

Jesus had just come down from Mount Hermon where He met with Elijah and Moses and discussed what lay ahead. Back in the valley He was faced with a father pleading for his demon possessed son. The boy was delivered and healed and could speak and hear (Mark 9:25ⁱ). The disciples had not been able to cast the demon out. Jesus told them that resistant demons are only cast out through prayer (Mark 9:29ⁱⁱ).

^{43b} But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." Luke 9:43b, 44 This was probably part of the conversation with Moses and Elijah. It was time for the disciples to start living like the Master because He would soon be arrested, tried, convicted, and executed. This warning came after the rebuke for their lack of faith. They had seen miracles at their own hands. Now they needed to learn to depend on God in prayer so that their faith is even stronger for severe cases like demonic resistance. They needed to follow their Master's example of depending on God's leading through prayer. That is an example to us as well.

⁴⁵ But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. Luke 9:45 They didn't understand and were afraid to ask because they were beginning to realize the implications an arrest. Matthew 17:23ⁱⁱⁱ tells us they were filled with grief. We've all probably heard someone say something that shocked us, and we didn't want to ask more because we didn't want it to be true. If Jesus was arrested, what would that mean for them? The full meaning was concealed from them, but the words would remain. After it came to pass they would remember that Jesus had predicted it (John 2:22^{iv}).

The disciples did not want to think about what was coming, but Jesus knew and set His face like flint toward Jerusalem (Isaiah 50:7^v). For the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2^{vi}), He charged forward obeying His Father to fulfill His mission of love, bearing our sins and conquering death.

⁴⁶ An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. Luke 9:46 An atheist told me that Jesus was just another of many saviors who claimed to be born of a virgin, the Son of God, resurrected, etc. Did those saviors have thousands of ancient documents reporting their miracles and healings, and the hundreds of prophecies they fulfilled? Even more importantly did they say things like we read in these verses? One of the greatest proofs that Jesus was who He said He was is His uncharacteristic sayings and behavior, that we see in the Gospels.

Mankind always competes for authority and power. Once fame is obtained we become aloof and are careful of who we allow in our presence. We don't want to appear weak or accessible, as we think we are above it all. Jesus' authority was used to help others more than to exalt His power and influence for personal gain. Who says things like the least is the greatest (9:48^{vii})? Who says I came not to be served by to serve (Matthew 20:28^{viii})? Who says I'm going to give my life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45^{ix})? Who discourages anyone from following them by saying they would have to lose their life and must take up a cross daily (9:23^x)? And what person claiming to be deity spent time blessing little children (18:16^{xi})? Critics want to say Jesus wasn't unique, but historians and documentation say otherwise.

Jesus' disciples were arguing about who was the greatest in the group. They had just been humbled by their inability to cast out the demon. I wonder if the three that were on the mountain might have mentioned they saw something amazing that they weren't allowed to talk about. Suddenly a spirit of one-up-manship took over and comparisons ensued. No doubt there were some critical objections to one another's past behavior.

Jesus saw what was going on and chose to use an object lesson. Children were loved but spending time with them was considered a waste of time. Important people didn't condescend to playing with children. Jesus took a child and put him by His side. Did the disciples notice or were they too busy arguing?

⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸ and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." Luke 9:47, 48 Then Jesus told them something they would never forget. To receive a child is to receive Jesus. That does not mean that we are saved by taking time for children, but that a person in the kingdom of God cares about others, even the least among us. **Kingdom people put others first.**

"For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." What? How can that be? Humility is essential for the believer. If we don't see the way Jesus sees, then we are seeing as the fallen world sees. Greatness is putting others first and serving them (22:26^{xii}). The disciples may not have realized it, but Jesus was serving them constantly. His teaching and ministry were daily efforts to prepare them for the ministry God had for each of them. They would see it more clearly when at the Last Supper He would wash their feet and reinforce the lesson by telling them to follow His example of service (John 13:12-15^{xiii}). They would serve others in the same way by pouring out their lives to give others the truth of the Gospel. It would never result in exaltation by the world. Quite the opposite. He warned them they would be rejected by men (John 16:2^{xiv}), but the service to others and to God would mean their reward in heaven is great (6:35^{xv}). One word for serve in Greek also means worship (*latreuo*).

It is natural to want the respect of others, but followers of Jesus must squelch that carnal desire and replace it with a desire to follow Jesus and walk worthy of the calling we have received (Ephesians 4:1^{xvi}). We must think of others more highly than ourselves (Philippians 2:3^{xvii}). You might think that is unnatural, but a better term is supernatural.

⁴⁹ John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you." Luke 9:49, 50 The previous three verses demonstrated Jesus' unusual perspective of greatness, and in the process, the importance of those whom the world ignores. In these two verses we get His perspective on those who are outside the group but doing good. We might think of it as non-church attenders. Someone today might ask, "Why is that man who never attends church witnessing to that person?"

Jesus knows the great diversity in human experience as well as the limitations and baggage we carry. Not everyone will fit the mold we think they should be in. We don't have to understand why. A judgment should be based on the facts of whether they are for Jesus or against Him. What fruit do they bear? By their fruits you will know them (Matthew 7:20^{xviii})

⁵¹ *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Luke 9:51 The time for the ascension was nearing. Jesus and the disciples are on the road to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus knows He must go to Jerusalem at that time as God's Passover Lamb (John 1:29^{xix}). Luke tells us He set His face to go. That is from Isaiah 50:7^{iv} where the servant of the Lord, the Messiah, goes on to say that He will give His face to those who pluck out His beard, but the LORD will vindicate Him (Isaiah 50:6-8^{xx}). He went with determination to Jerusalem. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy and the Father vindicated Him in the resurrection.

⁵² *And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him* (Luke 9:52). The Samaritans had received Him previously and even called Him the Savior of the world (John 4:42^{xxi}). But this time they see He is headed to Jerusalem, and they let their old prejudices harden their hearts.

⁵³ *But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.*
⁵⁴ *And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"* ⁵⁵ *But he turned and rebuked them.* Luke 9:53-55 Now you can see why Jesus called them Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17^{xxii}). Their prejudices came out. They thought they could ask the LORD to rain fire on these Samaritans as a judgment. That is what Elijah had done with God's enemies (2Kings 1:10^{xxiii}), and they had just seen Elijah on the mountain. They had seen Jesus in His glory, so they knew who He is and His authority. They probably thought, "How dare these half-breeds reject His grace!" They had forgotten His command to love our enemies (6:27, 28^{xxiv}). They had seen Jesus' example of mercy in His teaching and actions, so why did they think they should act differently? But then, that is what we often do when we are not in the Spirit.

⁵⁶ *And they went on to another village.* ⁵⁷ *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."* Luke 9:56, 57 Jesus and His disciples have left Galilee. The crowds are beginning to grow again as they journey toward Jerusalem. Along the way someone asked to be one of the full-time followers. "I will follow you wherever you go," is asking to be recognized as a disciple. A sage at that time would give his approval by saying, "Follow me." Jesus did not give such approval. The man may have been thinking that Jesus was about to declare Himself Messiah and throw out the Romans. To ask to be His disciple was to take a great risk, for Rome dealt harshly with people who claimed to be a messiah. The man must have been convinced that Jesus was truly the One. But what was the man's motive?

Many people proclaim they want to be a Christian for one reason or another. But if it is for any other reason than making Him the Lord of their lives and following wherever He leads, it is not likely they are ready to hear, "Follow me!" If they are not ready to die to self, taking up their cross daily and follow, then they are not disciples.

⁵⁸ *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."* Luke 9:58 Jesus dismissed him by telling him that He and His disciples sleep in the open air. Jesus wasn't trying to have great numbers of followers. He was looking for disciples. Jesus' response was enough to dissuade the man. Did the man expect that in each town hosts would supply a comfortable place for them to sleep? Was he hoping for a palace? They had just been rejected by a Samaritan town. The Twelve had been camping with Jesus for three years. Only in Capernaum and Bethany did they regularly have welcoming host homes.

This man represents many who believe Jesus is the Son of God, but who can't give up their comforts. They have a desire to follow Jesus, but their desire for comfort is greater. They have expectations of the minimum of what they will put up with. Jesus all or nothing demand is more than they are willing to accept (Mark 10:29,30^{xxv}). How about you? Is there something in your life that you reserve for yourself and would refuse to give up for Jesus? We should regularly check our hearts and see if something has come between us and Jesus. That is the definition of idolatry, allowing something to come between us and God.

⁵⁹ *To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."* Luke 9:59 In this next case, Jesus asks a man to be His disciple with the instruction, "Follow me!" This man wanted to bury his father first. Jews believed this to be one of their greatest obligations. It meant to care for him in his old age until he died and then see he had a proper burial. After all, the commandments say to honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12^{xxvi}).

⁶⁰ *And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."* Luke 9:60 Jesus gave him an unexpected response, one that was culturally unacceptable and even seemed to violate the fifth commandment. Burying one's father was considered a highly important duty. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." The man would not have been on the road with Jesus if his father had just died. The man's response means he wants to live with his father until he dies so that he can fulfill his obligation of burying him respectfully. Jesus response means that other family members who don't have spiritual life could care for his father until that time. This man was called to a higher call to proclaim the kingdom of God. That would truly honor his father!

The man did not realize the urgency of Jesus call to him. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. This was the final season of His ministry. Lazarus would be raised. The end-time teaching would be delivered to the disciples. They would see Jesus crucified and rise from the dead. Did the man join them? This seems to be a trio of accounts of men who would not give up all to follow. We aren't told what the man did. Perhaps after the resurrection he would become part of the early church, but it wouldn't be the same as being a witness of the resurrection. Or maybe he was one of the 500 who saw the resurrected Jesus. We'll have to wait until heaven to find out.

The point is that following Jesus is even more important than our cultural expectations and what people will think of us. It seems that Jesus is discouraging people from becoming followers. Jesus is testing their sincerity and determination so that He doesn't waste His time and theirs and leave them even more accountable.

⁶¹ *Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home."* Luke 9:61 The third example was a man who had joined the throng of people when they passed through his hometown. He wanted to follow but asked first to say goodbye to his family. They would wonder where he disappeared to if he did not say goodbye. They could provide something for his journey. But again, Jesus gave the man another tough saying.

It reminds me of Rebecca when the servant of Abraham came seeking a bride for Isaac. The family wanted her to stay ten days for extended goodbyes, but when they asked Rebecca, she was ready to go immediately (Genesis 24:54-59^{xxvii}). She is a type and shadow of the bride of Christ.

⁶² *Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* Luke 9:62 When Elijah called Elisha to follow him, Elisha was plowing. He asked to say goodbye to his family and was permitted to do so (1 Kings 19:20, 21^{xxviii}). But this is more important than even Elijah's call to Elisha. If you start to follow Jesus, giving your life to Him and His mission, and you look back, you just aren't fit for the kingdom of God. You haven't seen that it is of ultimate importance. In Jesus' teaching of the end-time He told the disciples to "remember Lot's wife" (17:32^{xxix}). She looked back on Sodom as it burned. The angel had warned her not to look back (Genesis 19:17^{xxx}), but she remembered all she left behind and turned to see if it was really being destroyed, and she became a pillar of salt.

When Elisha said goodbye to his family, he sacrificed his plow animal and used the yoke and wooden tools for the fire to roast it to feed the people (1 Kings 19:21^{xxxi}). He made sure he could not go back. His plowing days were over. He was entering a new life. That needs to be the mindset of those who hear Jesus' call.

Following Jesus is only possible when you see He is infinitely greater than the things of this world, including relationships with people. If we look back at what we walked away from and wonder if we have given up too much, if we might somehow return, or maybe dream that we can follow Jesus and have this world too, we deceive ourselves. **The kingdom consists of those who see the incomparable greatness of Jesus and His love for us.** Nothing can compete with that, neither comfort, or family, or the desire to meet the expectations of others.

"Not fit for the kingdom." The Greek word for fit is *euthetos* and it means "of use, suitable, well adapted". In Luke 14:34, 35^{xxxii} Jesus says salt that lost its savor is not fit for soil or the manure pile. It isn't useful, and neither is the person who looks back from serving Jesus because he or she is wanting the praise and respect of the world (16:15^{xxxiii}). The person who is suitable to be a disciple of Jesus, fit for the kingdom of God, is the person whose eyes are fixed on Jesus, whose heart is surrendered to His love, and whose desires are to follow wherever He leads.

Are we all called to be disciples of Jesus? That means to learn from Him. That is what He invites us all to do (Matthew 11:29^{xxxiv}). It is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19^{xxxv}), make disciples of all nations. Our passage today has shown us disciples follow Jesus to the cross. They put others first. They are gracious in the face of rejection. Their first priority is their relationship with Jesus. They don't cave to the world's expectations or worldly desires. They look forward in faith and refuse to look back.

If you can't say that describes you, then recognize you are not a disciple. What we need is a greater understanding of God's grace and His love for us. Love begets love. Acknowledge to God your heart's condition and the things that hold you back. Ask Him to increase your love for Him, to reveal to you how great His love is for you. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you in a greater way and open your heart to receive the revelation.

Questions

1 Why did Jesus go forward knowing it would mean death? 2 What were the disciples arguing about? 3 How did Jesus address the issue? 4 How can we apply verse 50? 5 Why did the Samaritans change? 6 Why were James and John wrong? 7 What deterred the first man from following Jesus? 8 What was the second man's struggle? 9 What was the problem? 10 And what kept the last man from following?

ⁱ **Mark 9:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."

ⁱⁱ **Mark 9:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

ⁱⁱⁱ **Matthew 17:23 (ESV)**

²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

^{iv} **John 2:22 (ESV)**

²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

^v **Isaiah 50:7 (ESV)**

⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

^{vi} **Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

^{vii} **Luke 9:48 (ESV)**

⁴⁸ and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

^{viii} **Matthew 20:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

^{ix} **Mark 10:45 (ESV)**

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

^x **Luke 9:23 (ESV)**

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.

^{xi} **Luke 18:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

^{xii} **Luke 22:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.

^{xiii} **John 13:12-15 (ESV)**

¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

^{xiv} **John 16:2 (ESV)**

² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

^{xv} **Luke 6:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

^{xvi} **Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)**

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

^{xvii} **Philippians 2:3 (ESV)**

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

^{xviii} **Matthew 7:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

^{xix} **John 1:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

^{xx} **Isaiah 50:6-8 (ESV)**

⁶ I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸ He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

^{xxi} **John 4:42 (ESV)**

⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

^{xxii} **Mark 3:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);

^{xxiii} **2 Kings 1:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

^{xxiv} **Luke 6:27-28 (ESV)**

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

^{xxv} **Mark 10:29-30 (ESV)**

²⁹ Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,

³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

^{xxvi} **Exodus 20:12 (ESV)**

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

^{xxvii} **Genesis 24:54-59 (ESV)**

⁵⁴ And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master." ⁵⁵ Her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." ⁵⁶ But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master." ⁵⁷ They said, "Let us call the young woman and ask her." ⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." ⁵⁹ So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men.

^{xxviii} **1 Kings 19:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" ²¹ And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

^{xxix} **Luke 17:32 (ESV)**

³² Remember Lot's wife.

^{xxx} **Genesis 19:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."

^{xxxi} **1 Kings 19:21 (ESV)**

²¹ And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

^{xxxii} **Luke 14:34-35 (ESV)**

³⁴ "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

^{xxxiii} **Luke 16:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

xxxiv **Matthew 11:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

xxxv **Matthew 28:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,