

Series: Messianic Fulfillment

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon #6: The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 9:57-62

Brad McNair--- October 4, 2020

Good morning, Grace. What I want you to do right now is take your phones-- I'm the children's pastor, and so what I need you to do right now is take out your phones and send a quick text message to this number ... no, I'm just kidding.

No, my name's Brad. I am the children's pastor here, and I have been enjoying the weather recently. I mean, fall is in the air. I love walking out in the morning time and feeling that crisp, cool air. And there's not a lot of humidity at that point either. And so, we've been enjoying that as a family, too, this past week, because you know you have to do everything pumpkin during the fall. So, we went to a pumpkin patch. Has anybody else been to a pumpkin patch yet? A couple ... okay, I see those hands. We had a blast. Truett had so much fun doing all kinds of fun things that you do at pumpkin patches. And we did leave with some pumpkins, and they each belong to a person now. "This is your pumpkin, Daddy, this is your pumpkin, Mommy, and this is my pumpkins." He has more than one, because that's the way kids work.

But no, pumpkin everything. Has anyone had their pumpkin spice latte yet? Okay, I see heads nodding. Anybody at home had their pumpkin spice latte? Here's the crazy things about pumpkin spice lattes. They only come out for a few months. And a report came out a few years ago that said that Starbucks serves over 400 million pumpkin spice lattes, only in a few months. They make boocoodles of money off that.

If you're wondering how much it would cost you to get one of those pumpkin spice lattes, it's \$4.95 a pop. Four ninety-five a pop for a pumpkin spice latte. That's how much it would cost you.

Now, that question of cost, that's something I've asked myself before. I don't think \$4.95 is worth a pumpkin spice latte. I like my coffee hot and black with no cream and sugar, so \$4.95 is just too much for that.

But how much is this going to cost me? It's a question I've asked myself several times in my life so far. I'm sure I'm going to ask it some more. The first time I remember asking that question is when Kate came to me and said, "We need new furniture." My question: "How much is this going to cost me?" I mean "us," not "me," but "us." Another time was when we were buying a house, because there always seem to be hidden fees in that. "What is this really going to cost me? What are all the fees included in this?"

One of the most recent times I remember asking that question was when Truett was born. "How much is this going to cost me?" I knew that, monetarily, this was going to cost me a lot. I didn't realize how much sleep it was going to cost me, though. A study came out recently that said the average first-year parent loses 109 minutes a night. That's over 39,000 minutes of sleep in that first year alone—not combining both parents' total. Each parent loses 39,000 minutes of sleep in that first year. Truett's almost three and I'm still catching up on sleep. So, I knew it was going to cost me, but I didn't know it was going to cost me that.

Counting the cost is wise and it is important. It's wise and important, and I think we can all agree that hidden fees are the worst thing ever. If you've been watching bank ads, they're always saying, *Hey, no hidden fees. We've gotten rid of the hidden fees. There are no hidden fees. You don't have to worry about that.*

Today, as we pick back up in our series on the Year of the Bible, we're going to be in Luke chapter 9, verses 57 through 62. And in this passage, Jesus removes all the hidden fees from the cost of discipleship. Jesus doesn't want there to be a hidden cost if you're going to follow Him.

And so, through a series of three conversations, we're going to see the cost of discipleship. What does it cost someone to follow after Jesus? Jesus is very clear in this passage that the cost is high. It requires a radical shift that Jesus has to be above everything else in our lives.

First Conversation

Luke 9:57-58

As they were walking along the road, a man said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.”⁵⁸ Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

So, let's dive into the first conversation in Luke 9:57. “As they were walking along the road, a man said to Him, ‘I will follow You wherever You go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.’”

This conversation and the two that follow happen in the context of Jesus on His way to Jerusalem. He's got His eyes turned toward Jerusalem and He has in mind, *I'm about to go die for sinners so that they can follow me*. He is mission-focused at this point. He's been mission-focused the whole time, but eyes now have turned toward Jerusalem and He's focused on that task at hand. This first conversation starts with this man saying eagerly, “I will follow You.” That word “follow” means that he is going to adhere himself, conform his life to the life of Christ and become like Him in every way. He's saying, *I'm going to be Your disciple. I'm going to follow you wherever*.

Jesus' response is not “Yes, you can follow me,” or “No, you can't.” It's a response that reveals that Jesus had no place on earth to call His home. The idea is that the foxes and the birds have their home where they can lie down and they can rest securely, but Jesus does not have that luxury because He's on that mission to seek and to save the lost, to heal the sick, to die for sinners. Jesus came to be rejected by people time after time. Crowds of people would clamor for His healing touch, and the religious leaders would seek His life. This life of Jesus does not get to enjoy worldly comfort and security.

Jesus isn't drawing attention to this to say, *Woe is me! Look how hard my life is!* But it's to say to this eager man, *Count the cost*.

What does it mean to follow Him? What does it mean to become a disciple of Jesus? Jesus is saying, *If you follow me, you have to make a radical shift. You have to put me above everything else in your life, including your comfort and your security.*

Now the rich young ruler—I love that story—it’s another conversation where this guy runs up to Jesus, and he’s rich, he’s wealthy, he’s got power and influence—he runs up to Jesus and says, “What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus looks at him and points him back to the commandments and rattles off a few and the ruler says, *I’ve done all that. I’ve kept the commandments since my childhood, since I was just a little boy.* Now Jesus knew that this guy had not really kept the commandments, because he’d have to be perfect, and the only perfect man is the guy he’s talking to. So, just knowing this guy’s heart, He looks at him and says, “You lack one thing—one thing. Sell everything you have”— *all the treasure that you’ve accumulated, all that gives you comfort and security, the house, the land, everything—all the stuff.* “Sell it and give it to the poor and then follow me.”

At that point, the rich young ruler—he was just waiting to hear what Jesus was going to say, he was so eager to hear His response. But instead of saying, *You’ve got it, Jesus. I’ll do that,* he walks away sad. He couldn’t let go of the comfort and security that he has accumulated on earth to say, *I’ll give it all, I’ll give it all away.* Comfort and security for the rich young ruler was more important. It was above following Jesus.

So, what about you? Is Jesus above comfort and security? Have you made the radical shift in your life to put Jesus above comfort and security? What would that really look like for us anyway? Does that mean we all should move to the mission field and quit our jobs here? Should we all sell everything we have and give it to the poor? Should we stop putting money in our 401K and use it for something different? Maybe.

But that’s not what this passage—that’s not what Jesus is saying here. That not what the whole of Scripture is teaching. Jesus above comfort and security means that you understand that this home, this earth, is not your real home.

In 1 Peter 2:11, believers are talked about as sojourners and aliens, people that don’t really have a home here on earth. Jesus above our comfort and security could be something as simple as going across the street and sharing Jesus with our neighbor—which (let’s just be honest) can feel very uncomfortable at times. But it can also be going across the world on a

mission trip or experience and sacrificing financially to go tell others about Jesus who have never heard of Jesus. That can be uncomfortable too.

Your comfort and security cannot come from your bank account, your retirement account, the stock market, anybody who's in political office, any type of organizational position or authority that you might have, or anything else that this world has to offer. None of those things can come before Jesus. We can't hold onto those things so tightly that we end up like the rich young ruler—sad because we don't want to let go of our stuff. It's a radical shift to put Jesus above comfort and security.

Second Conversation

Luke 9:59-60

He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Let's look at the second conversation starting in verse 59. “He said to another man”—talking about Jesus—’ Follow me.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’”

Now the roles are reversed a little bit. Instead of somebody saying to Jesus, “Let me follow you,” Jesus is calling to somebody, something that He had done previously before when He called His earlier disciples. He said, “Follow me.” So, it carries that same weight. *Come and be like me*, is what Jesus is telling this man. *Adhere your life to mine; look like me in all of life*.

The man responds saying, “First ...”—he's already got something above Jesus. “First let me go bury my dad.” Now there's scholarly debate around this idea of whether the dad is already dead or whether he's not quite dead yet. Some people say that he's not already dead, because if he was, he wouldn't be hanging around where Jesus was and he'd already be doing the duties of the son, because in Jewish tradition it was the son's responsibility to make sure that the parents, especially the dad, were buried properly.

Now what this guy's really saying though is *Hey, Jesus, after I take care of this over here, eventually I'll get to follow you. I'll follow you at some point in time, just not right now. Maybe some time later. It could be months, it could be years. But I'll follow you, Jesus ... eventually.*

Jesus' response to that was, "Let the dead bury their own dead." It's a turn of phrase that Jesus is using here, meaning that there's plenty of spiritually dead people who can handle the burial of the dead. It feels like a very harsh statement. I mean, how is somebody supposed to take this statement that Jesus says when Jesus has already told us "Love your enemies. Love each other. Love one another. By this they will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Think back to the Old Testament commandments: "Honor thy father and mother." Jesus is saying, *You can't have anything above me.*

This statement is not meant to be harsh, but it's meant to be a jarring kind of a "stop" statement. Because Jesus is wanting this guy to count the cost of what it means to follow Him, whether it's right now, or even eventually. Jesus cannot come second to anything, even family connections and the duties and the obligations and the responsibilities that come with that. Jesus has to be above even those.

But really, this can apply to every area of our lives. Jesus is supposed to be above all our duties and our obligations that we have to any person, anything, anyone. This jarring statement is supposed to cause us to stop and count the cost.

But Jesus doesn't just stop at the jarring statement. He goes on to tell the man, "Proclaim the kingdom of God." Jesus is explaining what the role of a disciple is. It's to go on to proclaim the kingdom of God. There's a sense of urgency that comes with following Jesus. It takes a radical shift above our duties and obligations.

I want you to think just for a moment about your priorities. We tend to think to think of these in lists. So right now in your head, or if you've got a pen and some paper, or maybe even on your phone, think about your top four or five priorities. Think about what those would be for you. Take a moment and think about it ... the top four or five.

Priorities List

- 1) Jesus
- 2) Family
- 3) Friends
- 4) Self-Care
- 5) Work

Now my guess is that they probably look something like this that you can see on the screen right now, this “typical priorities” list. You see Jesus—we put him at the top. He comes first, right? And then after that comes our family and our friends, maybe self-care. Hopefully, that’s somewhere on there. Jesus did say to love others as yourself. So, self-care should be on there somewhere. Then we put work in there. You could change that out with any number of things, but typically we would say that we put Jesus first.

I want you to notice something, though: the space between Jesus and everything else on your list. Is Jesus actually just at the top of your list, or is He a part of all aspects of your list?

See, here’s the problem with the list, at least with me. When I make a list of things it tends to become a task list in a lot of ways where I can look at this and say, *Did I spend time with Jesus? Check. Did I spend time with my family? Check. Have I spent some friend time? Yes. Did I take care of myself? Check, I did that. Did I do my work? Check.* It becomes this checklist.

Jesus isn’t a task that we do. Following Jesus isn’t all about the things that we do. It’s about who we are becoming in Him. Being a disciple is not about doing; it’s about being. So, what I’d like to do, instead of us thinking all the time in the sense of a priorities list, I’d like to challenge us to think a little bit differently. I’d like you to think about your life in terms of boxes, where duties and obligations come from.

Spouse Kids Work
Friends Fun Self-Care
Church Serving
Quiet Time Bible Study

You see I've got a couple of boxes on the screen. Spouse: there's duties and obligations that come from there—emptying the dishwasher, mowing the yard, taking the trash out. Men, we have our honey-do lists, duties and obligations, right? We're supposed to love our wives; wives, love and respect your husbands. Kids: there are duties and obligations that come along with kids. There are duties and obligations that come along with work and friends and fun and self-care. There's also the sense of church. There's a duty and a sense of obligation that you have to the church that you're connected to. Serving in a ministry, your quiet time, Bible study—all these things have duties and obligations that come with them.

Spouse Kids Work
Friends Fun Self-Care

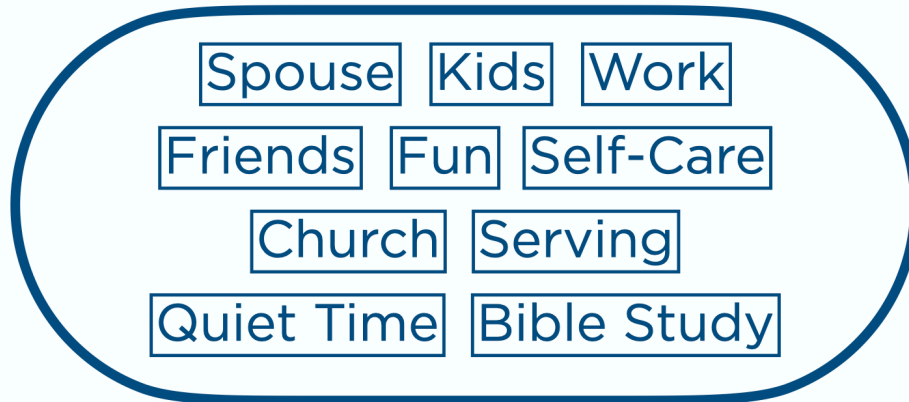
SECULAR

SACRED

Church Serving
Quiet Time Bible Study

And what tends to happen with this is that we create a divide between two categories. It could be called the sacred/secular divide. Here's the things I do for Jesus, with Jesus, on the bottom: church, serving, quiet time, Bible study. And here's all the things that Jesus isn't really involved in: my relationship with my spouse, my kids, my work, my friends, my fun, my self-care. We kind of end up in the same spot. Jesus becomes yet another thing that we have duties and obligations to. But what we have to realize is that Jesus isn't just some other box in our lives. Everything in our lives is supposed to come under Jesus.

JESUS



And when we do that, we remove the sacred/secular divide, and all of life—all of life-- comes under the authority of Jesus. So, no matter what the duty or obligation might be, everything has Jesus involved in it.

When we do that, Jesus becomes pre-eminent, He's the highest in our life, He's above everything else, and through it He's glorified when we live that way.

Eugene Peterson talks about discipleship as long obedience in the same direction. And that direction is Jesus. When we put duties and obligations above Jesus, our lives get out of order. But when we allow Jesus to encircle everything in our lives, when we allow Him to order our lives, it will be so much better--when He encompasses all the categories.

Because you're not going to stop being a good boss or a good employee because you put Jesus above those duties and obligations with work. No, you're going to continue to be a good boss and a good employee and probably an even better one, because you're including Jesus in it. You've given Him the authority over your work and all that goes with it.

A couple of weeks ago I was listening to a podcast where people write in to John Piper and they ask him questions for biblical advice and a biblical answer. And this guy wrote in about a month and ago and said, "I have a job as a marketing guy for Nike." And this guy really wants to glorify God in his work, but yet he feels like he's contributing to the overly consumeristic

tendencies of people, not just in the United States, but all over the world, especially for those who can't afford the stuff that Nike's making. Because Nike's kind of become a status symbol, people clamor for it. He feels like he's contributing to that. So, he asked him a question: "Should I change jobs? Maybe I should even change careers." Wrestling with those types of questions is what happens when we put Jesus above everything else in our lives. When we make the radical shift to put Jesus above our duties and our obligations, whether it's to our family or our work, we begin to ask some really hard questions. But those are the types of questions that we should be wrestling with.

Jesus never said that being His disciple was going to be easy. It takes a radical shift. And we've got to put Jesus above our duties and our obligations.

Third Conversation

Luke 9:61-62

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Let's take a look at the third and final conversation that Jesus has, starting in verse 61. "Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.' Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'"

In this final conversation somebody again is talking to Jesus. *I'm going to follow you, but only after saying goodbye. But first, Jesus—I've already got something above You, because I've got to do this other thing first.*

Jesus then goes on to use a farming reference. I have no clue about farming references, so I looked it up and read a little bit about it. I get the idea. But when you're plowing, if you're constantly looking over your shoulder and looking back, you're typically going to turn whichever way you're looking over your shoulder. Unless you overcompensate, and then you're

going to go the other way, and then you're going to end up with what's called the crooked row. So, your plow lines aren't going to be straight.

So, instead of jumping in with both feet to follow after Jesus, this guy's asking that he only be halfway committed. He'd only be halfway in, because he wants to look back at what was in his life, his past, and what could have been in his life. Jesus knew that this individual was only going to give half of his heart because he was going to be constantly yearning for what was and what he left behind.

Jesus' drawing statement is, yet again, to consider the cost of following of Him. Jesus doesn't want just part of this man. He wanted the whole man. He wanted his whole heart. He didn't want a half heart looking over his shoulder. Jesus wanted this man to make the radical shift, to put Him above his past.

Last year a video went viral of this sprinter from the University of Florida whose head seems to never move when he's running the 110 meters hurdles—so he's jumping. So, let's take a moment and watch that in case you didn't get to see it.

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Video of University of Florida Hurdler

<https://twitter.com/floridagators/status/1207836361585254401?s=21>

Sports announcer: Even on the first hurdle Holloway starts to make the move. It's Grant Holloway, but here comes Daniel Roberts—he's a good finisher. He's pressing now. It's Holloway—it's Roberts—Holloway wins three in a row! Twelve ninety-nine. Renaldo Nehemiah's forty-year-old record has finally ...

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Now there's some editing magic that has taken place that makes it seem that his head never moves. Do you notice the cameras constantly moving around his head? But still, I would think if you or I ran—unless you ran hurdles in high school or in college—if you or I went out there and tried that, my head would be doing this the whole time ... up and down, up and down. So, a little bit of editing magic, but did you see his eyes? The intensity and the focus in his eyes ... here's the crazy thing. He never looks down at the hurdle he's jumping. He's never looking

back. *Did I clear that one? Did I actually make it over that last hurdle?* His eyes are locked in. He's going in one direction. He's locked in. He's going to the finish line. If he was constantly looking back, looking down, he wouldn't be able to run in a straight line, much less make it over those hurdles.

The same is true for you and me. If we're constantly looking down and back at our past, what was, what could have been, we'll only be halfway in with Jesus. Jesus doesn't want it that way. Jesus wants the whole of us. He wants our whole heart. Jesus has to be above our past. This means the good and the bad in our past, including the sin in our past. You see, Jesus didn't die out there on the cross so that you'd have to walk low in your guilt and shame of sin on your own. Jesus made it very clear in His ministry that He came for the sick and the broken, and He came for sinners like you and like me. And when we put our faith in Jesus, our sin is forgiven. Stop looking back at your past sin, because it's tripping you up as you're trying to follow Jesus right now.

The other side of this, too: not only the bad, the good in the sense of ... if we continue to look back at yesterday's victories as though they're our own, yesterday's successes for the kingdom as if we did it, we're going to stumble. We're going to fall. We've got to stop looking back even, and stop daydreaming about how our lives could have turned out differently if we'd made a different decision. Because that's breaking our focus. Our eyes are being locked on Jesus right now. Following Jesus requires a radical shift in our lives. Jesus has to be above our past—what was and what could have been.

Conclusion

Luke 9:23

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

In Luke 9:23, just prior to the three conversations that we just looked at, Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

Jesus didn't set a low bar for discipleship. Jesus set a very high bar for discipleship. It was going to cost everything to follow Him. Being a disciple means that you deny yourself. That means that you realize that this life isn't about you. Denying yourself and taking up your cross means that you're going to have to lay some things down if you're really going to follow Jesus. And that takes a radical shift. But it's worth it.

You see, Jesus will not be second or third or fourth to anything in our lives. He has to be the highest. We have to put Jesus above our comfort and security. The truth is that true comfort and security is only found in Jesus, the eternal kind of comfort and security where we get to spend forever with Him in heaven. Jesus has to be above our duties and our obligations. At the end of this life, it's not about what you did; it's about who you are in Christ. Jesus has to be above our past—the good, the bad, the ugly. Jesus can't be second. He's got to be first. He has to be pre-eminent in our lives. He must be the highest.

So, let's make the radical shift to put Jesus in His rightful place. Let's step up to the high calling of discipleship, and let's put Jesus first—over everything. Make the radical shift. Put Jesus above everything else in your life.

Let's pray.

Lord, I thank You for sending Jesus, God, to pay the ultimate price for our sin so that we could be His disciples, His followers. And at the same time, Lord, I'd ask You to forgive us. Forgive me, God, because I haven't always kept Jesus in His rightful place. God, we long to place Jesus over everything in our lives, Lord, but it's a struggle. Our spirit is willing, but our flesh is weak, Lord, so God, I pray that You would empower us. Empower us to do this, God. Help us wrestle in these different areas of our lives. Are we keeping comfort and security? Are we keeping duties and obligations? Are we keeping our past above Jesus? Lord, reveal in us, each of us, where it is that we don't have Jesus over whatever it is in our lives. Lord, help us to make the radical shift to put Jesus above it all. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.