

THREE PROSPECTIVE DISCIPLES

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Luke 9:57-62 says, “And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” There are key lessons to learn from Christ’s answer to each of these three prospective disciples.

Forsake everything

The first man said to Jesus, “Lord, I will follow thee wherever you go” (Luke 9:57). Jesus’ answer was that “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). Jesus was materially poor while on this earth (2 Cor 8:9; Php 2:5-8). He lived a life of service (Mark 10:42-45; John 13:3-17). He also suffered for righteousness’ sake (Isa 52:13-53:12; Heb 2:10; 5:8-9; 1 Pet 2:19-25). The Lord’s answer to this man teaches us the lesson that following Jesus requires denying ourselves, forsaking everything (Matt 19:29-30; Luke 14:26-33), serving others, and suffering for doing well.

No excuses

Jesus called another man to follow him, but the man said “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father” (Luke 9:59). “Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60). Jesus was not condemning the practice of funerals or burying the dead. After all, Jesus himself joined a funeral procession in Nain and, filled with compassion, he raised the young man from the dead (Luke 7:11-16). Jesus also participated in the mourning for Lazarus in Bethany before raising him from the dead (John 11:18-45). Obviously, in this case the

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prospective disciple was making an excuse. If this man's father was truly in need of burial at that moment, why hadn't the man already buried him? Why wasn't he in the midst of taking care of that need at that very time? Those who make excuses and do not do the will of the Lord will be excluded from his kingdom (Luke 14:16-24). Those who reject the Lord are the spiritually dead (John 8:24). Jesus told the man to let these spiritually dead people bury their dead. Christ's answer to this man teaches us the lesson that we must not make excuses but should instead be busy preaching and laboring in the kingdom.

Never turn back

When Jesus called the last man, he said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house" (Luke 9:61). "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Jesus was also not condemning care and consideration for one's family members. While hanging on the cross, Jesus arranged for John to provide for his mother (John 19:26-27). This prospective disciple was also making an excuse. When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John, they immediately left and followed the Lord (Matt 4:18-22). But this did not mean that they never would see their relatives again. After being called, Peter still had a house, a wife, and his mother-in-law was in his house too (Matt 8:14-15). Therefore, it was merely an excuse to decline to follow the Lord because of a desire to say farewell to his family. This man's excuse was rooted in a love for this world. Jesus' answer to this man teaches us the lesson that we must not ever look back towards the world that we have been called out of (2 Cor 6:14-18; Gal 1:4; 6:14; Jas 1:27; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 1:4). Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). Lot's wife looked longingly back towards the wicked places that she loved and was turned to a pillar of salt. It is not possible to plow a straight row while looking backwards. We are not fit for God's kingdom if we love and look back to the world (Luke 16:13; Php 3:4-8,13-14; Jas 4:4; 1 John 2:15).