

What will you pay to have Jesus? Luke 9:57-62

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A few months ago Pam and I went on a long weekend to visit our niece who has a house in Park City, Utah, which is a former mining town that is now a resort town for skiers, mostly. Gorgeous area with a variety of Aspen trees in the high elevations I had never seen before.

So we were riding up a very long ski lift late one afternoon, this is summer and we're just out to enjoy the beauty and go for a ride up to the top of the mountain, and we had one of our grand-nieces with us on the bench in the lift, and we were playing a game called; "Would You Rather".

She is about 9 I think, and we had never played this before. So you come up with the most bizarre things and it's would you rather do this, or do that. Would you rather hold your breath until you turn purple, or would you rather pluck hairs from your grandmother's upper lip? Would you rather eat a raw fish, or eat a raw chicken? Would you rather take a bath in chunky rotten milk, or take a shower in hot prune juice?

Silly stuff and we all had fun dreaming up our own gross this or that's and it is always fun to laugh with any 9 year olds. And actually we were all exercising a far more serious truth which is put into I think the most understandable

terms by the French philosopher and mathematician, Blaise Pascal. Here is what he said;

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”

— Blaise Pascal

All men seek happiness. Every choice in every moment in every day is teeter tottering on this one thing. What will make me happiest.

People go on absurd diets and withhold from themselves great pleasure and happiness, because in their minds, the happiness of not being unhealthy trumps the happiness of short term satisfaction.

Vegans are convinced that they will ultimately be more happy if they do not partake of anything animal related. Some people drink wine to be happy, and others do not drink wine . . . to be happy. And we could go on and on. The silly EeeWW-Gross game with the 9 year old is only exercising that muscle that makes us happy. Two gross things, but we choose the least gross so we can get back to being happy with the least grossness.

Jesus is all about this happiness reflex . . . with a twist. Jesus ultimately offers us the final and best happiness. But what cost will men pay to have it.

We are condemned men, all. And it is a condemnation we deserve. All have sinned. All have fallen short of the glory of God. His condemnation is righteous altogether. We are born into a rebellion. Our planet is at war with God and Satan is the ruler of this darkness. God must judge all of it.

Jesus paid my debt. Jesus took my debt of rebellion and sin to the cross. He died in my place. He took the penalty I deserved. And then, as if that wasn't enough, He gave me His righteousness. He rose from the dead victorious over

my sins that He suffered and died for. He ascended back into heaven to dwell at the right hand of His Father.

Some day I will be re-united with Him and His Father in their glorious dwelling place. I'll be dressed in spotless garments, white and clean. My joy in that day will be unspeakable.

Even now He has given me His Holy Spirit who has quickened me from spiritual death to life. His Spirit dwelling in my heart is the downpayment, the promise of everything to come. I have the joy downpayment in this world that keeps my heart singing, no matter what this world throws at me.

All of those blessings are free in the sense that I was helpless to do anything that could work towards paying the debt I owed. I was bankrupt. Helpless. He paid it all. In that sense, salvation **MUST** be free. I can't do good works to pay my debt. Anything I do in this flesh, is vile. Worthless. All of my righteousness is like soiled rags to God.

So in the sense of earning my salvation, paying my debt of sin by some kind of good works, I'm bankrupt. That is hopeless. Jesus paid it all.

But having said all of that, so that there can be no confusion, what we're looking at in these three short stories today is; What does it cost to follow Jesus. What will we give up in order to have Jesus? Sin is a blinding happiness. There is real cost to be willing to give up the gratification of sin now in order to belong to Jesus and be an heir of unspeakable joys both now and later.

The Bible is littered with warnings that tell us our mechanism that chooses the pathway to satisfaction and real joy is broken. My mind, my heart, my soul, my inner longings are broken. That is true of every fallen person. The human race is broken from the fall, and we are chasing phantoms that don't lead us to joy or peace or satisfaction.

Jeremiah writes; 2:13 *“For My people have committed two evils: They have*

*forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns,
Broken cisterns, That can hold no water.*

We forsake the living water because our hearts tell us, just dig a well, you'll be satisfied, you can do it, dig, dig, dig, and our cistern is broken, it doesn't hold water. Our broken happy thing says; ditch the living water and go look for your own water out in the desert.

That's why the writer of Proverbs writes the two verses we memorized so long ago in Sunday school. Pr. 3:5,6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.*

That is SO counter-intuitive! Our television sets are shouting at us 24-7 "do this and you'll be happy!" Whatever it is. Our world has all the answers these days, and this book says, they're all leading to destruction. Our intuition is broken. Really, what it is, according to this book, it's not so much broken, as it is dead.

Jesus says, the intuitive path that all the world is buying is the wrong way. Mt. 7:13 *“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. 14 “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.*

Pr. 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Your happy thing that is always telling you what to choose, is broke. Without this book and without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, your decision making process based on some happiness you long for, is broken. We are desperately looking for the living water, in all the wrong places.

Salvation is a free gift and cannot be earned. But the whole idea of repentance, and you'll recall that the first words out of Jesus' mouth in these

gospels is a call to repent, the whole idea of repentance is leaving your old life behind, in order to follow Jesus in newness of life.

Paul defines real repentance when he tells the Corinthians 2Cor 6:17
Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

So, in a sense, we could say, you can't pay for forgiveness of sins. You're bankrupt. You've got nothing of value to offer to pay off that insurmountable debt. But then we could also say, there is no salvation, no following Jesus, without leaving this old world behind. What will that cost. What would you pay if the cost is giving up stuff in this world.

Every time we see Jesus talking to someone about following Him, it's a fail. Well almost every time. He called the 12 and they dropped everything they were doing, and followed Him. But as we go through Luke's gospel we keep running into these folks who weigh the cost in the balance, and walk away.

What does it cost to have Jesus? Listen to Jesus tell two short stories that explain the cost of entering into His kingdom, His authority to reign, His ownership and rule, as opposed to Satan's.

44*“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.*

45*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls,
46and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

In both of those cases, the person recognizes a treasure that they would gladly pay everything they own, in order to have it. They both sold all that they had, and bought the treasure.

What does Jesus require, in order that you might have Him. Everything. Everything. He's worth more than anything else.

So Luke gives us just a couple of glimpses of real time scenarios that played out when Jesus was here.

57 And as they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."

The greek word translated as follow is; ak-o-lou-thēs-ō, a present tense verb and; *"It implies something beyond the moment. And in the present tense, that implication becomes explicit. Keep on following Me. You might even say, "From now on in your life, follow Me." John MacArthur*

Or as in the examples we have in our passage this morning, we would say, I will be a **follower**, meaning some kind of continuous action. A follower is not a momentary action. You keep on following. That's our word.

And we might also note here, as in the case with the rich young ruler in Luke 19, we modern evangelicals would have all of these guys swept into the kingdom so fast they'd be teaching a class next week.

Jesus, not so much. He seems to look straight inside their hearts, something we can't do, and then He goes for the throat and says, OK, put your money where your mouth is; If you're going to follow me, consider this: and it's always different, the thing you won't give up, or can't give up in order to have him.

The other truth we want to consider is; this isn't necessarily a one time crisis and then it's smooth sailing. We evangelicals are lost in this idea that someone has this one time event, a burning in the bosom, an emotional instance where we walked an isle, prayed a prayer, filled out a card and that's it, signed sealed delivered.

All three of the examples we'll look at this morning are given by Luke as

comparisons to what we studied last week in vs. 51. *And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem;*

Jesus **set His face**. He resolved with steel will to march to Jerusalem and perish, because that was His Father's will for Him. Against the backdrop of that steel resolve, Jesus answers 3 different people. What will it cost to follow Jesus. What will it cost to follow someone who is a King, but not in this current world?

He requires that same disconnect with this present world and resolve to follow the God of the next world, not the god of this one. A change of ownership.

57 And as they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Jesus never owned a home of His own. Brought up with whatever comforts were customary in ancient Nazareth, He learned His step-father's trade. He could provide services in this world that were of value. Obviously, Mary and Joseph and all of His half brothers and sisters had some kind of dwelling at Nazareth. Whatever was normative in that culture.

But when the day came for Jesus to go down to the Jordan River and begin His ministry, according to His Father's will, He left whatever comforts of home and dwelling and family were His at Nazareth behind in order to follow His Father's will.

He had already left heaven behind in order to come into this world. And when He was about 30, He left family and home comforts behind in order to perfectly do His Father's will. And at this juncture in the story, He has resolved with steel will to go to Jerusalem where His own death waits. Why?

The author of Hebrews tells us plainly 12:2 *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the*

author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross,

We're back to Blaise Pascal's truth. Jesus is marching to His death, motivated by joy. Joy. who for the joy set before Him endured the cross,

He has a fellow who has told Him, he will follow Him anywhere He goes. And Jesus immediately responds with what we all fear the most. It will cost you. If you follow me to Jerusalem, you must consider the cost of the joy that is inherent in belonging to Jesus. For this man, the cost is; You must leave the comforts of this world behind, if you will follow me.

That's the pattern that we will see in not only this first of three, but in all 3, the cost to have Jesus is to leave the things of this world behind, if you would have Him. That idea is completely foreign to modern American Christians. Crazy talk.

Jesus didn't tell the man, you can't follow Me. He just said, get on board, but in your happiness calculator, enter this in, to follow Me is to leave this world behind. Is the happiness of knowing Jesus intimately and personally of more value than comfort, if that is necessary? What will you pay to have the treasure?

In each of the three examples, the cost is different. For one, leaving comfort might not be a cost at all. Tell John the Baptist to leave comfort behind. He would shrug and say, what comfort. I've been eating locusts and I wear animal skins. Comfort isn't his problem. The cost is different for different folks.

59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father." 60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

In the ancient eastern world, and indeed even into the twentieth century, this was an eastern saying that was common. In those lands, you were indentured

to your father. Your honor was to work for him in his endeavors. As long as your father was alive, your first duty was to do his bidding. When he was dead, you were released to rejoin your own enterprises.

That's what we have here. This man is torn between the call of duty to his father, who is still alive. Jesus calls him to come follow Him, but he says, I will. I want to follow you, but it must wait until my father is no longer living. My first priority must be to him. *Permit me first to go and bury my father.*” His father is alive and his father is priority over Jesus. Have to wait until he's dead, then follow.

Jesus answer sounds harsh to our ears. Follow me. I will, but my first priority is to my father, and when he is gone, then I will follow you. And Jesus says; *“Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.”*

Suffer the dead to bury their own dead. Let the dead bury their own dead.

It sounds harsh, but in those words is the stark reality that this world belongs to Satan, in which every person is born dead, spiritually dead, removed from the fellowship of God. All in this world are dead. All have sinned. All are separated from God.

Jesus has just called this man to come from death to life! And this guy is hesitating. This world, his father, his family, all have a strong hold on him.

Such is the cost to follow Jesus. A cost I never had to pay because both of my parents loved the Lord Jesus. But for very many, such is the cost of the treasure of having Jesus. Knowing Jesus. If you must choose between Him and your family who doesn't want Him, you must leave your beloved ones behind in order to have Him.

Tragic and stark truths. If the choice is your loved ones, or Jesus, then the cost to have the treasure is high, but it must be paid. Nothing is more important. This life is 5 minutes long. Eternity with the Saviour, dwelling in

His joy must be worth more to you than family.

What was the line in Luther's song? He understood this very well. *"Let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also; The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, His Kingdom is forever."* Luther's father was furious over what he saw as a waste of a hard bought education he had provided for his son. Luther had to let the dead bury his father.

In Arab lands, the Islamic world, the cost to have Jesus is immediate divorce of your family and friends. You must become an outcast. You would be shunned. And often, it can cost you your physical life, to choose Him.

What will you pay to have Jesus? Will you give up this world in order to have the next one?

61 And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Again, to our tender ears, this sounds so harsh. This doesn't fit with the gentle Jesus who taught such good things and only did pleasant things.

When Jesus resolutely set His face towards Jerusalem, did He stop in at Nazareth since it was on His way in order to tell His family good-bye? Did He?

No, that scenario had already come and gone for Him, before He required it of others. From Mark ch. 3 we witness the story of Jesus letting His family go;

20 Then Jesus went home, and once again a crowd gathered, so that He and His disciples could not even eat. 21 When His family heard about this, they went out to take custody of Him, saying, "He is out of His mind." Vs. 31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers came and stood outside. They sent someone in to summon Him, 32 and a crowd was sitting around Him. "Look," He was told, "Your mother and brothers are outside, asking for You."

33 But Jesus replied, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" 34 Looking at those seated in a circle around Him, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother."

Jesus doesn't ask us to pay a price He didn't already have to pay. He left comfort behind. He left Mary and His brothers in the carpentry business behind to go and do His Father's will, He was divorced from His earthly family in order to carry out His heavenly Father's will. And in the verse I just read, He says His Father's will trumps everything else. When we separate ourselves from this world in order to more closely follow Jesus then; *For whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother*

This subject will come up again in Luke 18 when we study the rich young ruler. At that time, Peter says;

Mt 19:27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" 28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.

What about us? Most of us haven't come up against any cost at all in order to have Jesus. Does this passage have application with us?

We have no idea what our future's hold. Cultural christianity in our land, has vanished like a morning fog. It was there, and it's gone. Al Mohler has minted a new word to help define the current phenomenon. Cultural christianity which we all grew up with was inhabited by people who were "christian-ish". Not real christians, millions who were christian - ish.

The numbers in the pew research poles, 66 out of 100 in our land say they are

christians. But they don't go to church. They don't worship God. They are christian - ish, and those numbers are falling like a rock.

Christian - ish people did not produce christian kids. And the current generation, and the rapidly coming of age generation want nothing to do with this book and what it claims. Tolerance has quickly turned into intolerance. And I mean quickly! The last 4 years have seen a massive sea change.

Christians who believe this book is authoritative; get out. Go away. Board yourselves up inside your crummy little church until we figure out what we're going to do with you.

Christian - ish people have vanished. The fog was there. You turned away for a moment to pour a cup of coffee, and you look, and it's gone. Just like that. You couldn't see it recede. It simply vanished.

The multitudes who followed Jesus were christian - ish. And when He didn't deliver what they wanted, they quickly shouted for His crucifixion. Quickly!

Jesus says, if you want to follow Him, you must leave this world behind. A divorce needs to happen. Luke 14:26; *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."*

What a strange verse. Hate my wife?? Hate myself?? What does that mean. It means that whatever it is, that is holding you to this world, while Jesus walks on down the road to Jerusalem . . . whatever it is, get rid of it, and run to Jesus. Don't let Him walk away without you.

Nothing in this world is better than having Jesus. At any cost! Nothing. He is the treasure that you must be willing to sell ALL, in order to possess Him.

We don't know who the writer of the letter to the Hebrew christians was. Lots of guesses out there. My money's on Peter. We'll know some day. But whoever it was, they must have meditated long on Jesus words in this passage

we looked at this morning. Listen to Hebrews:

12:1 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us,** and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*