

Luke 9:57-62 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."
Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

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

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

The disciples had just returned from a preaching tour, having received supernatural power over diseases, disabilities and demons. Jesus had fed 5,000 men (not counting the thousands of women and children) with a small lunch demonstrating His ability to provide food stuffs no matter what Rome might do in retaliation. Three disciples had seen Christ in His glory and while they were forbidden to reveal it, it captivated their thinking leading to a power struggle for positions in the impending kingdom takeover. Jesus had made it clear that no-thing and no-one was going to stop His going to Jerusalem. Expectations had reached fever pitch, as everyone was sure it was a short road to glory that awaited them. It was on this backdrop we must read these three encounters with Christ.

Jesus' interaction with these men must be understood in the context of the series of events leading up to it, and the assumptions and expectations that required immediate and abrupt correction. Jesus' replies sound strangely harsh to our ears. But let us not forget He knows the hearts and the needs of each hearer. Let us listen and learn these hard truths for ourselves. We need them, perhaps more now than ever!

Mr. Volunteer: "I'll follow you where you go!" (My home)

Luke 9:57-58 Looking for success – NO HOME HERE!

From Christ's swift rebuke, it seems evident that Mr. Volunteer was expecting a short hike home... to glory. He would follow Jesus to get what he was after... "success!" Mr. Volunteer was sure that this success was only days away, and so following Jesus just made sense. Mr. Volunteer's "Johnny-come-lately" willingness needed to confront the purpose and the cost of following Christ. Jesus made it clear that if Mr. Volunteer was signing up to follow Him, it wouldn't mean a short hike home to success. It would mean homelessness. No home here!

Jesus is not the means to and end of something better. He is the end! Christ has not promised us the American Dream. He has promised us present homelessness in view of eternal glory.

In our day of religious marketing, Jesus is often presented as the means to our self-designed dreams of success. "Follow Jesus and you'll be rich. Follow Jesus and you'll be healthy. Follow Jesus and your problems will all go away. Follow Jesus and.... fill in the blank." In all such teaching, Jesus is but the means to an end. Jesus is not the means to an end... He is the end!

Mr. Procrastination: "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." (My father)

Jesus challenges #2, Mr. Procrastination, with the urgency of the need to make the good news known.

Mr. Procrastination was looking for security. He intended to follow Jesus, but he had a few things to take care of first. He considered himself a careful man, a thoughtful man. But Jesus made it clear he was a foolish man, ignoring what really matters... full and immediate obedience.

Mr. Pleaser: "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." (My family)

Jesus challenges #3, Mr. Pleaser, to get his eyes on the King and his hand on the plow. It would seem that Mr. Pleaser longed for the approval of his family more than the approval of God. It's a devious and common temptation

to allow good things, such as family approval, to become obstacles to our obedience. The pull of the past, other allegiances and other approvals must be left behind. Like Paul, the past must be forgotten and forsaken if the goal of pleasing Christ is our all. (Phil 3:12-15) To honor family is good. To honor family approval above the approval of God is disastrous.

My home (success)... my father (security)... my family (approval)... you can't plow if you're always looking back. Some look back with longing, some with regret, some with fear. But the result is the same, if you take your eye off the King, soon your hand will be off the plow. *Remember: Focus determines faithfulness.*

Hand to the Plow – rsb 2011

*Hand to the plow, look back no longer
Birds have their nests, but you're called to wander
Foxes have holes, but you're homeless for now
Fix your eyes on the King, put your hand to the plow*

*Hand to the plow, look back no longer
Your calling is clear, but temptations grow stronger
To put off the choice and go back on your vow
Take your eyes off the King and your hand off the plow*

*Hand to the plow, look back no longer
Others will think you a fool and will wonder
What's wrong with a man who would make such a vow
With his eyes on a King and his hand on a plow*

*Hand to the plow, look back no longer
Jesus has called and you must be stronger
Than every idol that tempts you to bow
Fix your eyes on the King, put your hand to the plow*

*Hand to the plow, look back no longer
Harvest has come and O, what a wonder
If finding us still when He comes even now
With our eyes on the King and our hand on the plow*

Self Check:

1. How do you define success? Is Christ a means to an end, or is Christ the end?
2. How do you see this world? Playground or plow-ground?
3. How do you see yourself? Resident or Pilgrim?

Following will cost you - are you willing to become a misfit in this world?

Ultimately, there is only one thing that will cost you more than following Christ... not following Him!

Think about it:

Jesus addressed the same issues in His sermon on the mount.

Matt 6:19-24 ...your treasure... your eye... your master

Your treasure – what you spend your life for – your desire & pursuit

Your eye – focus – what you focus your life on – where your mind naturally goes in neutral

Your master – what you yield your life to – who gets your energy, effort, time and resources
YOU CAN'T PLOW WITH YOUR HANDS FULL YOUR EYE UNFOCUSED –

For further study:

Backsliding begins with the backward look of longing

Genesis 19:15-26 Lot's wife... looking back at the city Luke 17:32

She was tired of a pilgrim's life – she wanted a house, not a tent!

Psalm 39:12 Heb 11:13-16 **THIS IS NOT MY HOME...**

To follow Him means waiting for a home... and living a pilgrim's life below.

Keep your eyes on Christ and take the next step of obedience.

Hand to the plow... no looking back

"Lord, the call and cost of following You has never changed. You made it clear then, as it is now. When I am tempted by worldly measures of success, security and approval, rebuke me as you did Mr. Volunteer, Mr. Procrastination and Mr. Approval. You and You alone are Lord. Help me to keep my eye focused on You and my hand firmly grasping the plow of your calling, that on that day when You reward Your servants I may receive Thy "Well done." For nothing can ever measure the worth of those blessed words. It is You I long to please, to serve, to glorify. In Thy Name, O King, I pray. Amen."

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... Jn 9:4 Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable, changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows, spending our time on eternity, owning nothing yet possessing everything that matters and lasts. We are Pilgrims in Paradox. Welcome to THE JOURNEY.