

I invite you now, to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 9 verses 57-62. This can be found on page 734 in your pew Bibles. We continue the "Made for Mission" series today. Scripture reveals our mission.

### Our Fathers Word

*Lk 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 Word of God for the people of God

Even though it's been an exciting year of following Jesus, I still don't fully understand Him. I can still vividly recall the day we met after returning from fishing. He walked up to us, and asked us to follow Him. No one was more surprised than I was, when the group got up, left everything behind, and followed Jesus. As I look back, I now realize that this was the best decision we ever made. Life with Jesus has been an amazing Love filled adventure.

Crowds gather so quickly once we enter a town. Then, as usual, Jesus starts to teach, which almost always leads to miraculous healings, and people dancing in the streets.

This one day after Jesus finished teaching a crowd of thousands, we discovered how hungry this massive crowd was. Not wanting them to depart for their long walk home hungry, Jesus decided to feed them. Long story short, this young boy came forward with barely enough food for himself, and he gave all he had to Jesus. It was a miracle how Jesus took this offering of small fish and bread and turned it into a feast that not only fed the whole crowd, there was twelve baskets of left-overs! Oh, how I wish you could have been there to see that! People were in awe. At that point they would have done anything Jesus asked of them. He literally had them eating out of His hands.

A small crowd of people approached Jesus as we departed, asking to join our group. Great! Right? The more the merrier, that's my motto. Jesus responded with some pretty harsh words. He tells one, that if he comes, he will be homeless. He tells another that if they need to go back to say bye to their family, then don't even bother. Talk about strict. Right? This mission that we are on is not for the faint of heart.

We are in week two of the Made for Mission series. Last week we learned that every person has been called by God for a mission. You are God's masterpiece created for a purpose. You've got a decision to make about your mission. Some people choose to keep their blinders on completely ignoring God's calling into a life of mission. Others flirt with it, and *sometimes temporarily* join God in what he's made us to be. Every now and then they live out part of their purpose, only for a short time. Then, life gets busy, and they slip right back into the daily routine of everyday life.

Some people actively pursue the mission God made them for. They find it, because God's not hiding it from them. He's more excited than we are in seeing us *use our gifts and live out the purpose he made us for.* That's the goal of this series. That we would literally live our lives ON the mission we were made for.

Recall from last week, the main point from the message, is that "We are all called." Ministry is not for a select few, but for *all* Jesus followers. Knowing that, then the next obvious question is, "So, *what* am I called to?" or "What is my mission?" That's precisely what we are going to talk about today.

(Luke 9:51) *As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

Jesus was a man on a mission. He *resolutely* set out to *lay down his life* for others salvation. With focused intentionality, and faith, he knew where he was going and what His mission was. Earlier in the chapter he shared what that means for all who would follow him.

(Luke 9:23) Then he said to them all: "**Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.**"

Jesus made it clear that those who chose to follow Him, would join Him in the same mission He was on. Daily, His followers must *lay down their lives* and deny their own desires so that others would be saved. This is not a one-time event. This mission becomes ours on a daily basis, from now until Jesus returns. Our mission is much bigger than ourselves, or even the people we serve, it's part of a worldwide movement that Jesus began over two-thousand years ago.

For those of you who are still trying to sort out this whole Church thing, you might think "Well that might be your mission, but that's sure not mine." Let me just say, I get it. It can all be a bit intimidating. Even though this can still be intimidating for you today, as you're trying to understand all this, just know this, mission, our mission, is a critical part of it. God's not inviting you to come to church on Sundays just to have a feel-good experience, and hand over part of your hard-earned paycheck to him each week. He's inviting *you* to join *Him*, on *His mission*, where He is already hard at work all over the world.

If you've been a Jesus follower for a while, and know you're a Christian, you might be nodding your head thinking, "God's mission is my mission. Got it. What's next?" However, if you're anything like me, you may feel that it's much easier to just nod along with, but a little more difficult to live out. You may have complete conviction that your primary mission is to join God where He is already working, but practically speaking, your life reflects something completely different. A little caution here; today could get a bit uncomfortable, but just remember, I didn't start this...Jesus did.

One of Satan's most effective and powerful methods to get Jesus follower's off mission, is DISTRACTION.

If you have a cell phone would you pull it out for a moment.

- The average person checks their cellphone 110 times a day. That works out to 9 times an hour.
- 55% of phone users text while driving; which is 6 times more dangerous than driving drunk.
- 84% of world-wide cell users report not being able to go a single day without their phone in their hand.
- 50% of teens admit to being addicted to their cell phones. It is something that they could not live without.
- Here is the ultimate test to see if your cell phone might be a distraction or even an addiction for you: Did you check your phone when I told you to pull it out and have now missed part of what I just said? Be honest, raise your hands.

Can we all agree, we live in a culture filled with every type of distraction you can imagine. If Satan can't cause you to fall away from God, to make you a bad person, he will at least keep you very busy with distractions. He will make every attempt, in whatever way he can, to keep you off the mission that you were made for. If he succeeds, he's winning. At least, for the moment.

In a recent survey conducted by Lifeway, 80% of those attending church regularly, say *they believe* that they have a personal responsibility in sharing their faith. Unfortunately, 61% say that they haven't in the past six months. So, the vast majority of us understand what the mission is, and the importance of it, but somehow it doesn't impact the way we live. That's what we are going to talk about today.

(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 dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me." But he 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 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."

Here in today's scripture, Jesus identifies three distractions, that will keep you from connecting with Jesus on the mission God has made you for. You must ask yourselves what's my mission. Is my mission following Jesus, or have one of these distractions become my mission?

***The Distraction of Comfort*** -- A man approaches Jesus, ready to follow Him, and Jesus simply says that His mission may lead to homelessness. "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has *no place to lay his head*." We don't get to hear the response, but it's implied that *this* was a game stopper for him. He was completely ready to follow Jesus, of course, providing it didn't take him **out** of his *comfort zone*. Jesus doesn't just pull His followers out of their comfort zones, he obliterates them.

Consider Jesus's expectations for his disciples on mission with Him. He sent them out without food, money, extra clothes, or even a back-up plan. Ultimately, Jesus would model this *life lacking comfort* throughout His mission, though His passion, right up to dying on the cross with over six hours of excruciation pain and torture, ending with His death.

Before Christy and I head out we will pray for the Lord to keep us safe. I'm sure most of you do this, it is a good prayer. What if Jesus' mission was more about us following Him through danger, and less about keeping us safe in our comfort-zone all the time?

Now, I don't know about you, but I have found that the times I seem to grow the most, is when I'm uncomfortable, out of my comfort-zone, completely depending on my trust and faith in Jesus. Knowing He will be with me, there working His love through me. Taking care of all the details.

Consider how many items you can buy in this world, designed to bring your life more comfort. What happens when your distraction of comfort conflicts with Jesus' mission? What happens when your mission of life *is* comfort, rather than serving Christ? Nothing happens, and nothing changes. Jesus would have us to first consider the impact on our life-style prior to following Him. Then, take that leap of faith to follow, and serve Christ.

In today's scripture, Jesus responds to a second distraction, our *commitments*. Jesus offers His invitation yet again, "Follow me," he says to another man. *His* commitments are made *clear* as he says, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus' response may seem a bit harsh to us. He says, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Picture a father on his death bed, and a son who desires to be with him. Jesus tells the son to leave him, and follow. How could He ask this of him? If the father were already passed away, the man would have been occupied with burial duties. Evidently, he thought the mission could wait until after the passing of his father, which could potentially be years away.

Jesus' response brings a sense of **urgency** to the mission He is calling us to. Our immediate action is required, because its priority number one. We can't just put it off until our schedule permits it.

The first two words out of this man's mouth are in the wrong order, and that makes all the difference. Rather than "Lord, first let me..." his response should have been "First, Lord!" This wasn't an unrealistic request he was making. Taking care of his father was a respectable thing to do. However, he was making *that* a priority over Jesus mission and our Lord finds *that* unacceptable. Our response should only be, "First Lord! Whatever you are calling me to do Jesus, I'll do that first!"

Our obedience is not the only reason we follow, the *blessings* are also the issue here. Jesus commands us in Mt 6:33, His sermon on the mount, "**seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**" First Lord! First His kingdom! First His righteousness! Let the blessings flow! Our Lords promise to *us*, is when we put Him first, He will take care of all the rest.

If there are areas of your life you have prioritized over Jesus, you need to rethink your priorities. If your response is "Yes, but first..." I'll serve you Lord but first let me get through this busy season I'm in. I'll give you more Lord, but first let me get that promotion. I'll share my faith more Lord, but first let my own walk with God get better. I'll read my Bible Lord, but first.... Our intentions may be good or even honorable in our commitments, but Jesus still gives us that urgency to keep His mission first.

Another distraction Jesus identifies is *Competition*. Another man approaches Jesus upon hearing the calling to follow Jesus, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

Here again, Jesus' reply may seem harsh on the surface, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

If anyone can understand how difficult it can be to drop everything you are doing to follow, it's me. We can get so engulfed into our daily routines, that they can become a barrier between us and Jesus. Prioritizing is essential. Jesus must be put first. Busy schedules must not be competition with our calling into His mission. Here in our text though, this man hardly knows anything about Jesus, who he has only just met, and letting his family know his plans to go on a mission seems to be the smartest, most responsible thing to do.

Going right along with the trend of the world, this man gets his words reversed as well. "Lord; but first..." We have all learned that keeping our family informed is the responsible thing, and in that request this man actually commands Jesus. He is essentially saying Lord you let me go do this or I won't follow.

Could humility have been a better solution than trying to make a deal with Jesus, by putting conditions on his willingness to follow him? What if his response was, "Jesus, I will follow you! Could I go let my family know we are departing, and tell them goodbye?" Not "Lord, but first..."

"But" completely impacts everything we have just said.

I'm pregnant, but...      It's a boy, but...      I love you, but...      I'm all in, but...

I'll follow you, but...

Our calling, being on mission with Jesus, must be embraced with thankfulness, as a reward, without any regrets attached. We must joyfully and confidently follow Jesus without looking back with uncertainty and anxiety.

Remember this? The Apostle Paul just revealed this to us in the book of Philippians, in our joy series. Phil 3:12-14, in Paul's letter to his friends, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

So many things in our lives are competing with Jesus' mission. Work, family, making money, acquiring stuff in the world, staying healthy, raising kids, sports. Many of these things are worthy of our time. But they can't compete with God's mission of *resolutely* following him no matter the cost.

We discovered last week that *we are **all** called* when we are followers of Jesus. Whether or not we live out our calling is up to us, we must get up and follow. We must be *resolute*, just as Jesus was resolute when he walked towards Jerusalem, even though he knew what lay ahead there. So too must we intentionally, resolutely, follow Jesus in his mission, above all else.

Simply saying that you will follow him is not enough. The primary characteristic he is looking for in His followers is humility. Will you lay down your own comforts, other commitments, and things that compete for your time, to resolutely follow Jesus?

Are there any comforts that you have made more important than Christ? Are there any other commitments that you've been saying, "but first," before you can fully follow Christ's call on your life?

Are there any competing things in your life, that might be good, but have become more important than your calling to know Christ and make him known?

As we offer our closing prayer, I offer you a moment of silence to ask God the question, “Do I have any distractions in my life that I need to overcome today, so that I can resolutely follow Jesus?”

Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father,

We lift up our hearts to you in praise and adoration,

In Love and thanksgiving, for the calling you have put upon our hearts.

Lord, by your strength, empower us daily, as we make your mission our own.

We desire to meet you, where you are already working your miracles in this world.

Surround us with your protection, keeping us safe

from the attacks of the world, and the devil.

Deliver us from a coldness of heart and a wandering mind filled with distractions.

Help to share our faith to those you have placed into our lives,

as our testimony of the blessings, joy, and peace you give us.

Let them be drawn into a loving relationship with you, joining us,

As we serve you on the mission you have called us to.

May we give you all the glory in everything we do.

AMEN