

Going Big for God by Selling Out

Part One

Luke 9:23

Intro:

Many times in our American Culture Christianity we have made following Jesus way to easy. We pray our little prayer, come to church, and we might even go to Sunday School. We think of it more as a duty to follow Christ than as a privilege. We enjoy our nice, safe Christianity that gives us coffee at Mae's with our local church folk and the warm fellowship of nice home-cooked meals. All these things are nice, but is it really what Christ has called us for? Let's take a look at what Jesus asks of us to become true Disciples of Christ.

- The word "if" is a primary participle of conditionality. It is used as a verb of conditionality. Meaning that when you follow Christ, the things following the word "if" must happen. Let's take a look at what Christ calls us to.

1. Deny Oneself

- Webster's Dictionary: to do without desired things.
- Greek word *aparnēōmai*: to deny utterly
- Christ calls us to give up all the desires of our flesh. It is a call to lay down all the things of this world. To give up the wants, dreams, and desires of our hearts and follow headlong after Him. He calls us to deny the frivolous things of this world.
 - Ex. What if I told you that there were hundreds of children dying daily from an incurable disease. There is no hope and all we can do is share the gospel in hopes that they fall in love with Christ before they die. How many of you would be willing to go? Now, what if I told you there is no indoor plumbing, running water, AC/Heat, or electricity. How many would still be willing to go? Have we truly decided to sell out and deny ourselves, or are part of us still stuck on ourselves?

- Interesting Fact: In 2008 Sub-Saharan Africa 24.3 million people had AIDS. 1.4 million of them died from AIDS.
- Those of us who follow Christ must be willing to say to ourselves, “I do not know me” just as Peter denied Jesus in Matthew 26:74.
- “Self-denial means knowing only Christ, no longer knowing oneself. It means no longer seeing oneself, only him who is going ahead, no longer seeing the way which is too difficult for us. Self-denial says only: He is going ahead; hold fast to Him.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer

2. Take up Our Cross

- Many times this scripture is interpreted to mean taking up Christ cross, but no human has the power to take up the cross of Christ. We do not have the ability to endure divine wrath that was placed on the cross and person of Christ Jesus. We each have our own cross to endure daily.
- For people to understand what their cross is, they must first understand what a cross does.
 - The cross was a brutal, torturous execution. For us today we see the cross as a call symbol to wear around. We pimp the cross as blingage. When in fact, the cross was the most brutal form of execution ever invented. Taking up our cross daily would be like me saying take up your electric chair daily. A cross is used to kill through long suffering and agony. The cross is our symbol to come and die.
- “The first Christ-suffering that everyone has to experience is the call which summons us away from our attachments to this world. (deny oneself) It is the death of the old self in the encounter with Jesus Christ. Those who enter in discipleship enter in Jesus’ death.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Just as Paul said in Galatians 2:20a “I am crucified with Christ...”
- Romans 6:6 “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that they body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

- “The cross is not the terrible end of a pious, happy life. Instead, it stands at the beginning of community with Jesus Christ. Whenever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer

3. Follow Christ

- Christ calls His disciples to be radically obedient to Him.
- Luke 5:10-11 “And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, ‘Fear Not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him.”
- Luke 5:27-28 “And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, ‘Follow me.’ And he left all, rose up, and followed Him.”
- They were willing to abandon all they had ever known and radically follow Christ wherever he may lead them. How many of us are willing to abandon our jobs, homes, normal way of life, and comforts and radically follow Christ?
- You see if we have allowed ourselves to truly die, we don’t care what Christ expects of us, we will do it because we love Him and are willing to be radically obedient to Him.
- “Whether we, like the first disciples, must leave house and vocation to follow him, or whether, with Luther, we leave the monastery for a secular vocation, in both cases the same death awaits us, namely, death in Jesus Christ, the death of our old self caused by the call of Jesus.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- The word follow in this text is actually a particle of union. Meaning that following Jesus will bring about the union of us with Him. Jesus prayed this out in John 17:21 “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...” We find union with Christ in our radical obedience of Him.
- Bonhoeffer sums it up by saying “The disciple’s answer is not a spoken confession of faith in Jesus. Instead, it is the obedient deed.”

Conclusion:

For you see to truly follow Christ, we must become His disciples. “Christianity without the living Jesus Christ remains necessarily a Christianity without discipleship; and a Christianity without discipleship is always a Christianity without Jesus Christ. It is an idea, a myth.”

You may wonder why I use so much Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the message tonight. It is because Bonhoeffer truly knows what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was arrested for his Christian stance against Adolf Hitler in April 1943. While in prison it was discovered that he had been a part of an assassination attempt on Hitler. So he was sentenced to death. On April 9, 1945, just three weeks before the Soviets captured Berlin; Bonhoeffer was stripped of his clothing and led naked into the execution yard, where he was hanged with thin wire for strangulation. A German doctor watching penned these words: “I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer... kneeling on the floor praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the few steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost the fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have never seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer knew what it was like to be a true disciple of Christ. Do you? Bonhoeffer’s most famous quote “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”