

June 29, 2025

St. Luke 9:57-62:

## **“The Cost of the Cross”**

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St. Luke 9:57-62

Dear Friends in Christ,

Scriptures say, "The (Holy) Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rm.8:16,17)." *Provided we suffer with Him.* I know, did we have to start on that note?

You see, the suffering of God's people is a thread running through the fabric of Scripture from Genesis through Revelation which, of course, includes this time? There's a presence in this country that wants to see the end of Christianity. For many, the separation of church and state is not seen as a means to protect the freedom of religion, but the means to quiet the church. Martin Luther wrote:

"Unbelievers will be fortunate for awhile. But in the end, they will be destroyed. Believers, on the other hand, will have to suffer for awhile. But they will find protection, help, comfort in God. He sustains sad people and relieves their misery. In the end, God will take his little flock away from their suffering and reward his people with eternal life and happiness (Through Faith Alone, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1999, July 21 reading).

I don't know the author, but here's the thought: "There are lessons which cannot be learned in a dress parade. Only the firing line puts the mettle (the fortitude) in a soldier." Of course, there are countless churches you can attend these days and be emotionally charged to the highest level of joyous positivity. Suffering as a Christian is tucked away....unless, of course, you really study the Bible. We're looking at . . .

## THE COST OF THE CROSS

### I. The Cross

It's not our text, but it magnifies it: "...Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me...For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul (Mt. 16:24,26)?" And with that, just what does "take up the cross" mean? Well, we must endure, suffer patiently, because of our connection to Jesus. In their commentary, the Albrecht's wrote:

The crosses Christians bear are the hardships and sufferings and persecutions they faithfully endure as a consequence of faithfully following Christ. These crosses vary from person to person, but every Christian must expect to bear a cross.... Jesus will give us the strength to bear it, and he will use it increase our appreciation for the cross he bore for us (G.J. & M.J. Albrecht, Matthew, *The People's Bible*, Northwestern Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 2000, p.242).

The reality is that the world doesn't want Jesus because He confronts the world with its sin, self-righteousness, and arrogance, as Scriptures teach, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm3:23)", and, "no one is good ("good" as God defines it), not even one (Rm3:12b)." And, we know, God so loved the world that He gave His Son to earn our pardon and eternal life. Whoever believes has eternal life, The self-righteous can't swallow that!

Consider this question: Pressured that we will loose all our worldly stuff and hopes if we faithfully walk with Jesus what would we - you - I - do? And this brings us to our text for this morning. . .

### II. Someone

"As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' 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 (vv.57-58)."

This "someone" was rather quick to make such a decision. The question is: under the circumstances in which Jesus made His journey through this world, was this man ready to make such a journey? God's Word is clear: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Cor.8:9)."

And let's recall these words of Paul: "To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless...when reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure...(portions of I Cor.4:11-12)." And four verses later Paul writes, "I urge you, then, to become imitators of me (I Cor 4:16)." Whoa! He's talking to all God's people - us!

We sang the words: "What is the world to me with all its vaunted pleasure when you and you alone, Lord Jesus, are my treasure!" Is He...for you...for me? We sang the words: "You only dearest Lord, my soul's delight shall be; you are my peace and rest, what is the world to me!" What is our main priority for each day's journey through this world? The journey won't be easy.

### III. Another

To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God (vv.59-60)."

Matthew Henry was a British minister and author. He died in 1714. In his commentary on Luke, he wrote:

Not that Christ would have his followers or his ministers to be unnatural; our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every relation...and to (repay kindness) to our parents. But we must not make these offices an excuse from our duty to God. If the nearest and dearest relation we have in the world stand in our way to keep us from Christ, it is necessary that we have a zeal that will make us forget father and mother, as Levi did. Deut.33:9. (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol.5, Hendrickson Publishers, Vol.5, p.547).

I think I know what some are thinking, but I'm convinced by what Jesus said: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Mt.10:37)." Again, whoever or whatever dictates or pulls us away from our walk with and service to the Lord into a fading or disappearing relationship with Christ must be checked. To repeat, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Mt.16:24)." Well, we sang it: "When You, and You alone, Lord Jesus, are my treasure."

### IV. And Another

Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom (vv 61-62)."

We remember the grave corruption of Sodom and Gomorrah and God's judgment against them. He would destroy everything and everyone by raining down sulphur and fire, but He spared Lot and his family. And when Lot and family left we're told, "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt (Gn.19:26)." Lot's wife was melancholy, ached for the corrupt cities; "looked back" in longing. And that underscores the words of Jesus: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom."

Do we ever find ourselves, or are any of us in in that predicament - longing for something of the past, something we know could cause severe consequences, hurt and sorrow for ourselves and others? Maybe some are there now. God help us to run back to this Word from the Lord"

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds (your thinking) on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Col.3:1-4).

Brothers and sisters, we desperately need this: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom...(Col.16)." The Word, which is "A lamp to my feet (a light for our walk through this messed-up world) and a light to my path (the path the path to eternal life - Ps.119:105)." The past is forever gone. Think on what's to come: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, for the former things shall not be remembered."

Our post sermon hymn is "Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus." Please listen to the second stanza:

"Let us suffer here with Jesus and with patience bear our cross.  
Joy will follow all our sadness; where He is there is no loss.  
Though today we sow no laughter, we shall reap celestial joy;  
All discomforts that annoy shall give way to mirth hereafter.  
Jesus, here I share your woe; help me there your joy to know.

I remember very clearly the years before I knew and understood the meaning of God's love in Christ. I remember wondering why I was on earth, why am I here; why is life full uncertainty, dying, and people who bring suffering and death into the lives of others?. If there is a God who cares, why does He allow the violence and corruption of this world to go on and on? And what's going to happen to me when I die? If there is no God, I won't know or care. I'll be forever dead, forever forgotten, without memory. But if there is God...then what? That's the big question. Who or what is God? And of all the books I had read and studied over those years, one evening my wife asked me to look at the Bible with her. We met Jesus...or, rather, He met with us. *The Cost of the Cross* is worth everything. Truly.

Pastor Bill Abbott