

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

A Stern Challenge for Disciples

Last time...After a contentious visit to Jerusalem, Jesus returned to Perea
(down by the Jordan River)

There, He was invited to a meal in the house of one of the chief Pharisees.

Dinner conversations: Another hostile confrontation with His enemies
4 stinging rebukes/lessons by Jesus

This time...Jesus has 3 very stern challenges for those following Him

We will be in Luke 14 again

v25 great multitudes with Him:

After a very “instructive” meal at the house of one of the chief Pharisees (v1)
during which Jesus spoke of

- healing on the Sabbath (to the Pharisees)
- humility (to the invited guests)
- the Kingdom of God (to all)

Jesus takes His adieu

His ministry in Perea continues

And as He went His way, He is being followed by a great multitude of people

Why are they following Him?

Where is He going?

He knows they do not know what it means to follow Him (and where He is going)
so Jesus turns and gives them all a heart exam

What Jesus has to say will sound familiar, for He said the same thing to disciples
during His ministry in the Galilee

This heart exam is applicable to this day for anyone who wants to follow Jesus;
He is speaking personally to each of us right now

v26 come to Me and hate not:

The 1st challenge to a disciple of Jesus: Pre-eminent love

hate = “to detest”, “love less”

Jesus sounds rather harsh, so let’s let Scripture interpret Scripture

Mal 1:1-4

Esau was carnal, he despised his birthright

His descendants were defiant of and

opposed the God of Israel/Jacob

Rom 9:13

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated

Heb 12:14-17

Esau was unbelieving, bitter, not repentant,

sorry/sorrowful, but not repentant

2 Cor 7:9-10

godly sorrow, repentance: lasting change

Esau was...unbelieving, untrusting of God

Deut 13:6-11

Say No to, do not follow, unbelieving family

Reject family that rejects the Lord

Luke 9:59-60

dead = unbelieving, dead in sin

vs

Luke 8:19-21

“Family” elevated in definition

Family hears and does/obeys the Word

hearing, not doing = not believing

Love = action/doing

James 1:22

If anyone wants to accompany Jesus but
loves Jesus less than

- father
- mother
- wife
- children (grandchildren)
- brothers
- sisters
- yes, even his own life
 - his will
 - his dog
 - his sports
 - his house
 - his job/career
 - his favorite sin

or

is Luke 9:26 (bowing before family vs before the Lord)

he cannot...it is absolutely impossible...be Jesus’ disciple

e.g. Eli the High Priest and his sons

his sons were sons of the devil and knew not the Lord (1 Sam 2:12)

Eli despised the Lord's sacrifice (shadow!) and honored his sons above the Lord (1 Sam 2:29)

The Lord said to Eli, "I will honor those who honor Me and I will despise those who despise Me (1 Sam 2:30)

The Lord told Eli He was going to judge his house/family forever because his sons made themselves vile and he did not restrain them
ie stood with his sons vs with the Lord (1 Sam 3:13)

Jesus is the Almighty Creator, He is the Lord of all, He changes not...

As long as unbelieving loved ones remain unchanged in their unbelief despising the Lord...the follower of Jesus Christ must make a choice:

A. To walk with Jesus and NOT with his family

B. To walk with his family and NOT Jesus

To whom will I cleave – Jesus Christ or my unbelieving family?

Cannot have it both ways, a choice must be made

Because Jesus and unbelieving loved ones are going in opposite directions

A follower of Jesus must be willing to go against the flow of society...

even against the tide of unbelieving family...to accompany Jesus

A follower of Jesus Christ must also

Selflessly, self-lastly choose Jesus

or

Selfishly choose Self

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that
hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life
eternal

(all choices are made manifest by actions)

Jesus Christ must be loved pre-eminently, or a person is not a disciple of His

Jesus will not play 2nd fiddle to anyone or anything

He is the Living Word of God, the eternal God (Is 9:6)

He is salvation...John 14:6

He Lord of all

If He is 2nd fiddle, He is not Lord

He will not share or give to another His glory

If a follower prefers anyone before Jesus Christ, he is not really a follower

(has deceived himself but Jesus is not deceived)

v27 not bear his cross:

The 2nd challenge to a disciple of Jesus Christ: his cross (dying to Self)

The Cross is a place of suffering and shame and death

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me

Rom 6:11-13 reckon = account, think as if
Let not – make the right choice (Gal 5:16-17)
Daily, moment-by-moment, Joshua 24:14-15

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Being a disciple of Jesus means

- no looking back
- no turning back
- holding all things loosely but holding Jesus tightly

Luke 9:61-62
Luke 17:32-33

. If a person refuses, denies, avoids his cross, he is not really a follower of Jesus
(he has deceived himself but Jesus is not deceived)

v28-32 count the cost...finish:

With the 2 challenges thus far (and the 3rd as well), the heart exam administered by Jesus demands that we:

1. Count the cost
2. Finish

Do a financial analysis of resources – time, priorities, “covetousness trade-off” (things of the world or things of God)

Do a Cost/Benefit and Risk/Reward analysis – spiritual, emotional, material, relational “gains and losses”

Conduct an environmental impact study – how will my life change, who will be in/out of my life

needed to...Finish

The City of Phoenix issues a License to Occupy when a building is...finished (and not until!)

A partially completed building is useless

The most important part of any race is the...finish

A partially completed race is pointless

The only score that matters in a baseball game (etc) is the score at the...finish

All intermediate scores are forgotten

The most important day of a war is – the last day, the finish, winning

A partially fought war is a war lost

With the illustrations of building a tower and going to war, Jesus is telling us to count the cost of following Him and to finish

Following Jesus...everyday, wherever He may lead...is a walk of faith

But it is not a blind faith

It is an intelligent/rational faith

Common sense goes a long way!

Jesus is challenging us

- to be honest and real with ourselves, to not be self-deceived
- to be thoughtful and measured, not reckless and rash
- to not pick a fight that cannot be won
- to know that only a fool begins what he cannot or will not finish

Rationally count the personal cost (not anyone else's) of

- pre-eminent love of Jesus Christ
- the cross of Jesus Christ

Keep your eye on the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus
(Phil 3:14)...and finish!

Heed the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

Matt 25:21 Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord

vs

Matt 25:30 cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth

Matt 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (because loved/did)

vs

Matt 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (because did NOT love/do)

Matt 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal

It is pure folly to

- Not love Jesus pre-eminently
- Not bear one's cross
- Not count the cost
- Not finish that which is begun (PTL Phil 1:6)

v33 forsaketh not all:

The 3rd challenge to a disciple of Jesus Christ: possessions

If a follower of Jesus is not willing to renounce

- his ownership of
- coveting for

“his” possessions, things of the world, he is not really a disciple of Jesus
(he has deceived himself but Jesus is not deceived)

Ps 24:1 The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein

Luke 12:15 Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth

Luke 18:18-25

Love worldly wealth more than love Jesus
(look at checkbook register for evidence of the heart)

Matt 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful

vs

Col 3:1-5

If Jesus is Lord, followers are servants
Servants do not own anything, the Lord owns everything
All a servant has is...his Lord
Servants are stewards of the Lord's possessions,
no longer claiming ownership of anything
Luke 9:57-58

A common denominator in all 3 challenges:
sacrifice of something lesser for something far better

Now, Jesus concludes His "disciple challenge" to the multitude...and to us...
with a very stern warning...about that sacrifice

v34-35 salt...lost his savour...cast it out:
Every sacrifice was offered with salt

Lev 2:13 And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt

Mark 9:49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt

The salt of our sacrifices:

Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God

1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ

Phil 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ

If our sacrifices to, our devotion to, Jesus loses its savor (“made foolish”)

- distinct quality...a quality unlike any other
- taste...good
- odor...sweet

what of our lives will be pleasing to God?

A life without sacrifice/devotion to Jesus Christ is worthless, good for nothing

Application

So let's consider the 3 “disciple challenges” taught by Jesus Christ

1. pre-eminent love

Love of God must be in a class by itself, above all other loves

No other relationship can approach the importance of a relationship with Jesus

Decision: Cleave to Jesus or cleave to unbelieving family...or to Self

To hate my life means:

- Not my will be done, but Your will be done
(Gethsemane moments every day!)
- Everything is about You, nothing is about me

2. the cross

Give your life to Christ, Who gave His life to you

Sacrifice that which is lesser (temporary life) for that which better (eternal life)

Stand against the world and with Jesus

3. possessions

All the things of this world will stay in this world (ultimately will burn)

The Kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36)

So which will it be, which has your heart:

- temporary things temporarily
- eternal things for all eternity

It is required of stewards to be faithful

Doing all 3 of those things is the most reasonable thing anyone could do.

Now let's consider the Lord's very strong warning at the conclusion of His 3 challenges

Sacrifice, devotion

Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength...every day

Jesus Christ above all, always

“All in” with Jesus...no reservations or hesitations

or

No devotion, no sacrifice...cast out by Jesus

This is not a warning for others – “Oh, I sure hope so-and-so is listening!!!!”

This is a warning for each of us, individually and personally

We need to examine our hearts and our relationships with Jesus

We live in perilous times (2 Tim 3:1-9) when men are lovers of selves and lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God

Many who begin to follow Jesus do not finish, stopping short of the Finish Line

Many who follow Jesus do so half-heartedly, superficially, double-mindedly, wandering

Many who follow Jesus come to church but are playing with sin or living in sin...because they love themselves and their sin more than Jesus...sons of Belial (1 Sam 2:12)

Following Jesus is not to be taken lightly; nothing could be more serious

“I follow the Lord” is not to be spoken glibly; a regular heart exam is needed

“I love Jesus” is revealed in our actions...public and private

If the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, that Jesus Christ is not Above All or you have stopped short and not finishing what you have begun

It's time to repent!

It's high time to

- awake out of sleep
- love Jesus pre-eminently
- bear our cross
- claim ownership of nothing and cling only to Jesus
- give what Jesus deserves – our complete devotion

Those who have counted the cost of following Jesus and are determined to finish what they have begun,

we gather to encourage and edify each other, provoking ourselves unto (pre-eminent) love and good works (devoted, sacrificial living)