

## TEXT SERMONS

DISCIPLESHIP SERIES: **ENEMIES OF DISCIPLESHIP** – Part 2**Theme Verse: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23)**

Message #8

**"INDIFFERENCE"**

Scripture:

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

Enemies of the good are all around us, however, our worst enemies are within us. We see this demonstrated in the last six verses of Luke chapter nine, where we read about three inward enemies of discipleship.

In the previous message we examined the enemy of "impulsiveness" revealed in the man who said, "Lord, 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." (Luke 9:57-58) After his impulsive overture to Jesus, he fades away, not willing to pay the cost of discipleship.

We come now to Luke 9:59-60 where we meet another enemy of discipleship: indifference. Here in this man we see gross indifference. Let us analyze the heart of Mr. Indifference as follows:

**I. THE DEMAND THAT CONFRONTS INDIFFERENCE.**

Jesus said, "Follow me." (v.59)

Jesus was drawing near to the close of His earthly ministry; He was on His way to the cross. We are told that He, with steeled face and steady pace, was on His way to Jerusalem and crucifixion. (Luke 9:51) It was in this spirit that He speaks to the man who is the object of our attention.

As Jesus walked along He saw this young man by the roadside and said to him, "follow me". But, as we shall see, this man was totally indifferent to the claims of Christ. Mr. Impulsive, whom we met in vs. 57-58, volunteered. Mr. Indifference did not volunteer, he was singled out and called by Jesus. However, he refused to follow! Why does anyone refuse to follow Jesus' call?

Let us explore this man's encounter with the Lord Jesus. Let us imagine that we are there beside the road with this young man as Jesus walks past. He approaches the man and looks right at Him. You too see that caring face and those tender eyes. You hear that magnetic voice as He says to the man, "follow me."

What will his response be? As you stand there, you think of at least 3 questions that must be passing through his mind:

**A. There Is The Question Of Acquaintance.**

- Is he acquainted with the One who is making this demand?
- Does he know Him personally?
- How well does he know Him?

To quote Jesus on the importance of knowing Him personally and intimately, I call to your attention what He said in John 10:4,5 where it is recorded that He said, "When he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." Does this man, to whom Jesus is speaking, know Who it is calling him to follow? This is no charlatan, this is the Christ! Secondly,

**B. There Is The Question Of Reliance.**

Acquaintance alone will not produce discipleship. There were many who were acquainted with Jesus but did not follow Him, even members of His own family! There is the matter of reliance – that is trust. It is possible to know Him and not trust Him. To follow Him means to know *and* trust Him. Then, thirdly,

**C. There Is The Question Of Compliance.**

Jesus said, "follow me" - i.e. follow my teachings, my directions, my lifestyle, etc. – to comply is to obey! The demand that confronts indifference focuses upon this trilogy: acquaintance, reliance, compliance.

These are the issues with which the man, whom Jesus addressed, was confronted and with which we too are confronted when we hear the call from the Savior to "follow me." To remain along the roadsides of life while others follow in His steps is to be in the throng of the indifferent! The call, "follow me" is an order, not an option! He is not teasing us but testing us – testing the sincerity of our commitment to Him. How can we remain indifferent?

**Illust.** Shakespeare wrote: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries. And we must take the current when it serves or lose our ventures." The tide was coming in for this man that Jesus called that day. What will he do? Remember where you are – you are on the roadside – Jesus is passing by, when suddenly His eyes are fixed upon one among the spectators and He says, "follow me." His demand is plain, pointed and personal.

Then you are startled by the verbal response the man gives to Jesus' call to "follow." You can't believe your ears when you hear the man say, "let me first bury my father."

**II. THE DELAY THAT CHARACTERIZES INDIFFERENCE.**

"let me first bury my father."

You are shocked to silence by the indifference with which this man treats the call of

Christ to “follow me.” His answer is callously cold and calculatedly bold! We see this in:

### **A. The Excuse That He Gave.**

On the surface this man’s excuse seems very sincere and touching. He said, “My Father died and I’ve got to bury him.” What is a more legitimate reason to be excused, at least temporarily, than that? However, this man was insincere as well as indifferent.

You see, what he said was simply an excuse. I will explain. Bagster, in his Bagster’s Companion Bible Commentary, which the renown Charles Haddon Spurgeon used and highly recommended, writes of the statement, “Let me first bury my Father,” as follows: “This saying is an Eastern euphemism used for declining an invitation, for the Jews buried within 24 hours and did not leave the home for 10 days thereafter in fulfillment of the laws of purification.”

Num 19:14 states: “When a person dies in a tent: anyone who enters the tent and anyone who is in it will be unclean for seven days...” They were quarantined. And also, Num.19:11 states, “Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days.”

J.C. Ryle in his commentary on Luke says, “there was a year of special mourning after the funeral when public appearances by the near of ken were kept at a minimum.”

Archeologist George Adam Smith, of Scotland, on a trip to the Holy Land, once offered an education in Scotland to the son of a Bedouin chief, who had assisted him in his archeological work. The boy replied, “Suffer me first to bury my father.” And the father was standing beside the boy and in good health.

This saying is currently used in the Orient as a nice way of declining an invitation – of saying, “I am not interested.” In our culture we say, “I’ll think about it”, or “thanks anyway but I have other things to do.” The best definition of an insincere excuse is this: “It is the skin of a reason, stuffed with a lie.”

In Luke 14 we read of other excuses: “They all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’” (Luke 14:18-21)

And so it goes, whether it is marrying, burying, buying or selling – all are excuses for not coming to Christ and following Him. All such excuses either delay or decline discipleship. Jesus call to “follow me” required immediate obedience, not excuses. This man’s choice not to follow, shows that he exchanged the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

### **B. The Exchange That He Made.**

The Lord Jesus invites us to exchange a dead-end life for an eternal life; to exchange Sin for salvation; guilt for peace; sorrow for joy; death for life; a life of drudgery for a

life of discipleship. Instead, this man whom Jesus invited to follow Him, chose:

- A life without Christ, instead of life with Christ;
- The status quo instead of the privilege to company with the Christ;
- The temporal over the eternal;
- That which is of secondary importance over that which is of primary importance. Jesus had said, “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matt.6:33)

Let us see the entire context in which Jesus called these persons:

“Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.” (Luke 9:23-27)

The alternative that this man chose is the alternative that the majority of people are choosing every day when confronted with the gospel message. It is sad, but true.

Jesus continued on His way, leaving the indifferent man behind. That man missed so very much that is recorded in the remainder of the Gospel of Luke that Jesus said and did. This man, because of his indifference, missed it all. It is said that “opportunity knocks but once.” If that is indeed true, this man missed the greatest opportunity of his life.

“Jesus calls me I must follow,  
Follow Him today.  
While His tender voice is pleading,  
How can I delay?”

Let us take one last look at the man beside the highway. He had such potential but now he is to be pitied. He is in the paralyzing grip of indifference. There is one further proof of this man’s indifference – not only do we see the Demand that Confronts Indifference and the Delay that Characterizes Indifference, we also see,

### **III. THE DEFECT THAT CONFIRMS INDIFFERENCE.**

“Let me first bury my Father ...”

The defect that confirms our worst suspicions is seen in two words in v. 59 – “*me first*”. A “*me first*” attitude reveals:

#### **A. A Defective View of Discipleship.**

A disciple is a follower – the one who follows is never in front of the Leader! Jesus dealt with the “me first” attitude back in the discipleship pledge in v. 23 when He said, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself.....” The “me first” defect not only reveals a defective view of discipleship but it reveals:

#### **B. A Defective View of Lordship.**

“Lord” means – number One, first place! This man was saying to Jesus, “Number One, I am number one!” A “me first” philosophy of life kills discipleship! It is death to spiritual growth. “Me first” reveals gross indifference to:

- The Person of Jesus Christ. Did this man realize to Whom he was speaking?
- The Priorities of Jesus Christ. All other demands are secondary to the claims of Christ upon our lives.
- The Purpose of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ purpose and program is to promulgate the Good News around the globe. He said to the original twelve disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.” To this man he said, “Go and preach the kingdom of God.” However, this man, like so many others, was indifferent to Christ’s call and commission.

### CONCLUSION

This man did not respond positively to the Son Of God, not because of his father’s death; not because of persecution; not because he did not have the opportunity; but because of indifference toward Jesus Christ due to his desire to save his life for himself!

Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.” (Luke 9:24) There are two kinds of church members: those who say “me first” and those who say “Christ first.” Christ first Christians have their priorities in proper alignment and their lives reflect it.

We have met a man who met the Master, but who refused to be mastered by Him – He lost the greatest opportunity of His life! This man has millions of companions today. They too have heard the Lord’s call, “Follow Me,” but because of indifference they remain along the roadsides of life pursuing earthly interests.

If there is any tugging at your heart, any spiritual longing to go with God, to journey with Jesus – then respond now, lest you become a victim of indifference.

**Illust.** Many years ago, in the early days of Princeton University, which was founded as a Christian University by godly men and women, a spiritual awakening was taking place. A student named Aaron Burr was moved to seek God. He went to the President of the University and said, “Mr. President, I have made up my mind to consider the claims of Christ upon my life. Mr. President, what would you do?” The President said, “Burr, if I were you, I would wait until the excitement has subsided and then give it some thought.” Aaron Burr bowed his head a moment, and then said, “Mr. President, that is exactly what I will do.” And never again in his life did Aaron Burr express a desire to be a Christian. Aaron Burr later killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel.

Indifference is a deadly enemy of spiritual desire and discipleship. Will you decide today to follow Jesus?

**JdonJ**