
Demand of Discipleship

1. Intro & Context

- In our discipleship series so far, we've looked at
 - The call to discipleship
 - The goal of discipleship
- Today ... we're looking at the theme of the **demand** of discipleship
 - As we go, we're going to see the level of commitment that Jesus expects of his disciples
- Now I have seen the kind of commitment that Jesus wants ... and it is awesome ... it's inspirational
 - Not far from here ... I have seen adults present every week
 - Hours and hours committed each weekend
 - Money donated to the cause
 - Fund-raisers run
 - Rosters organised
 - Volunteers turning up on time
 - Kids brought along and nurtured and trained up carefully
 - Family life arranged around the cause
 - Passion, and emotion every week
 - Never a weekend absent
- In case you're wondering which church, I'm referring to ... well I'm not
 - I'm talking about Forest Rangers Football Club
- And if that's what people will do for their local soccer club ... what should Christians do for Jesus and the kingdom?
- Well that's what we're going to be looking at this morning as we look at these few verses at the end of Luke 9
- Two weeks ago, when we looked at the Call to Discipleship, we saw in Luke 9:20 that the disciples finally recognised that Jesus is the Christ and immediately Jesus tells them he must die and rise again and then calls them to follow him
- At this point Jesus is up in the north of Israel in Galilee, about 100km away from Jerusalem
- But at 9:51 ... the gospel changes tact
 - *As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

- Jesus turns and begins to head towards Jerusalem ... where he knows he's going to be arrested, tried and killed
- He resolutely sets out on the journey that he knows will result in him being nailed to a cross to die for the sins of the world
- And for the next 10 chapters (9-19) as he travels towards Jerusalem ... he begins to teach his disciples
 - what it means to be a follower of Jesus
 - what will it mean to follow the one who has set his face to go and suffer and die for people?
- And as they were beginning their journey Jesus starts laying it on the line
- Jesus doesn't ease the disciples into it
 - He's straight up ... pulls no punches ... tells it how it is
- And he says
 - "If you want to follow me on this journey ... if you want to be one of my disciples ... then **don't underestimate the demand of following me**"
 - "Following me won't be a walk in the park"

2. Underestimating the cost of following Jesus (v57-58)

- In these 6 verses we get these little cameo appearances by three would-be disciples
 - Three little cameos that paint the picture of what it means to be a disciple
- In 9:57 a man says to Jesus ... *"I will follow you wherever you go"*
 - Seems like a well-intentioned and sincere statement
 - And Jesus reply makes it clear what it's going to mean for him to follow Jesus and be his disciple
- Jesus says ... *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."*
- Even though Jesus is the Son of Man ... even though he's the Christ ... he has nowhere to stay
 - The king of glory ... God's one and only Son ... the one who gave up his heavenly home and came to earth ... is homeless
 - He's worse off than the animals and the birds who have homes
- It's not that Jesus slept rough every night on the streets or in the fields
 - He typically stayed in the homes of others
- But it wasn't his home ... he'd left his home in heaven
 - He was itinerant

- Always on the move
- No permanent place to call his own and lay his head
- And he says to the man
 - “You sure you want to follow me ... I’m not sure where I’m sleeping tonight”
- You see what Jesus is saying here? Being my disciple is costly
 - Jesus doesn’t lie to the man
 - He doesn’t sugar coat what discipleship is all about
- He doesn’t promise
 - “Follow me you’ll be healthy, wealthy and happy” – that’s a prosperity gospel and it’s a false gospel
- He doesn’t say
 - “Follow me and you’ll have a bigger house”
- He says ...
 - “Follow me and you’ll have no house”
 - That’s **not** prosperity gospel
- He says
 - “If you want to walk with me ... there will be a cost”
 - “This is no walk in the park ... it won’t be an easy path”
 - “Life won’t be easy, life won’t be comfortable”
 - “You want to follow me ... be aware of what you’re getting yourself into”
- Jesus point here is
 - Don’t underestimate the cost of following him
- **Illustration – Missionaries**
- Many missionaries from the C18th were people who understood the cost of following Jesus and who were prepared to bear the cost of being a disciple
 - They were often the best and brightest college graduates in their early 20s
 - They were known as one-way missionaries because they bought tickets to the mission field without a return ticket knowing that they had no intention of returning
 - The average life expectancy was low and so many of them packed their things in coffins rather than suitcases
- One such missionary was a man called William Milne (1785-1822)
 - He set sail for the New Hebrides in the South Pacific what is now known as Vanuatu

- He did so fully aware that the headhunters there had martyred every missionary before him
- Milne didn't fear for his life because he had already died to himself
- His coffin was packed

Application

- Are you prepared to bear the cost of following Jesus?
- There are many ways in which you will experience the cost of following Jesus
- One of the ways is it will affect your relationships
 - It may be ridicule from friends or family because you follow Jesus?
 - It may be that relationships go cold ... old friends no longer want to catch up
 - I was talking to someone from church last week about the rift, becoming a Christian has created between them and their father
- If we're fair-dinkum about following Jesus ... one of the ways you and I will feel the cost is not having the lifestyle that your friends do
 - You may not have the wardrobe you desire
 - You may not have the holidays you dream of
 - You may not live in the suburb you prefer
 - Because you understand that Jesus call on your life includes your finances too
- Another way you will feel the cost is in your career
- **Illustration – Brian**
- A friend of mine used to be a city lawyer ... smart guy ... one step away from partnership
 - One step away from setting himself up financially for life
 - Not to mention the prestige and kudos it would have brought him
- He gave it up ... for the sake of Jesus
 - He resigned and to became the administrator of a big city church he belonged to
- It cost him ...
 - financially – he'd never earn what he would have as a partner
 - relationally – ridiculed by peers
- He understood the cost and was prepared to bear it
- Are you prepared to let go of secret sins ... nurtured grudges ... self-centered aspirations?

- Because it will cost you those things to follow Jesus
- You won't be able to indulge yourself with those things any more
- The cost of following Jesus might mean you moving suburb, or city or even country
 - Mike and Katie Taylor understand that cost
 - Not only do they not have the conveniences they had in a modern western society like ours
 - It cost them not being able to see friends when they want
 - It cost them their kids not being able spend time with their grandparents
- Don't underestimate the cost of following Jesus

3. Underestimating the priority of following Jesus (v59-60)

- In v59-60 Jesus says to another man to "Follow me" ...
- And the man wants to put off following Jesus in order to go and bury his father
 - On face value you'd think that's a reasonable and good thing to go and fulfill a responsibility like that
 - Burying your father has got to be the highest social obligation in any culture
- And what does Jesus say in v60?
 - "Yeah, no worries, take your time. You gotta do what you gotta do."
- No! Shockingly ... Jesus tells the man
 - *"let the dead bury their own dead ... but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God"*
- In other words
 - Let the spiritually dead look after those things
 - Let those without kingdom priorities take care of that
 - Instead of doing that ... you go and tell people about me and my kingdom
- Wow!
 - This is full on!
 - Can you imagine not attending your parent's funeral?
- Jesus is NOT saying
 - Parents don't matter, family doesn't matter, funerals don't matter
 - They do
 - Jesus affirms the need to care for one's family¹

¹ Mark 7:9-13 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for teaching 'corban' at the expense of caring for aging parents

- In fact, in Mark 7 Jesus tears strips off the religious leaders of the day for neglecting their parents and not looking after them
- What he is saying however ... there's something that has an even greater priority than your family
- What's that?
 - Telling people about Jesus and the kingdom of heaven
- You would have thought that the man had the best excuse for postponing discipleship
- But Jesus says 'No' ...
 - There are no excuses
 - There are no good reasons to delay
 - There is nothing that has a higher priority than following me and being a disciple who proclaims the kingdom
 - Not your parents, not your kids, not your spouse, not your job, not your savings
 - They're important
 - They're good
 - But none of those things has a greater priority than following me and proclaiming the good news about me and my kingdom
 - Nothing is to get in the way following me and nothing is to postpone its start
- **Application**
- Friends if these words shock you (like they did for me) ... then I think this shows we've underestimated the priority of following Jesus
- It shows that we think
 - there **are** things more important than following Jesus
 - that **is** okay to put off following Jesus
 - that there **are** somethings that we ought to prioritise over being a Christian
- Not saying you can't or shouldn't look after your family
 - You should do those things
- But it's also not saying you need to meet our parents career aspirations for you
 - "I have to be successful in my career or my life because it might upset mum and dad"

- No ... show you parents, honour, respect, look after them ... but the kingdom of God is more important than any other relationship
- And so, the warning here from Jesus ...
 - If you want to be my disciple ... you need to make me and my kingdom #1
 - Everything else sits under that
- **Illustration – Umbrella or Pyramid**
- Think of a pyramid
 - The top stone is Jesus and following him ... everything else fits under that
- Think of an umbrella
 - The centre peak is Jesus and following him ... everything also flows out from and sits under him
- Not that they don't exist or are ignored
- It's about having the right order or priority

- **Application**
- If you're not yet a follower of Jesus ... but you know enough
 - about Jesus
 - his death on the cross for you
 - your need for forgiveness
- You know you
 - need to repent
 - need to put your trust in Jesus
 - need to turn to and follow him
- But you're just holding off doing what you know in your head and your heart you need to do
 - You're procrastinating
 - You're putting off following Jesus

- Friends, if that is you ... then I want to urge you to hear what Jesus is saying to today
 - Don't delay
 - Don't makes excuses
 - Don't prioritise other things
- Today is a good day to heed Jesus call
 - Because there's no excuse you can offer is adequate to put on hold his call for you to follow him

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- Now there may be others of you here who following Jesus ... but you're letting other things distract you
 - You're allowing other things to compete with Jesus as the #1 priority in your life
 - In your mind you're having this internal dialogue that goes something like this:
 - "Jesus, I know you call me to make you #1 ... but I need to spend more time with my family"
 - "Jesus, I know you call me to make you the priority ... but I need to pay off the mortgage"
 - "Jesus, I know you call me to proclaim the kingdom ... but my work is really demanding"
 - "Jesus, I know you call me to prioritise telling others about you ... but I'm just really tired and need more me time"
 - I'm not saying family, mortgages, work or rest are bad things
 - They're not
 - God created them and gave us those things for our good (maybe not mortgages)
 - But we can be very good and being like the man in v59 at inserting a very reasonable looking explanation for not making Jesus the #1 priority in our life
 - But Jesus wants you and I to understand the absolute priority it is to follow him and proclaim the good news about Jesus and the kingdom of heaven
 - Because when you know and that Jesus Christ went to the cross to save you and all who believe from spending eternity in hell, then you understand there is nothing that is as important as telling that message to others
 - Nothing else can be more important than people hearing the gospel, being saved from judgment and sharing the in blessing of eternal life
 - Example
 - I love how Cath Newman understands this priority
 - A lady Cath has got to know over the last two years doesn't know Jesus
 - In the course of their conversations Cath shared how she'd seen the movie 'Case for Christ' and the friend showed some interest in it
 - So Cath gave her a copy of the Case for Christ DVD as a Christmas gift
 - Recently Cath suggested to her friend they catch up for a cuppa and chat about the DVD

- When they did ... her friend had lots of questions, and they had a deep and spiritual conversation
- Cath invited her friend to join her growth group and she started last week
- Why?
 - God – of course
 - But God working in and through Cath who gets the priority of following Jesus and proclaiming the kingdom
- Jesus said ...
 - *"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*
- Friends, don't underestimated the priority of following Jesus
 - There is a gospel to be proclaimed and it is more important than anything else

4. Underestimating the commitment of following Jesus (v61-62)

- In v61 another man comes to Jesus and says "I will follow you" ... but he wants to go home and bid his family farewell
- Again, the request seems reasonable
- And Jesus warns him with a farming metaphor about plowing
 - *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*
- When a farmer plows a field with a hand plow behind an animal as they did in Jesus day ...
 - The farmer normally had one hand on the plow and another holding a whip
 - And in order to plow and straight furrow in the field ... he would have to fix his eyes ahead ... often to something in the distance ... to ensure he maintained a straight line
 - To turn around and look back would mean he takes his eyes off the object that is guiding his path and he would veer off course

Illustration – Driving

- Have you ever had that experience where you've been a passenger in a car and someone else is driving ... may your L-plater kids, or your spouse?
- And they see something that catches their eye of to the side of the road
 - Nice car
 - Kid with a balloon

- Cyclist on a Pinarello with Di2 Dura Ace group set and carbon wheels
- Or often in my case ... a magnificent cliff top view that plunges 100's of metres down to the ocean

- And they take their eyes of what is in front of them start looking at whatever is distracting them as they're driving along
 - And what happens when a driver starts watching things off to the side of the road rather looking straight ahead?
 - Yeah ... they start veering into on coming traffic or the barrier that's the only thing stopping them careening off the cliff
- If you're going to drive straight ... you must keep your eyes fixed straight ahead

- And this is Jesus point
 - If you're going to follow him ... you can't be looking behind you all the time to your old life
 - You'll veer off course and crash

- Jesus warns the man and he warns us
 - When you follow me ... don't look back longingly at the life you left behind
 - You need to let that go
 - You need to ensure you're not distracted by it
- Because if you're going to follow me says Jesus ... you need to be 100% committed
 - Not 50 / 50
 - Not saying you're a Christian but constantly desiring for what you left behind
- If you're going to follow me, you need to keep your eyes fixed on me and don't look back
 - Because if you're not ... you're not fit for the kingdom ... you can't be my disciple
- Friends, don't underestimate the commitment of following Jesus

Illustration

- For a while when I was going through Bible college and my first years of ministry ... I would occasionally look at job search websites and search for the role I used to do before I went to Bible college
- I think what I was doing was looking to see how much money would I be earning now if I wasn't at college or in ministry?
- I was seeing where my career could have advanced to if I hadn't followed Jesus into full time ministry

- I was looking back
- Which was completely stupid ... because as Anglican ministers we're well paid and have absolutely nothing to complain about
 - Even if I wasn't ... I was forgetting ... the commitment Jesus calls us to and the spiritual riches we have in now and eternity that pales in significance to the what we let go of to follow Jesus

Application

- When a soldier signs up for the special forces ... they sign up knowing that at some point they will be going into battle
 - And when you know your life and the life of the men around you in on the line ... you know you can't go into that half-hearted
 - You have to be 100% committed and focused on the task at hand
 - You can't be looking back, doubting yourself and your commitment to the task
- Friends, Jesus call to follow him is not a walk in the park
 - He resolutely set his face towards Jerusalem and willingly lay down his life for the sins of the world
 - And he called on his disciples to follow him
 - And he calls on you and me to carry on his mission
 - And his point is if you're going to do that ... you need to be 100% committed to the task
- Not distracted > not pining for worldly trinkets or approval or power
 - You can't be looking back, doubting yourself and your commitment to the to following him
- **Illustration – Packing the Car**
- A lot of Christians order their life like they way they pack the car to go on holidays
- If you're married ... you'll know how this works
- [Generalising] Your wife gets all the stuff together and dumps it at the front door
- And then the husband has to play this game of car-boot Tetris and fit it all in
- How do you do it?
- Start with the big non-negotiable things first ...
 - Suitcases > in they go (humph)
 - Bike > in they go (humph)
 - Kids > pram, travel cot > in they go (humph)

- Crate of toys and games > in they go (humph)
- Then you'll be left with a few squishy things like pillows and sleeping bags and they get wedged into all the crevices and cracks
- And then you close the boot > bomp > and your ready to go on holidays

- That is the way so many Christians organise their lives
- That is, there are lots of big solid non-negotiable things like
 - Career > (humph)
 - Family > (humph)
 - House > (humph)
 - Me time > (humph)
 - Kids schooling or extra-curricular activities
 - Relationships > (humph)
- And pretty soon their lives are full and all that's left for Jesus and the kingdom is a few hours on a Sunday that you can squish in around everything else

- You may hear that and say ... well how many hours a week should I dedicate to following Jesus
 - What is the right amount to be a committed disciple of Jesus?
- You know how many Jesus wants?
 - 168 is the answer – 24/7
- And you might say
 - “What! Really?! How!?”
- Friends ... we need to remember that Jesus
 - Owns the car and the boot and all your luggage
 - He owns your finances, your wealth
 - He gave you your job
 - He blessed you with your family
- It's not that you do more ... it's what you do with it

- What if you and I sat down took the priority and commitment of Jesus seriously ... and thought about how might I re-pack my life, so I could be most involved and effective for Jesus and the Kingdom?
- Given my gifts and abilities and money and possessions and opportunities ... how can I re-order all those things ... to enable as many people as possible hear the gospel and the salvation that comes through him?
- What changes would you need to make?
 - What's the first step you would need to take?
 - Can you take that step today?

- Can you take that step this week?

5. Conclusion

- The demand of discipleship is high
- Jesus doesn't gild the lily here ... he wants you to know what it means to be his disciple
- But he doesn't want disciples like these men who say
 - "I'll follow you Jesus, but ..."
- He wants disciples who will say:
 - "Yeah I get you have no home and following you will cost me"
 - "And I get that I need to make you #1 priority in my life"
 - "And I understand you're calling on me to be committed to you and not look back"
 - "And I know it's going to be hard"
 - "And there will be times when I stumble and fall"
 - "But I know it will be worth it"
- How do you know it is worth it?
- Why would you
 - Bear the cost
 - Make Jesus #1 priority over all else
 - Commit wholeheartedly to him
- Because of who he is and what he has done
- In v58 Jesus says ...
 - *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*
- That word = lay his head is the same word in the original as 'bow'
- It's the same word the Apostle John uses in 19:30 which says
 - *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up*
- During his earthly ministry ... Jesus had no where to bow his head
 - The one place he did bow his head was at the cross
- Jesus left his heavenly home, and had no earthly home ... and he did it so that you and I could have an eternal home
 - And he did it laying his head down on the wooden beam of a cross
- Why would you make Jesus the #1 priority in your life?
 - Because he made you the #1 priority in his life

- Why would you fix your eyes on Jesus and commit your life to him?
 - Because he fixed his eyes on you and committed his life to you

- AW Milne wasn't killed by head hunters in Vanuatu like others before him
- None-the-less he understood the demand of discipleship
- Having re-ordered his life to give whatever he had for Jesus and his kingdom ... he spent 35 years living there amongst the people of Vanuatu ... sharing the good news of Jesus and the kingdom with them
- When he died, they buried him in the middle of the village
- And inscribed this on his tombstone were these words
 - "When he came there was no light. When he left there was no darkness."

- The demand of discipleship is high
- But it is worth it
- Let's pray

PRAY