

The Hard Sayings of Jesus - "Follow Jesus Whenever"

Luke 9:57-62

October 30, 2011

Following Jesus whenever requires more than good intentions

The hard sayings of Jesus that we look at today will disturb the person with good intentions; but no follow through. We're in the same passage of scripture as last week; but this week we look at another man who encountered Jesus. However, this time it was Jesus who initiated the conversation and he invited a man to follow him.

Read Luke 9:57-62

So Jesus invited this man to follow and the guy agreed, but then said, "**First let me go bury my father...**" Jesus responded to him by saying, "**Let the dead bury the dead.**" This is one of those hard sayings of Jesus. Because this story could cause someone to think Jesus was some ego maniac who had no compassion for any one else except his own agenda. Pastor Kyle Idelman provides some helpful background about this passage so we interpret it correctly. He states that the more accurate intent of this man's request was, "Jesus whenever the day comes that my father dies, then I will be able to follow you." It's not that his father had just died. It is not that Jesus lacked compassion during the death of his father. It is just that the man responded to the invitation to follow Jesus by saying, "**yes, Jesus, but not right now.**"

In a sense Jesus was calling on this guy to follow **whenever God called. If the calling from God is coming to us now, then the timing must be right.** It's like in the world series played this past week. When the manager wanted to change pitchers he got on the phone and he made the call to the bullpen. He named who wanted

out came that relief pitcher. Matter fact in game 4 or 5 there was controversy over the call from manger Tony Larussa to the bullpen. Some how his call was mishandled and the wrong relief pitcher was sent out the mound.

God does not make a mistake on his end when he calls and wants you or me. He knows and see that it's the right time or otherwise God would not be impressing upon our hearts a call to follow him obey him, learn of him go with him in some venture, some risk or purpose.

This anonymous man who said yes to Jesus, but not right now is the person with just good intentions. But being a follower of Jesus, a disciple of Jesus goes deeper than good intentions. Our good intentions may say to Jesus when the kids grow up, when I have more time, when I learn more about you, when I am caught up on other things, then I'll be able to respond to your invitation to follow you.

Good intentions of this man was basically to procrastinate. His response was, "First Jesus let me go bury my father, and at the time chances are his father was as healthy as an ox." His procrastination rates up there with, "I'll take out the trash when the game is over, I'll start dieting on Monday."

I had a professor in seminary who wrote a small book entitled, Stop Procrastinating and Start Living. He wrote that behind our procrastination or delay is really fear.

- You may procrastinate going to the in-laws because you don't get along with them and you dread how the visit will be.
- You may procrastinate on that homework for school because you don't know the subject and fear your grade will be bad.
- And yes we procrastinate responding to God because we believe some how the outcome is going to be disappointing.

This past week for my pastor's article in the newsletter I began sharing the research our denomination has completed that is being used to develop a church revitalization strategy named, A Call to Action plan. One thing I like about the plan is instead of just focusing on churches with problems and trying to solve those problems, they have cut to the chase and looked at churches that have found solutions. One of the things noted about churches that are growing in spiritual vitality, worship attendance, and new converts **is that a higher percentage of those who attend worship are also involved in other aspects of church life and ministry. Meaning people don't just limit following Jesus by coming to worship.** They have less people saying, "Jesus I'll follow you; but not right now."

When Jesus then said to the man, **"let the dead bury the dead"** that was his way of saying, God sees through any good intentions that are a cover for us to delay and procrastinate. Let the dead bury the dead means God can see reasons why we procrastinate whether it is fear of failure, rejection, or called to a greater responsibility.

But the hard saying of Jesus is that when God calls us out of the bullpen, then the time must be right or he wouldn't bother to call.

Following Jesus whenever means we don't delay

Contrast the delayed response of this man to the initial disciples of Jesus. When Jesus called them, they followed immediately. Luke 5 teaches us that Jesus went by the sea where Peter, John and James were fishing and says follow and they drop their fishing nets and do. In Luke 19, Jesus meets Matthew a tax collector making a good salary for his day, and says to Matthew follow me, and Matthew quits his lucrative career and follows. God calls and he is to be answered when he calls.

There was a story that broke a few weeks back about a motorcyclist who had an accident and was pinned under a burning car. Take a look. The urgency of the people who rescued him was awesome. Disciples of Jesus, churches of Jesus are to have that type of urgency. We won't have that urgency unless we trust God's timing.

But we won't have that urgency unless we believe that unsaved people stand in danger of missing out on eternal.

We won't have that type of urgency if we don't see that being a follower of Jesus means staying alert of opportunities to model and share the love of Christ.

This past week RC Owen and I met with the resource leader for Methodist churches in the Paducah district. She told us how her church adopted a class in local public school. And whether they were helping fund supplies for the classroom, paint the school room, bring snacks for special occasions or anything else they did they always told the people they helped they did because God loves them. To me that is a great story of living out Colossian 3:17 that says, **“And whatever you do, in word or deed do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”** It's a simple way Christians from a given church did not delay; but answer God's invitation to love others in his name.

Following Jesus whenever realizes that later can easily turn into never

If we say Jesus I'll follow you whenever, well what about now? Because the danger can be that telling Jesus “later” or one of these days, turns into never. When Jesus said let the dead bury the dead, it's a sharp and shocking response to say be careful we don't lull ourselves in spiritual apathy and disobedience.

In his book, I'm Not A Fan, Kyle Idelman writes about what he defines as the principles of **“as now, so then...meaning current**

habits are overwhelmingly the most likely predictor of future practices. (I'm Not a Fan, Idelman, p.195)

As Pastor Idelman goes on to say, don't tell yourself tomorrow you'll surrender to God regarding that secret sin, next opportunity you'll be more generous, next Sunday you'll introduce yourself to the new person attending worship, or serve on some project.

What is your "as now issue" and God is calling today to make a change, take action, get it resolved, get involved but don't delay?

There are so many scriptures that remind us God is calling us and inviting us to follow. God is waiting to see if our whenever will start today.

The Old Testament book of Numbers, chapter 9 describes how Moses and the people of God made their journey toward the Promise Land. God sent a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to hover over the sacred tent of meeting. When God wanted the people to move on with their journey, the cloud would lift and move and the people would follow, and when the cloud of God stopped, they stopped. It's about following God whenever God calls.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 13:11 that it is time to awake from our spiritual sleep.

2 Corinthians 6:2 he said today is the day of salvation.

Three times in the book of Hebrews in back to back chapters, 3:7, 3:15, and 4:7 Paul wrote the words of "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

Hebrews 12:1 states we are to lay aside the sin that besets us and run the race that is set before us = get running now. Paul said so many times don't delay when God is calling.

I think the most compelling words are those from Jesus himself in Revelation 3:20, where he says, “Behold I stand at the door and knock.” Look at the picture that was inspired by those words. Many of us have had it pointed out to us that the door in that picture has no external handle or door knob. The door cannot be opened from the outside by Jesus, we have to make a choice to answer his call to open the door and allow him inside. But he is knocking on our hearts door today for some reason some purpose to follow him today.

Pastor and author Francis Chan has neat illustration that gets at why perhaps we delay and settle for only good intentions. Take a look.

Chan Video

You know if you are not sure how God is wanting to use you and where you could plug in then again this week in the bulletin are some opportunities. But anything short of a yes to God in our actions is disobedience. By his grace we are able to follow his lead.