

Luke 9 (57-62) – The Cost of Closeness

Complacency has replaced intimacy in many of our relationships, and complacency can lead to contempt. Reestablishing intimacy requires risk (“Fireproof”, gave away boat, gained back wife). Intimacy with God – James 4:8 – we know the promise of God’s Word, but we fail to practice God’s Word because we worry about what will happen if we sell out to God. We are talking about establishing a real intimacy, and not just on our own schedule, when we want it. This means much change in our lives, but the truth is that we don’t have to be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. The closer we get, the better we will know Him. The risk is nowhere near as great as the reward. We have to keep walking by faith to keep experiencing that.

Now a lot of people will say amen to that. Yet while we may admire, respect and reverence Him, but still not be willing or intentional in releasing certain things or certain parts of our life to Him. What we are holding onto is what is holding us back. We say we want to draw near to God, but we draw back when we get to that fork in the road. We try and draw near in prayer and worship, but the best prayers have legs, and an obedient life is worship. We sing, “*Just a Closer Walk with Thee*”, but we fail to put the legs to the prayer. We fail to be obedient to the call of God and that is what a closer walk *is*. The tests come outside the prayer closet, not on our knees but on our feet, out in the street, this is where our sanctification is proved.

The cost of discipleship is no less today than it was back then. We know that nothing should take precedence over the call to follow Christ, but it is not as easy as some make it out to be. The practical problem is the actual acts of discipline required to follow Jesus when other “good” things are pulling against our commitment. Jesus gives us insight into the conflicting commitments that would try and pull us away from following as close as we might think we would like to. Jesus isn’t saying that the things holding the people in our text back are bad in themselves. He is saying don’t let what is good keep you from what is best.

The first man’s problem is **Controlled Obedience**: we won’t get radical in our walk with Christ. It is all just theory to us. We say we will follow but we keep our distance. The first seeker has his zeal met with an unexpected response. Jesus challenges the man to see that He walks the way of certain sorrows. Jesus in essence asks, “Do you know where I am going? Do you realize how rough the road is?” Would he still want to follow knowing this? The truth of the trail is that testing, trial, and tribulation come before the triumph (Philippians 1:29). The hasty hero needs to realize what he is getting into (Luke 14:27-30).

We want to follow along with the “enlightened” crowd, but we’re not willing to follow too close to the “on fire” crowd. What is the difference? It is repentance. It is a life that continues to change in conformity to Christ. We may say we want to change, but repentance happens, not when we see the light, but when we feel the heat. We want to see where we are going, and feel the warmth of the fire, but we don’t want to get burned into submission. Jesus is talking about a life of constant movement, going ahead with God. The hard truth is that other people don’t follow along with us most of the time. They aren’t against Jesus, but they are in a controlled environment. They only fly so high, they are settled in. The question is, will you settle for less?

The first man found out that the cost of closeness was repentance. But it is a life of freedom because we are exchanging the shackles of sin for a closer walk with Him (John 8:31-36).

Instead of hanging around sin, we are hanging around the Son. The problem: controlled obedience. The solution: repentance. The result: freedom.

The second man's problem is **Delayed Obedience**: we let responsibilities get in the way of our walk with Christ. The second would-be disciple is challenged to see that obedience to Jesus is more important than obligation to culture. Jesus asks, "Do you know I am leaving right now? Do you realize I won't wait around?" This man did not place the value of Jesus high enough. He was hesitant; he wanted to wait until he received his inheritance to follow Jesus fully. Serving God by serving family can become an evil commitment if we fail to follow Christ (Luke 14:26).

We put off our obedience until we think we are "ready" for it. We say, "I'll follow Jesus when, or as soon as..." The conditions will never be as right as you want them to be. That is why it is called sacrifice. He is not talking about neglecting people or responsibilities or denying your family in the name of God. But we must realize that we have a way of heaping up things to take care of in order that we don't have to face our responsibilities to God.

The second man found out that the cost of closeness was sacrifice. But it is a life of power because we leave off the dead things of this world and our witness comes alive (Philemon 1:6 / 1 Peter 3:15). The problem: delayed obedience. The solution: sacrifice. The result: power.

The third man's problem is **Partial Obedience**: we let relationships get in the way of our walk with Christ. We are halfhearted. We don't have to forfeit all in order to follow Christ; but we must be willing. The third man was challenged to see that following Jesus means going all out, and you can't go all out unless you are all in (Luke 14:31-33). Jesus says, "Do you know they can't come along? Do you realize you're not coming back?" You can't run with the old crowd (1 Peter 4:3-4). You can't move forward if you keep looking back (Philippians 3:8-14). "Looking back" is like Lot's wife (Genesis 19:26), not an actual return to the world, but a reluctance to break with it. Don't miss the obvious implication. If Christ had lived in honor and glory among the world, then we could expect the same. If Christ lived in dishonor and without the applause, comfort and convenience of this world, then that is to be our expectation.

The third man found out that the cost of closeness was focus. But it is a life of rest because although you will be constantly changing, moving forward, and sacrificing things others may enjoy, you will be yoked up the Jesus and His plow, and find that He is doing the work (Matthew 11:28-30). If you keep your eyes on him, you'll see He has His eyes on you. The problem: partial obedience. The solution: focus. The result: rest.

The problem: controlled obedience. The solution: repentance. The result: freedom.

The problem: delayed obedience. The solution: sacrifice. The result: power.

The problem: partial obedience. The solution: focus. The result: rest.

If you want to follow in someone's footsteps you have to see where they've been. To get closer you might have to drop some things slowing you down. When we are hasty, hesitating, or halfhearted, we need to be reminded that Jesus is worth it. The closer you get, the more beautiful He gets, the more freedom, power and rest you'll experience. Let us draw close in prayer, and remember to stay close out there. The risk is nowhere near as great as the reward.