

HOLD ON, JESUS ...

Saying Yes When You Want to Say No

Following Jesus—Wherever, Whenever, Whatever • Luke 9:57-62

Pastor Kenneth Spiller • March 19, 2023

***BIG IDEA:* The one thing we are most reluctant to give up is the one thing that has the most potential to become a substitute for God in our lives.**

➔ **Share about a time you made an excuse to either get to *do* something you wanted to do, to get *out* of doing something, or to *avoid* getting in trouble.**

Pastor Kenneth began his message by asking an even harder question: Have you ever made an excuse regarding your faith? Perhaps God wants you to do something, but you kind of want to do something else. You wrestle with saying yes when it's easier to say no.

This morning, we're looking at the story of three people who were willing to say yes but not willing to go all-in with Jesus, and they all had excuses for why they couldn't follow Jesus. They might have been looking for a negotiated settlement. They wanted to follow Jesus on their own terms. When we negotiate a settlement with Jesus, we want to follow Him on our own terms. It usually looks like this: **God, I will do ____ for you if you will do ____ for me.**

True discipleship is following Jesus even when we don't get what we want. We wrestle with saying yes when it's easier to say no so we try to bargain with God.

Pastor Kenneth told a story about Christy Pugh, a vegetarian who actually made some large exceptions for meat because she particularly enjoyed sausage. When vegetarians grew frustrated with these self-proclaimed vegetarians who still ate meat, they gave them a new name — “flexitarian.” Flexitarian is a good way to describe how many people approach their commitment to Christ.

➔ **Have you ever tried to negotiate with God, telling Him you'd be faithful if He first did something for you?**

➔ **Where have you been a flexitarian in your life — that is, committed to something with some exceptions?**

The three men we're looking at in today's text are spiritual flexitarians, with excuses as to why they could not follow Jesus. Jesus speaks directly to each of their excuses and gets to the heart of the matter for them and for us.

Follow Me Wherever

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you *wherever* you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

-Luke 9:57-58

As Jesus was walking on the road, a man tells Jesus he would follow Him **wherever**. The man said he would follow Jesus wherever and Jesus gets right to the heart of the issue: "If you follow me, you may be homeless ... will you follow me even here?" The man says he will follow Jesus wherever and Jesus asks, "What about *this* wherever?"

If your Christianity has not brought discomfort to your life, something is wrong. It's not like we look for discomfort or find joy in pain, but following Jesus requires a cost. The cost of following Jesus means saying yes to Jesus when you want to say no.

➔ **If you said to Jesus, "I'll follow you wherever," where do you think Jesus would point to and ask, "What about there?"**

When we say we will follow Jesus wherever, it may mean living out of step with modern culture, giving sacrificially and wearing older clothing or driving an older vehicle as a result, or not accepting a promotion at work because it would take you away from church. Many of us don't want to go "wherever" because there are things in our lives we want to hold onto. **The one thing we are most reluctant to give up is the one thing that has the most potential to become a substitute for God in our lives.**

➔ **What is it that you want to hold onto in your life?**

Follow Me Whenever

He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." -Luke 9:59-60



This man was interested; he called Jesus Lord. But he feels the timing isn't right. He's not saying no, he's just saying, "Not right now," because he wanted to bury his father first. As 21st-century Americans, we need to know this about this request:

1. We don't know if the man's father is actually dead yet or if this man is planning ahead.
2. If his father is dead, the mourning period in Jesus' day was over a full year after the person's death.

This guy potentially wants to take a year plus off before he comes to follow Jesus. Jesus believes he has already taken care of the family obligations and He calls him to a greater service — proclaiming the Kingdom of God. There's a sense of urgency in following Jesus. "Let the dead bury their own dead," is a part of the cost of a disciple. Following Jesus comes even before family obligations. This man's excuse was later, as in, "Let me follow you later."

Pastor Kenneth shared that the procrastinator's motto is: Never do today what you can put off till tomorrow. He shared that the spiritual procrastinator's motto is: Never follow Jesus today as long as you can promise to follow tomorrow.

The problem with deciding to follow later is that one is making some pretty great assumptions:

1. There will be a tomorrow.
2. That one will want to repent later and follow Jesus because sin will not harden the heart.
3. Real life is found out there.

We are not guaranteed tomorrow, so let's make the most of today.

→ What's that thing that stops you from following Jesus right now?

Follow Me In Whatever

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." -Luke 9:61-62

This man wants to say goodbye. To the modern reader, there is nothing wrong with saying goodbye, but what we miss with our 21st century eyes is that going home to say goodbye could have been filled with many parties and rituals and lasted for weeks.

The most dangerous part of following Jesus tomorrow isn't what you will lose between now and then The worst thing that can happen is that tomorrow might never come. The truth is the longer you put Him off, the more likely it is that following Him will never happen.
-Kyle Idleman



It's not that following Jesus wasn't important to this man; it's just that following Jesus wasn't his top priority. This man wanted Jesus, but not with both hands on the plow. Looking backward while plowing a field is a great illustration because you'll make mistakes if you look backward instead of forward. Jesus is looking for commitment that doesn't turn back or wonder if the old way is better. Jesus makes it clear from the beginning that following Him is best but not easy.

Pastor Kenneth shared a powerful illustration told by David Platt about two men who accepted Christ and lived in a country where it was illegal for these two men to identify themselves as followers of Christ through baptism. They were baptized knowing that they could lose their lives. One man when asked if he wanted to be baptized said, "I have already sacrificed everything to follow Jesus. Yes, I want to be baptized." The other said "Jesus is my Lord. Whatever he says to do, I will do."

Their lives demonstrated the kind of discipleship that Jesus called the three men in our text and calls us to live out today.

➔ What excuses are you making for not following Jesus?

➔ What is the one thing you are most reluctant to give up?

➔ What might the impact be of a group of people willing to follow Jesus wherever, wherever, and in whatever He asks?

Pastor Kenneth ended the message with a prayer of invitation and commitment. If you made such a commitment at the conclusion of this message, please contact one of the staff so we may walk alongside you: kspiller@parkgate.org; chaines@parkgate.org, kboggs@parkgate.org.