

New Sermon Series: The Hard Sayings of Jesus  
Today's Message – “Will You Follow Jesus Where Ever?”  
Luke 9:57-62  
October 23, 2011

Last week's message focused on Jesus being the defining relationship in our lives, the relationship above all others. This week and next week **we consider the evidence** that demonstrates that we have that type of bond with him. Because to be truthful we don't always handle our lives in such a way that we put Christ first. I was listening to a former NFL defensive lineman Warren Sapp analyze some current players and he said, “**A lot of people know the right thing to do; but they don't do what they know.**” We know as Christians that Jesus Christ is to be the first and foremost influence over our lives and so today's scripture gives us examples how we should see that truth in action.

**Luke 9:57-62**

This week the evidence of being a follower shows when we're obedient to follow Christ **wherever he leads us**. We hear this principle in this scripture where Jesus has conversations with three different men. Today we focus on the first of those three men. A man came up to Jesus and says, “Hey Jesus I will follow you wherever you go.” There was a reason why the man made that statement. A couple weeks ago I mentioned in a sermon that in biblical times if you were selected to be a disciple or follower of a rabbi you would go wherever your teacher went. If he went to the market you went to the market. If he walked out into the hills to pray, you followed him out to the hills. So this man is telling Jesus I want to be your follower. He desired for Jesus to be his teacher/rabbi. So far so good. The man promised he will follow Jesus wherever Jesus would go. By now this man whose name we don't know has probably heard great stories of Jesus. He had probably witnessed first hand the teachings and the miracles of

Jesus. He said he'll follow anywhere. Does our relationship with Jesus require that depth of commitment? It must be because Jesus is about to test him. Jesus was about to give him a reality check. Because Jesus knows that, **“A lot of people know the right thing to do; but they don't do what they know.”** Sometimes in the heat of a conversation we hear the expression used, “don't go there.” When the content of the discussion may get personal and it may require a cost we don't want to face, we get defensive and say if nothing else with our body language, “don't go there.” Jesus was about go there. He was about to offer this man a clear picture what it means if we say, “Jesus I'll follow you wherever.”

**Wherever means a total surrender.**

So in verse 58 Jesus says to the man “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nest; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Talk about your lack of upward mobility for being a Christian. Jesus was born in manger, with no crib to lay his head, yet he turned water in to wine, fed the multitude and he was warning this guy even Jesus doesn't get the cushy motel room to stay in as you travel. He was letting this man know and he is letting us know God can call us to follow anywhere and the conditions are sometimes less than desirable. He was asking this fellow are you willing to be homeless?”

This past Wednesday, RC and I went the RIFA food bank in Jackson to pick up supplies for the food bank that Newbern Presbyterian has been running. While we were waiting to be checked out, I heard one of the men helping us mention to his co-worker that Tuesday night he slept under a bridge not to far from the food bank. He said he slept there so he could make it in to work at the food bank on time. Didn't get pretty cool this past Tuesday night? But this guy impressed me as probably someone who is trying to get his life back together and he was desperate enough to sleep out in the cold for a chance to work.

Jesus was warning this guy to follow Christ means you're desperate to follow. The real truth is to say I will follow you wherever equals total surrender. It is having a mind and heart that is desperate for God's leading.

### **Wherever is also somewhere in particular**

But don't mistake "wherever" as nowhere in particular. One preacher commented about this story and he said, "Wherever could be Jesus' way of asking what about there?" Jesus could be pointing to a particular aspect of our life and asking what about there?

**What about in your home?** Are you following Jesus around in your home? Jesus said the greatest amongst you will be a servant. Maybe in your home you don't serve you wait to be served. Maybe you have a critical spirit that nothing done is ever quite good enough instead of expressing gratitude. Jesus said the truth will set you free maybe in your home there are more secrets and issues avoided; then the truth is spoken. Maybe instead of being the spiritual leader; you live the life of a passive bystander?

**Maybe Jesus is pointing to your job?** Maybe he is asking will you follow him as you seek to develop your career improve your financial portfolio? I read of a woman that attended a large church. She emailed her pastor and asked that he pray for her because she had been working at the same place for like 7 years and really had not been sharing her faith with her co-workers. She had a co-worker she wanted to invite to church but needed to pray for boldness so she would invite her. He agreed to pray for her, but then didn't hear back from her on how things worked out. So one day, he emailed her and she said she had good news and bad news. The good news was she finally got up the nerve to ask the friend at work to attend worship with her. The bad news was the woman she asked also attended the same church. Both of them had to admit how they had been failing to share Christ on their job. They

went seven years working together and neither knew the other person was a Christian. **“A lot of people know the right thing to do; but they don’t do what they know.”** (I’m Not a Fan, Idelman, p.178)

**Maybe Jesus would be pointing at your spiritual practices or some call the spiritual disciplines.** The early church we read about in Acts 2-4 was dynamic because of the key spiritual practices they shared together. They shared together because they knew it just wasn’t what they received that mattered; but how they encouraged each other. They worshipped together, study the apostles teachings, shared their money, food and other resources, they fellowshiped/hung out together and served others together.

He may be pointing to your worship life and asking what about there? He may be asking if you love me and trust in me, why aren’t you gathering with others to honor and seek me? Maybe he is pointing to your unread bible, or lack of hanging out with other Christians including those you call a part of your church family.

If the core practices of the early church bore us, disinterest us, then I would encourage you to spend time in prayer and decide why and get it worked out. **If we cannot follow Jesus to join with others Christians in fellowship, scripture study, serving and worship chances are we’re not following Jesus anywhere else.**

*One of our folks sent me a story about how some years ago, a great Southern Baptist pastor was praying prostrate on the floor of his study one morning, asking God for an anointing of the Holy Spirit's power upon his ministry. Over and over, he passionately pleaded with God, “Lord, give me Your power. Do not let me preach and minister without Your power.” Every serious preacher has prayed this prayer with earnest appeal. However, he declared that suddenly it seemed that the roof over him opened and a hand came*

*down and touched his shoulder and it seemed that God's voice spoke within him, saying, "My son, stop praying!" When he became quiet, the Voice seemed to clearly say, "My son, **with plans no bigger than yours, you don't need My power!**"*

**If we are not following in the spiritual basics how can we possibly really want God's power to do anything exceptional through us?**

**Wherever has two enemies; comfort and fear**

When Jesus calls us to follow him "wherever" there are some enemies that want to interfere with his call. **At least two of the enemies are comfort and fear.** See when the man said to Jesus I will follow you anywhere, Jesus responded in verse 58 by saying the foxes have holes and the birds have nest, but the Son of Man has no where to lay his head." Jesus was letting him know you will face discomfort and uncertainty. He will take us beyond our comfort zones.

Excuses stop us from following wherever and they cover for our preference for comfort and security. Excuses justify our actions and soothe our conscious. Excuses keep us in our comfort zones. **Following Jesus wherever means saying no to ourselves.**

Pastor Kyle Idelman said he sent out emails to some friends and asked them to finish this statement: "Saying yes to Jesus meant saying no to...." Here are a few responses he received:

Saying yes to Jesus meant saying no to my kids growing up in a comfortable home in America. (friends were missionaries)

Saying yes to Jesus meant saying no to hanging out at the club with my friends that I grew up with.

Saying yes to following Jesus meant saying no to continuing to live with my boyfriend.

Saying yes to following Jesus meant saying no to retiring and moving to the home I was having built in Florida.

Saying yes to following Jesus meant saying no to raising my children near their grandparents.

Saying yes to Jesus meant saying no to a quiet life of privacy.  
(I'm Not a  
Fan, Idelman, p. 182)

The call to follow wherever is not a suggestion but a command if we are going to be his disciples. Too often we take the words of Jesus and treat him like a consultant. Author Larry Osborne writes,

**“A consultant is someone whose wisdom we highly value and listen to, but at the end of the day, we make the final decision. That’s why they’re called consultants. Here’s the problem: God doesn’t do consulting. Never has. Never will. He does God. When we treat him as a consultant, he simply stops showing up for the meetings.”** (Ibid p.180)

Maybe that sounds a little harsh. Maybe that sounds like a very authoritarian view of God and Jesus. However remember the story in the last parable Jesus tells in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the gospel of Matthew. Where Jesus says some will be cast into the outer darkness even though they call him Lord. When they ask why they are being cast into outer darkness, Jesus told them it was because they failed to minister to

the poor, those in  
prison and so forth in other words **they weren't really willing to  
go wherever.** And  
Jesus said I never knew you. Maybe they were only thinking of  
Jesus as a consultant.  
Maybe that's how you think of Jesus?

### **Conclusion**

We don't know the name of this man who said, "Jesus I'll follow  
you wherever." Maybe that is a good thing. Maybe not knowing  
his name makes it easier for us to decide if his words are really our  
words to Jesus, our pledge to Jesus. **And Jesus is asking each of  
us today, so what is your wherever you need to follow?**

You see the activities in the middle of the bulletin in place of the  
sermon points. Maybe helping out in one of these activities could  
be the wherever Jesus wants you to go?

Maybe your wherever is to try the prayer group that will start this  
Wednesday?

Maybe your wherever is to serve as a driver on Wednesday nights  
so kids don't have to walk home in the dark. (Get-Ad-Bouts)

We need chaperones to take our younger kids to pumpkin patch.

We need chaperones to take our older age youth to a night time  
walk through a corn maze in Yorkville.

Maybe your "wherever" is to join up with some of our senior age  
people who are interested in forming an exercise group. They  
want give and receive encouragement to stay healthy. I have  
volunteered to provide a short devotion and prayer before they

workout. They said they would need it. Jane Yarbaro said “preacher you better get good at raising the dead.”

We are getting overwhelmed with calls of people who need food. The local pastors and some lay folks like John Uitendaal and RC Owen have been a part of early discussions about trying to expand the community food bank ministry that Newbern Presbyterian runs. Maybe you would like to get in on the ground floor of that “wherever” because we are going to need more people, and eventually a different building to host the food pantry.

Anyone who calls themselves a follower or disciple of Jesus cannot settle for being the person who **knows the right thing to do; but they don't do what they know.**” Jesus is calling, and unless our life is being lived perfectly within God's will, and I'm sure none us live that well, has some new following to do so we don't settle for our excuses or fears.