a cross, those who want to be his disciples must also be willing to take up a cross. In that culture, as Leon Morris famously said, if you saw someone carrying a cross, he was "on a one-way journey. He'd not be back." Taking up your cross daily, means that every day you are living for Christ (not for yourself) whatever the cost.

Third, a disciple actually "follows" Jesus. When Jesus walked the earth people literally followed him around Galilee and Samaria and Judea. Since Jesus has returned to his Father in heaven, following Jesus means imitating him and learning to obey everything he commanded.

Discipleship is a comprehensive way of life. A disciple is progressively becoming more like Jesus in order to represent him in this life. Disciples deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus. That is ***the cost of discipleship***. Jesus didn't try to hide

the fact that the cost of following him would be great. But he next tells them that **the cost of non-discipleship** (not following him) would be far, far greater.

24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

If you “save your life,” you do not confess Jesus as Lord, you do not deny yourself, and you do not live for Him; you are your own master and you live for yourself. You can do that, but Jesus wants you to know that if you save your life in this world, you will lose your life in the next. But if you lose your life for his sake in this world, you will experience a salvation you cannot fathom in the next. Jesus asks a question in verse 25 that reiterates this.

25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

The scenario here is that you might live for yourself, and you are very, very successful. You have wealth, fame, and power; you become king of your little kingdom. You “gain the whole world.” But one day Christ will return and establish **his** kingdom. But since you are not his disciple, you will lose or forfeit yourself! Again, in verse 26 Jesus reiterates what will happen on that day:

26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

If you have lost your life for Christ’s sake, you are not ashamed of him or his words. Like Paul (Romans 1:16) you will say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. . .” But of the one who is ashamed of Christ and his words, Jesus says, “I will be ashamed of him when I come in glory.” Again, the cost of not following Christ is infinitely greater than the cost of following him.

If you are not yet a follower of Christ, please know that he died on the cross so that you too can have eternal life. You can’t earn it or buy it; it is simply a gift that you receive by faith. I would encourage you to listen carefully to the testimonies of those being baptized this morning. Their stories are different in some respects; but they have each experienced the miracle of having their sin forgiven. . . they have each become new creatures in Christ. Please know that you can have this same experience through faith in Jesus.

Each person being baptized will make a series of affirmations that reflect what Jesus teaches in this passage. Through these affirmations, those being baptized are expressing their commitment to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus Christ no matter the cost. Here are the three affirmations for the age group of sixth grade through adults; the affirmations for fifth grade and below are a bit simpler and shorter, but they express the same commitment. You can see those on the back of your bulletin.

Baptism Affirmations: Those being baptized will be asked these three questions:

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of evil in the world? **I renounce them.**

Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love? **I do.**

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love? **I will, with God's help.**

The Church's Response: After each baptism, we will be asked for a response.

People of God, what is our response?

We receive you into the household of God! Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection and share with us in his eternal family!