

“The Cost of Christ: Part 2”
Luke 9:28-62

Intro: Dismiss. Pray. Names?

The events of life Friday have left us searching. There are so many layers here. How could this have happened? Why did it happen? Not only did 26 people lose their lives, but 20 were children and the six adults, all women. Perhaps the greatest grief that could be experienced in life is that of a parent who loses their child. This raises questions about the world in which we live. Are any of us safe? Where is God in all of this? This morning it is not my aim to answer all of these questions very thoroughly. At the same time, God’s Word is so deep and life giving that we should not be surprised that our passage for this morning will help us reflect well both theologically and practically in light of the Newtown tragedy.

Last week we saw the disciples confess Jesus as the Christ and Jesus foretell his coming death for the first time as well as lay out the cost of what it takes to follow him. This week we are going to gain further insight into the person and work of Christ, which will in turn, teach us what that means for us as his would-be followers. Luke will challenge us to . . .

The Point: See the glory of Christ, and embrace the cost of his cross. *Trans:* Number one

I. See that the glory of Christ outshines all other competitors (9:28-43).

a) See the glory of Christ in his person (28-36).

- About a week after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ (9:20) and Jesus went on to foretell his death and lay out the cost of following him, Luke tells us Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. As we have seen, this was not uncommon for Jesus, but on this particular occasion something extraordinary happened. **Verse 29**
- This moment we know as the Transfiguration amounted to a sneak peek, a preview of the preexistent glory of Christ. As the divine, eternal and uncreated Son of God, Jesus is completely glorious.
- **Hebrews 1:3 says, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”**
- He meets with Moses and Elijah...

The divine endorsement...

- We saw this at the baptism. We have it again here.
- “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!” (Son, Chosen One, Listen!)
- This endorsement was timely because it reinforced their understanding of him as the Messiah, it spoke words of comfort in light of his coming death, and they needed to be encouraged to listen closely because they did not have it all figured out. They weren’t ready
- Listen to him!
 - Jesus is the “Prophet like Moses”
 - **Deuteronomy 18:15...** “**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—**”
 - We have much to learn. Like the disciples, we often think we understand most everything there is to know about God, however astounding and nonsensical that may be, not remembering that God is infinite in all his perfections.

b) See the glory of Christ in his work (37-43).

- The authority and power of Christ have “dominated” this section of Luke. We see it again, but this time Luke is contrasting the power of Jesus with the impotence and unbelief of his disciples.
- Jesus moves from the mountaintop experience of his glory being revealed back down into the valley of our fallen world.
- Like Jesus, we must spend time tucked away in prayer to gain encouragement and a proper perspective, but we do so, in part, so that we might serve those around us.
- **Story:** And Jesus serves a man in his moment of crisis, who had an only son riddled by an unclean spirit. This demonic spirit caused epileptic reactions for the boy and endangered his life. Once again, and this is good news for us this morning, we see that Jesus has authority over all evil and spiritual forces. The people caught glimpses of this in the gospels, but one day we will see this in its fullness.
- Verse 43 is the key: “And all were *astonished* at the majesty of God. . . . they were all *marveling* at everything he was doing.”
- *App:* We need a heavy dose of the glory of Christ in times like these. The glory of Christ inspires us in our greatest moments, and the glory of Christ comforts us in our darkest moments. A glimpse of his glory, a radiance that outshines all other competitors, and his glory tells us there is something more, something higher and greater and purer, something beyond the trappings of this fallen and often tragic world. We were made to see the glory of Christ and live for his glory. Life will only make sense, in the deepest and truest sense, when we see and live for the glory of the God who made us.
- Now, don’t lose sight of this scene: the disciples, the huge crowd, everyone is astonished and marveling at the glory of Christ displayed in his work, and then Jesus speaks the sobering words of **v 44**.

- 2nd time he has predicted his death. Let's keep reading and we will break it down. **Verses 45-50**

II. Reject seeking glory for yourself. (9:44-50).

- Rather than being solely captivated by the glory of Christ and properly interpreting what that should mean for their lives, the disciples had another agenda on the table. *They sought glory in their own greatness.*
- **Verse 46** tells us that they had argument about which of them was the greatest. Because they did not understand the nature of Christ's saving work, they thought that Jesus was on the road to glory and an immediate earthly reign, rather than on the road to the cross.
- Let's not forget that all of this is going on in the presence of Christ. V. 47 says, "Jesus knew the reasoning of their hearts." He knew their selfish motivations and desires. He knew they were prone to elevate themselves. He knew that we all crave notoriety, achievement, greatness. It's intrinsic to who we are. We all seek glory, and most of the time that glory is all about us!
- Rather than coming down hard on them, he decided to teach them in a way that carried even greater force.
- He grabs a child and puts him by his side, and then distributes these heavy words to his proud disciples.
- Hey guys, you see this little kid? "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receive him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."
- Now, before we get to the heart of what Jesus is doing here, I want us to examine the place of children in the life and ministry of Jesus. It is important to understand that many viewed spending time with children in Jesus' day as a waste. In Judaism, children under twelve could not be taught the Torah, so needless to say, people would not have lifted up a child as an example of greatness.
- There are a couple of key passages that we should know to understand the deep love Jesus had for children.

Jesus and Children in the Gospels

"And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them." (Mark 10:13-16)

- **1) Jesus loved children and treated them with unique kindness.** He was indignant when the disciples tried to keep the children from him.
- **2) Jesus blessed children and held them up as examples of entering the kingdom.** Jesus prayed for these children, blessed them, and said that if you want to enter the kingdom, you better be like a child: humble, dependent, receptive to my voice.

Matthew 18 parallels our text in Luke and tells us more: **"Whoever receives one such child in my name receive me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:5-6)**

- What do we learn here?
- **3) Jesus identified himself with children completely.** If you receive them, you receive me.
- **4) Jesus protected the innocence of children.** If you cause one of these little ones to sin or stumble, it would be better that you did not even exist.
- Jesus loved children, cared for children, blessed children, prayed for children, identified with children and protected children... and so should we. We know this is the way it should be, and this is the way it is in the kingdom of God.
- That is why the indescribable tragedy in Newtown shakes us to the core. We are horrified over the loss of 20, six and seven year olds; we grieve with the families affected, and we hope for the day when sin, evil, spiritual warfare, and death will be no more. To me, rather than questioning God's existence, tragedies really reinforce the story of the Bible. (not the way it's supposed to be, reality of evil; and God's common grace keeps us from being as bad as we could be).
- This is the unique hope of the Christian. Justice will ultimately be served in a way that no human court could, and there will come a day when God will right every wrong and restore all of the pieces of our brokenness.

Now, Jesus brings in a child here in Luke 9, because he wants us to see that greatness resides not in recognition or seeking personal value by comparing ourselves to others, but in knowing Jesus.

- This is the whole point. It's not about how we relate in comparison to one another, which can be so incredibly crippling, and we all struggle with it. Gotta get to the gym, gotta make the grade, gotta get my act together... for what? For who?
- It's about our relationship with God. Greatness is established by our relationship with Jesus, so even though this child isn't great, receiving him is like receiving Christ. You are trying to gain status but Jesus is saying to change the way you view others to the point where you see everyone as important and even the least as great.
- The disciples needed to not only change how they viewed one another, but they also needed to lose their selfish perspective when it come to outsiders as well.
- **Vv.49-50: Unity/Cooperation not rivalry**
- App: This church will never be great if we care about who is great among us. Who is great among us? Let me go ahead and answer that: God is great and God alone!
- We have to reject our bent to seek glory for ourselves, and when we do, we are in position to, then, #3

III. Experience the glorious cost of following Christ (9:51-62).

- **Read 51-56**
- Luke is helping us to see, by his composition, that the call to follow Jesus is a call to follow him completely even when that means suffering. Both passages on the cost of discipleship follow Jesus predicting his coming death, and this time it also follows the programmatic statement from Luke in v. 51: “he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”
- Verse 51 marks the end of the first major section and takes us into what is known in Luke as the “Travelogue” that will take us to chapter 19.
- The expression “he set his face like flint” to Jerusalem is an idiom that tells us that Jesus was determined, completely resolute to go to Jerusalem, because he knew that Jerusalem is where his mission would be fulfilled. There he would suffer, be rejected, be crucified and then resurrected and then taken up (ascension, his mission would be completed...)
- Death comes to every man, but for Jesus it would be unique. He knew the physical implications of his death. Death by crucifixion was the most despicable known to man, but he also knew the spiritual and emotional implications of his death. He would bear the sin of the world.
- From this moment Jesus is staring down death in the face. He voluntarily became broken and died so that we might become unbreakable and have life.

Story...

- Not received because, “his face was set toward Jerusalem..” Think about this practically. Disciples were sent ahead to make preparations, but they did not receive him.
- The bold disciples, James and John, the “Sons of Thunder...” had a great idea: “Jesus, how would you like for us to call down fire from heaven? If a town dishonors you, judgment should follow.”
- Verse 55 simply says: “He turned and rebuked them.” I can just imagine: “James, John, tough guys, enough of the nonsense. We are on a mission here.”

The way of glory for Jesus is the way of the cross. And Jesus continued his death march to Jerusalem. It is against this setting we read **vv. 57-62**

- As they were traveling along the road Jesus meets three men. These three men are would be followers of Christ.
- #### Encounter #1 (57-58)
- This man is to be commended for his initiative and pitied for his presumption. “I will follow you wherever you go.”
 - Bonhoeffer says that Jesus “damps his ardour...” by telling him he does not even have a place to sleep.
 - Jesus was often homeless, constantly on the move and slept under the stars.
 - Jesus knows our idols. He asks: Do you treasure your comfort more than me?
 - The cost of following Jesus is great, and for many, the cost is too great. Sacrifice is involved.
 - Are there sacrifices you need to willingly make for Jesus? Is there anything too great? What would you not give up for him?

Encounter #2 (59-60)

- This time Jesus initiates: “Follow me.” To which the man replied. “I’d like to but first, let me go and bury my Father.”
- And Jesus replies, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”
- Seems harsh... This one is tough. We have responsibilities. Sometimes the most noble and the highest, and yet, there is a greater responsibility, a privilege that supersedes all other plans and commitments. This opportunity is so valuable, so precious that we should allow absolutely nothing to stand in our way.
- Jesus knows our idols. Do you treasure your family and other obligations more than me? And part of the call to follow Jesus involves proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Encounter #3

- I will follow you, but I have another priority. I would like to say farewell... He comes to Jesus on his terms... True discipleship only operates on the conditions Jesus sets. He doesn’t answer to us; we follow him.
- Jesus says, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”
- The man says, “I’m in, but not really in.” Jesus says, “You’re not in. You cannot follow two things at once.”
- This is hard work and a call not to a temporary decision, but to a lifetime commitment to Christ. Following Christ for a couple of days, weeks, years, or even decades is not following Christ. This is a picture of enduring commitment.
- Our hand is on the plow. Denying self, taking up our cross, putting our hand to the plow is a difficult, a sacrificial, a radical call.
- App: Don’t look back. What causes you to look back? What is it that distracts you from being wholly committed to following Jesus?
- Jesus knows our idols. Do you treasure your anything more than me? Jesus demands our unreserved commitment. Jesus and his plans are now the priority of our lives. Anything less is to be “unfit” and unusable for the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

What’s your excuse? What is holding you back?

- I’ll put that off. These are my priorities for now, surely God will understand... How many people, because of their work, because of their family, because of their obligations and their misplaced loves, reject following Jesus. In seeking to save their plans, they forfeit the path to life.
- BUT this is where glory is found. This is how Jesus defines glory. The road to glory is the way of the cross.
- **The cost is great, but the reward is greater!**
- This is a glorious cost. Because Jesus says “follow ME.” He is the greatest treasure. He is worth it all!