

Our passage this morning in Luke chapter 9 is one of my favorite passages in the whole book. I love it so much that around 15 years ago I chose the last five verses as my text of my very first sermon. It has been awhile but my love for this story has not changed. What I love about it is that we hear Jesus' voice invite us to come and be His disciples.

But the problem is that people are not ready to follow Jesus. There are excuses and all sorts of things that hold them back. And what I want us to see is that some of the things that keep people from being ready to be disciples of Christ keep us from being ready as well.

I want us to look at this passage together and see what keeps us from being ready to be disciples of Christ.

I. The disciples are not ready to be faithful (v. 37-45).

All of these stories will be about people's failure to follow Christ.

Even the disciples themselves fail to be faithful.

Because faithfulness requires endurance to the end.

It is not just enough to be faithful up on the mountain.

They need to be faithful in the valley.

But once they come down, they fail again.

Verse 37, **"On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him."**

The disciples are going to fail the very day after the transfiguration.

A day after Peter, James, and John see Christ in the fullness of His glory.

A day after seeing Elijah and Moses.

A day after hearing the audible voice of God the Father speak to them.

They completely fail.

Verse 38, **"And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. 40 And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."**

Someone brought their child to Jesus's disciples to be healed.

They are possessed by a demon that is torturing his son.
It is similar to epilepsy but it is not the same disease.
They would have been familiar with that disease and know this is demonic not a medical condition.

The man comes to beg the disciples.
He does not ask or politely petition.
He begs.
He begs like only a parent could.
He begs that this is his only child.
He cries and pleads.
Yet the disciples cannot cast out the demon.

This should be a surprise.
If you remember at the beginning of Luke 9 Jesus sent the disciples out.
He commissioned them to preach the Kingdom of God.
And He gave them the power and authority to cast out demons and to heal the sick.
They should be able to cast out this demon.
Christ has not taken back their authority.
Yet they fail.

Luke does not tell us why.
Matthew 17 tells us it was because of their lack of faith.
Mark tells us it was because this demon only comes out from prayer and fasting.
Luke does not give us specifics.
He is happy to let their failures over the rest of the chapter speak for them.
It is not because Luke forgot an important detail.
He wants us to focus not on prayer and fasting, but on their faithlessness.

In verse 41, Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith.
"Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here."

This might sound familiar to you.

Because it is the same complaint that Moses makes in Deuteronomy 32. He calls the generation who refused to go into the promised land a faithless and twisted generation.

Even after seeing the miracles, the plagues of Egypt, the parting of the red sea, the fiery cloud, and manna from heaven, Even after that they failed to have faith and to trust God.

And now the disciples fail.

After all the miracles they have seen.

After the miracles they have worked

After the demons they have already cast out.

Now they fail.

And Jesus laments their faithlessness.

They were faithful for awhile, but couldn't continue.

But Jesus does not leave this boy alone.

Jesus is going to heal Him anyway.

Because our faithlessness cannot stop God's will.

Our failures will not hinder God's plans.

We fail all the time, But Jesus does not.

Verse 42, **"While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father."**

The demon knows what is coming and

He exerts the very last bit of his power before Jesus kicks him out.

He throws to the boy to the ground to show how much power he has.

And then Jesus shows the demon how much power he has and tells him to leave.

Jesus gives the boy back to his father healed and restored.

Verse 43, **"And all were astonished at the majesty of God."**

All of them are amazed at Jesus.

The disciples really shouldn't be because they should have expected it. They have seen Jesus do this before and they should have had faith He would do it again.

But in the midst of this Jesus turns to rebuke them again.

Verse 43, **"But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."**

Jesus is serious.

It is hard to not imagine Him as angry here.

But more than likely He is disappointed and saddened by their lack of faith.

And He wants them to hear His words and let them sink in.

Because apparently they did not hear or understand His words that they could cast out any demons before.

He reminds them again **"The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."**

Last week we talked about how suffering is normal for the Christian.

To follow Jesus is partially to suffer.

And He wants them to know that He is going to die.

He is not just trying to prepare them for His death.

He is trying to help them understand what kind of faith they should have.

He wants them to understand the mission of the kingdom.

Because they clearly do not seem to get it.

They are confused and misguided.

Even though they have been following Jesus and doing great things for Jesus, they don't understand.

Verse 45, **"But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying."**

We are told a number of different ways why they fail.

They did not understand it.

They just did not comprehend what Jesus was talking about.
It is going in one ear and out the other.
It is not just because they are dumb.
Ultimately it is their lack of faith.

It seems like part of their lack of faith is because God is concealing it.
The meaning of Christ's parables hidden from the crowds.
Only the disciples were given access to what they meant.
But here the truth about Jesus is hidden from the disciples.

I think this is because they do not yet have the Holy Spirit.
They are not yet ready to be completely faithful because it is still in their own strength.
And they need God's help.

This veil over their eyes is part of why I pray before I preach.
It is why we should pray before we read God's Word.
Because we need the Holy Spirit to remove the veil over our eyes.
We need God to illuminate the Scriptures to us.
Because if God concealed it from us, then we will never understand.

This is also why Jesus reminds them of His death.
Because His suffering and death will be their salvation.
It will be their deliverance from faithlessness.
Jesus will die and rise again in order to bring them new life.
And only through the power of the gospel can they be faithful.
And if we are going to be faithful, we need the gospel as well.
Because we cannot be faithful in our own strength.

2. Disciples aren't ready to be the least (v. 46-56).

Pride will hinder your faith.
Pride will keep you from being able to walk with Christ.
You cannot follow Jesus if you do not humble yourself.

Pride always wants to be in first place and the most important.
But humility requires being willing to be in last place.
Being a disciple of Jesus means being willing to be the least and last.

Verse 46, **"An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest."**

What great timing to have this argument now huh?
After Peter embarrasses everyone up on the mountain.
After all of them completely fail to cast out a simple demon.
After Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith,
They think this is the time to have an argument as to who the greatest is.

None of them are that great.
They all are pretty terrible right now.
But they are all so prideful that they are arguing about it.
Twelve dudes loudly telling each other who the best is.

Especially since the answer to that question should be painfully obvious.
Who is the best in this group of men?
Which among them is the greatest?
The answer is Jesus.
Jesus is the greatest.
He is the only one not arguing.

Look how the greatest among them responds.
Not with a louder argument.
He does not even bother getting involved.

Verse 47, **"But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side 48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."**

Jesus takes a nearby child and pulls him close.
Jesus tells them that in the Kingdom of God the least are the greatest.

The child is an illustration.

Because while we think of children as adorable and our future we do not think of them as great.

When we make lists of the greatest people who have ever lived the only people who would vote for a baby is it's parents, or maybe grandparents.

Jesus pulls this child as an illustration of the least.

Because children are at the low end of the totem pole.

And Jesus is not just saying be nice to kids.

And Jesus tells them that whoever receives children receives Christ.

This doesn't mean Jesus is telling them to be nice to kids.

He means that Christians are to treat the least like the greatest.

We give them the same attention and priority we would give anyone else.

You should treat the poor homeless woman the same way you would a king.

Or the same way you would Jesus Himself.

Because the least are the greatest.

This is also Jesus tell them that none of them are great.

The greatest among them is this small child that they probably didn't notice.

The disciples pride continues in their answer.

Verse 49, **"John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us."**

John answer's Jesus lesson on humility with another illustration of his pride.

John says that they saw someone recently who was casting out demons.

And instead of celebrating that people are being freed.

Instead of glorifying God that demons are defeated and hell is losing.

They complain.

And they want to put a stop to it.

Notice what they say as well.

"He does not follow with us."

The focus is that this person thinks they are better than the disciples.
It is not "he doesn't follow you."
It is "he is not one of us."

There is also the irony that they cannot cast out demons anymore.
Yet this man can.
And they are prideful and jealous.

Jesus rebukes them again in verse 50, **"But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."**

They do not need to stop him.
This man can only cast out demons if God allows it.
And the man is not on the side of demons.
He is on their same team.
He is a part of the kingdom as well.
But they only view him as a competition.

They are like churches that view each other as enemies.
Churches that get angry when they hear another one is growing while theirs struggles and dies.
That is a prideful attitude.
The kingdom is greater than the disciples.
The kingdom of God is greater than our small sphere.
We should not be concerned with our own individual greatness like the disciples.
We should be happy to be the least.
We should not worry about where we rank.
Because the least are the greatest in God's Kingdom.

We then get one more example of pride.
This time it comes from the disciples and from the Samaritans.

Verse 51, **"When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem."**

This verse marks a turning point in the book.

From this moment on Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem.

He is heading towards the Cross and the Resurrection.

He is determined and this is the focus of His mission.

And not everyone likes this focus.

Verse 52, **"And He sent messengers ahead of Him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive Him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem."**

On His way to Jerusalem Jesus passes by a Samaritan village.

This is a surprise.

Jews and Samaritans hated each other.

Most Jews would avoid the Samaritan villages on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

But Jesus goes out of His way to include the Samaritans.

He visits the least intentionally.

But the Samaritans reject Jesus.

They do not receive Him.

And they do not receive Him because they don't like His mission.

They do not like that He is focused on Jerusalem.

They don't want to be second fiddle.

They want to be the focus of Jesus' mission.

This is their own pride.

And now James and John say something dumb.

All of the disciples who saw the transfiguration last week completely fail this time.

Verse 54, **"And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?'"**

I find it funny that the disciples who had no faith to cast out demons suddenly believe they can call down fire from heaven.
That is a miracle only Elijah was able to pull off.
They believe they are Elijah's equal.
They have plenty of faith to destroy their enemies.
They don't have enough faith to see their enemies saved and delivered.
Too often we are like that.
We are quicker to pray for our enemies destruction than their salvation.
We are more confident in God's ability to send our enemies to hell than to invite them to heaven.
We are almost zealous for God to crush them instead of redeem them.

Verse 55, **"But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village."**

Jesus rebukes His disciples because they still don't get it.
And then Jesus humbly leaves.
He casts off the dust and goes to another village.
And He preaches to them instead.

A question we have to wrestle with is Are you willing to be the least?
Are you content to be the least in the kingdom?

The gospel turns everything upside down.
The least are the greatest.
And we do not achieve greatness by seeking it for ourselves.
It is in following the footsteps of Jesus.
The disciples do not understand that Christ wants them to be great.
He came to help them achieve it.
But they will not be great by following the methods of the world.
They certainly won't find it in arguing with each other.
In the Kingdom of God greatness only comes through humility and service.
Greatness comes from being like a child rather than like Caesar.

3. Are you ready to be a disciple (56-62)?

Here we see Jesus interact with three different people.
Each of them claim that they want to be a disciple of Jesus.
But none of them are ready.
They all have a self-centered excuse as to why they cannot be a disciple.
And I want us to examine ourselves.
To see if we are tempted to make the same excuses.

Verse 57, **"As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."**

This person is volunteering to become a disciple of Jesus.
They are raising their hands saying Jesus I want to walk down the aisle.
I want to follow you wherever you are going I want to be one of your disciples with Peter and James and John.
This is wonderful.
This is what most preachers would dream of.
Most rabbis in Jesus's day would have wanted this.
It would be amazing if somebody just came up and said hey tell me about Jesus I want to be his follower I want you to teach me what it means.

But Jesus does not respond how we might expect.
He doesn't clap and celebrate and say yes I'm so glad you're going to come and follow me.
Jesus gives a warning.

Verse 58, **"And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."**

Jesus wants this person to pause and think.
He wants them to consider the cost.
To listen and make sure that they really are ready to be His disciple.
Jesus is not like a recruiter for the military that might tell you whatever you want to hear to get you to sign that paper.
Jesus is not a preacher who will say whatever he can to get you to walk down the aisle.
Jesus is not afraid to give it to you straight and to tell you the truth.

And Jesus wants to know if this person really is ready.

Jesus tells them exactly what following Jesus is going to look like.

It is going to look like being homeless.

Very practically it means that Jesus has no idea where they are going to sleep tonight.

It will probably be outside.

And He uses the illustration of wildlife.

He says that in some ways, the animals you see will be better off than you as you follow me.

Because the foxes have holes to go in and the birds have nests to keep them warm at night.

But Jesus has no bed to sleep in.

And neither will they.

I think Jesus as well as not just making a comment about the animals.

He is also making a subtle political statement.

Israel would sometimes refer to their enemies as foxes.

And later in Luke 13:32 Jesus will call Herod a fox.

Jesus once would be disciples to know that their enemies might be more prosperous than them.

That the romans, their oppressors, and the servants of darkness will have much better accommodations than the followers of Jesus.

And if you want to follow Jesus then you have to understand that.

We need to understand this today as well.

You need to be ready to follow Jesus even if that means people who are not following Jesus are going to be way more blessed than you are.

You need to be willing to follow Jesus even if that means you might have to leave all of your comforts behind to follow Him.

This will look differently for all of us but we have to be willing to follow Jesus.

Verse 59, **"To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."**

Here we have someone else who has an encounter with Jesus.

They are actually invited by Jesus to come and follow Him.

Jesus extends the invitation asking them if they are ready to be His disciple.

And they say yes but.

They have some things they would like to take care of first.

And their request seems really reasonable.

They want to finish taking care of the funeral arrangements for their father.

Now it's possible that their father is still alive and either he is sick or this person just wants to wait until their father passes on so then they are free to follow Jesus.

Or the father really could have just died and they need to take care of it.

We don't get all of the details but the point is that we are supposed to see this as a understandable reasonable good request.

When a loved one dies you understand that everything else gets put on pause till you take care of the mountain of things that need done.

People would have expected Jesus to say yes that's fine.

They would have especially expected it in a culture that highly valued submission and obedience to your parents even when you're an adult.

But Jesus does not say that's fine.

Verse 60, **"And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."**

Jesus declines as request and his answer is actually rather harsh.

Jesus says let the dead bury their own dead.

Here, the dead refers to those who are spiritually lost.

Those who like in Ephesians 2 are dead and their sins and trespasses.

Jesus is saying that if this man stays home to bury his father he is spiritually dead.

This response might seem harsh to us but that is only if we do not recognize the supreme importance of following Jesus.

We must recognize the priority that Jesus takes.

Jesus must take priority over even our family.

Following Jesus make us take priority over all of our comforts.

There is no reason to not follow Jesus.

You cannot come up with a better excuse than this one.

You cannot delay it.

You must not put it off.

Some people say that they'll put off following Jesus and maybe when they finish school or have kids or get older then i'll get really serious about it.

Now you must follow Jesus now or not at all.

For me practically feeling called to follow Jesus to serve him as a pastor meant that i needed to be willing to leave my family behind.

I had to be willing to go and to pastor in a place that my family did not live.

And I remember other guys who felt called the ministry wanted to serve the lord as pastors but would draw a map around where they were willing to live.

They would say well I really need to be within 50 miles of Dallas because this is where my family is.

And I get wanting to live by your family but I couldn't help but think of this passage.

How can I say I'm willing to follow Jesus if I tell Him not over there.

I'm willing to follow you Jesus just don't ask me to move.

That's not real discipleship.

I don't know what that line is for you.

But all of us have to be willing to leave it all behind when Jesus calls.

And He is calling. Are you ready?

Verse 61, **"Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home."**

This person hasn't even more reasonable request they just want to go say goodbye real quick.

It even echoes Elisha's call to follow Elijah.

When the prophet Elijah found Elijah he was plowing a field.

Elijah called him to follow him and be his disciple.

And Elisha had one small request.

Elisha requested that he could go home and say goodbye to his family.

Elijah said yes.

Jesus says no.

Because Jesus is greater than Elijah.

And following Jesus requires more.

Following Jesus must take priority over the best excuses we could come up with.

Verse 62, **"Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."**

Jesus says no you cannot even go back to say goodbye.

Says that when you begin to follow Jesus.

When you are working the plow you need to keep your eyes straight.

Because if your eyes aren't straight and your lines and your field will get all messed up.

A more modern version might be if you're going to mow your lawn you can't be looking behind you while you push it forward.

You're going to miss a lot in your yard is going to look bad.

Or If you're driving fast down 81 you shouldn't be turning back looking behind you or you're going to get in an accident.

But Jesus is not just talking about a quick glance.

He means something more.

The idea of looking back seems to be more continuous.

And it is looking back with a longing to go back.

It is a desire to go back to the way things were before you were following Jesus.

It is much like Lot's wife who looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah and wishes she didn't have to leave such a lovely place.

Jesus says if you want to be my follower then you have to long for the kingdom of God.

You cannot look back to the kingdoms of this world and wish that you were there instead.

Are you ready to be Jesus's disciple?

Often just like these people in these passages we want to put conditions on our obedience in our submission to Jesus.

We will tell Jesus that we will follow Him but just let me take care of this quick.

Or we will say that Jesus I'm willing to be your disciple if you just do this one thing for me first.

Jesus wants us to know that all of our conditions,

All of our qualifications,

All of the exceptions that we think we have are worthless.

The only thing that matters is we must follow Jesus.

We must follow Him without hesitation without reservation and without expectations of receiving anything other than Jesus.

Because He is our only hope.

And in Him are the words of eternal life.

But we have to be ready to follow Him.

1. Are you ready to be faithful to the end? Are you ready to be happy being the least? Are you ready to be a disciple? Because Jesus is calling all of us to follow Him. And I hope you answer yes.