

## LifeGroups 2.6—Compelled by Love Luke 9:57-62, 14:25-35

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] For a number of weeks now we have been talking about what it means to be on the mission that Jesus launched. A quick rundown of where we've come from so far.
- The mission Jesus launched is different than the "church." The way out of the bubble called "church" is love. The more you know and experience the love God has for you, the more serious you'll be about Jesus' mission. The love God has for us compels us to be on the mission. Being on the mission means sacrificial love for everyone we meet. It means praying fervently, going dependently, boldly proclaiming God's good news, faithfully warning of God's judgment.
- My dream, my prayer is that every follower of Jesus not only understands this mission but is actively on the mission in a significant way. Here's the deal. You need to know, if you don't already, that the mission is costly. [Slide #2]

### Proposition

- **Being on the mission Jesus launched is costly**
- Think about the preparations and then the difficulties of climbing, let's say, Mount Everest. I'm not a mountain climber but I've seen enough [National Geographic](#) specials to get an idea. Massive snow and ice avalanches. During winter, near the summit, hurricane-force winds that can reach 177 mph. An average January temp of -33° F. The risk of Hypothermia and high altitude sickness. Anyone who dreams of climbing Everest counts the cost before attempting an ascent.
- It's the same with being on the mission Jesus launched. Being on the mission Jesus launched is costly. It will cost you something to be on this mission. Or, as a wise person once said, following Jesus "is not a fly-by-night affair."<sup>1</sup>

### Transition

I love [Luke 9:57-62](#) for the simple reason that Jesus tells us like it is—up front. There are no small print, hard to understand disclaimers with Jesus. In this section he has a frank conversation with three would-be followers. Three people who want to be on his mission. [Slide #3]

### Organizational Sentence

- **Jesus gives them three warnings; three warnings to would-be followers about the cost of being on His mission**

### Transition

Listen to [verses 57-58](#) and Jesus' [first warning](#). *As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have*

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<sup>1</sup> Bock, p. 976.

*holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*" No two ways about it. [Slide #4] Being on Jesus' mission means **expecting hardship**.

### Main Points

- Here's the scene. As Jesus and the disciples walk to Jerusalem a man comes up and confronts Jesus with, a sincere and genuine desire. *"I will follow you wherever you go."* This guy really wants to be on the mission Jesus launched.
- What does Jesus do? Pull out the pen and paper and have the guy sign on a dotted line? Done deal? Chalk up another follower? Another one on the mission? No. Instead. Reality. Jesus expands on what it will mean for this guy to join the mission. **Verse 58.** *Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*
- In other words, you want to be on the mission? Count on being uncomfortable. Count on sacrifice. Count on hardship. Being on the mission means living as Jesus lived—a man with fewer creature comforts than the creatures themselves have. *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*
- And anyone who wants to be on the mission Jesus launched needs to take his warning to heart. Jesus is up front about what being on the mission will mean. To be on the mission with Him will cost you something. Expect hardship as part of the mission.

### Transition

But that's not all. There's a **second warning**. Look at **verses 59-60**. *He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."* 60 *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."* Jesus' warning here? [Slide #5] **Making excuses** to get out of the mission—not acceptable.

- Unlike the first guy who approaches Jesus, Jesus seeks this second would-be follower out. Jesus makes the demand of him. *Follow me*, he says to the guy. But instead of joining the mission the guy gives an excuse. *"Lord, first let me go and bury my father."*
- Now to us, the man's response seems pretty reasonable, pretty innocent, doesn't it? "Jesus, I want to be on the mission. I like the mission. I believe in what you are doing Jesus. Good stuff. Just let me take care of a few things first." That's the guy's response. What does Jesus tell him? *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*
- See, the Jewish religious tradition at the time demanded a son fulfill the sacred responsibility to bury a parent. That's what good religious people of the day did. To neglect this duty was disgraceful. And Jewish burial practices were a long drawn out process. We're talking a year long process that started with the burial itself and ended with the bones of the deceased being placed in a bone box—an ossuary—in the family tomb.

- It's unclear from the man's response whether or not this man's father was dead or alive. In either case Jesus' point is the same. Don't put off the mission. Excused absences from the mission don't cut it. *"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*
- Again, Jesus is not rejecting the responsibility of taking care of one's parent. He's rejecting the long delay that would have kept this man off the mission. Any excuse that delays the mission, puts off the mission is unacceptable. Even sacred family duties, Jesus says, shouldn't be used as excuses. To be on mission Jesus takes precedence over every everything, over every social obligation, over every human relationship.<sup>2</sup>
- Jesus says the same thing later on in **Luke 14:26**, doesn't he? *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple."* Jesus is not saying literally you must hate your wife. Hate your child. Hate your parents. Or in the case of **Luke 9**, don't bury your parent. What's he's saying is love him and his mission more than those things. I think Jesus wanted this second would-be follower to fulfill his obligation to family. Just not at the expense of the mission.
- Jesus warning here is about timing. If you want to be on the mission that Jesus launched the time is now. Not later. Not in the future. Not after you take care of some business. Not after you get your ducks in a row. Now. No delay. No excuses. No ifs ands or buts.
- To me, the most telling thing about the man's excuse, the reason for his wanting to delay being on the mission, is religion. Being religious is his excuse. The man doesn't say, "Jesus I can't be on your mission because I need to party every weekend. I need to advance my career. I'm too young. I need to cut the grass, take care of the house. I have to go to the cabin. I've got school to deal with." He cites something very religious as his reason for not joining Jesus and his mission. And I wonder how many of us have either intentionally or unintentionally done the same?

### Transition

Finally, **verses 61-62**. *Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."* [Slide #6] The last of Jesus' warnings has to do with **divided loyalties**.

- Like the first guy, the third would-be follower approaches Jesus and volunteers for the mission. *Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord. But he comes to Jesus with a condition, doesn't he? Look at **verse 61**. "Before I follow, let me say goodbye to my family."* On the surface it seems all the guy asks is that he return home to say good-bye before joining the mission.
- Again, Jesus must have sensed something wrong with the man's heart because in **verse 62** he warns the man. Look at **verse 62**. *Jesus replied, "No one who puts his*

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<sup>2</sup> NIDNT, vol. 1, p. 556.

*hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."* You can't be on the mission and have **divided loyalties**.

- Jesus explains that to be on the mission he launched is like plowing a field—to do it well you can't keep looking backward as you plow. Yesterday I tried this. Not plowing. Yesterday when I was mowing the grass I tried to cut while looking backwards. You can't do it. I wonder what our neighbors thought of me. What is that idiot doing?
- Jesus' point to this guy is that you can't do it. In the same way you're not able to plow a straight furrow with your loyalties divided between the field in front of you and the field behind you, you're not able to be on the mission with divided loyalties, without total dedication. Divided loyalties won't cut it. The expectation is that "total dedication to the task" is required to be on his mission.<sup>3</sup>
- Because anything less than this makes a person unfit for the mission. Think hard about what Jesus says here. Listen to the hardness of Jesus words in [verse 62](#). "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*" The person with divided loyalties is a square peg in a round hole—unfit for the mission. Man that's tough.
- As we continue to work out as a church what it means to be on the mission Jesus launched we can't be naïve. Jesus' mission will mean a disruption of your normal—whatever that is. Being on His mission is to welcome a new normal.

### Transition

I want you to turn to one more passage in Luke. [Luke 14:25-35](#). And I want to zero in on [verses 28-32](#) because Jesus gives two illustrations that help us count the cost of being on his mission. Listen to what Jesus says. Again, pay particular attention to verses 28-32.

- *Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*
- *28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'*
- *31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*

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<sup>3</sup> Bock, p. 983.

- 34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
- The **first illustration** has to do with the construction of a tower. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. In other words following Jesus, being on his mission, is like building a tower. The goal of any project is finishing, right? Finish what you start. And so before you undertake a larger than normal project like building a tower—or launching out on Jesus mission—you take into account what it will take to finish—you count the cost.
- Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'
- Jesus' point is that if you don't count the cost you run the risk of not finishing. And an unfinished tower means ridicule; the project stands as a monument to the man's foolishness.<sup>4</sup> Jesus doesn't want the same to happen to us. He wants us to finish strong and complete what we start.
- In the **second illustration** Jesus tells of a king being attacked. "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. The attacked king has a problem. His army is half the size of his enemy's. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?"
- Again, Jesus' point is that it would be wise for the king who's being attacked to calculate whether or not he can fend off an army twice his size before rushing headlong into battle? You bet. He'd better count the cost. And when he does, he sends out an emissary to seek peace. Better to count the cost and surrender than to fight and suffer tragic defeat.
- Do you see what Jesus is saying? To avoid an embarrassing, even deadly outcome, one must count the cost of being Jesus' disciple.<sup>5</sup> Anything less than wholehearted devotion to him and his mission yields tragic results.
- What does being on the mission Jesus launched cost? **Verse 33**. *In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.* It costs you everything; complete surrender to Jesus.

## Conclusion

- All of this, all three of these warnings to the would-be followers and then these two illustrations about counting the cost beg the question. If following Jesus, if being on his mission is so costly why in the world do it? What's to be gained? Who in their right mind would join Jesus on his mission?

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<sup>4</sup> Bock, p. 1288.

<sup>5</sup> Bock, p. 1289.

- The assumption in all of what Jesus says is that, for some, the mission costs too much. Some will hear Jesus' call to follow and walk away. Think **Mark 10:17-22**. *As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: `Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*
- If being on the mission Jesus launched is costly, and it is, what's to keep us from walking away like that man who initially *ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees before him*? Who in their right mind would do it? What's to be gained?
- Here's the reason. The only way the mission is worth it is if what is gained by being on the mission is greater than what is lost through the cost. Listen to me. The only way the mission is worth it is if what is gained by being on the mission is greater than what is lost through the cost.
- Do you remember what Paul says in **Philippians 3:7-9**? For Paul being on Jesus' mission meant hardships, troubles, distress, beatings, riots, imprisonment, sleepless nights, hunger, stoning, shipwreck, and as he calls it, cold and naked toil.<sup>6</sup> The only way the mission is worth it is if what is gained by being on the mission is greater than what is lost through the cost. Paul says in Philippians. Let the weight of his words sink in. *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.*
- What do you gain by being on the mission? What comes with all difficulty and the hardship and the surrender and the sacrifice? You get Jesus. You get to be with him. Jesus' presence is where his mission is being lived out. Gaining him more than makes up for whatever is lost through the cost. *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.*
- The only questions you need to answer this morning are, how much do you value Jesus' presence? And, right now, what are you valuing more than him? Honestly and sincerely answer those questions and you just may find yourself on the ride of your life. There is no better place to be than with Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 6 and 11