

## Luke 33 – Three Disciples

I grew up in Indiana, which is known for the love of basketball. So it was in my town, where you were nothing really important unless you were on the basketball team. So every year, starting in fifth grade, I would try out for basketball. I never really considered myself a bad basketball player. I could beat my younger brothers sometimes, but they weren't on the team: my peers were, and they were all better than I. So, though I made the team (everyone did in fifth grade), I didn't get much playing time. As the years progressed, I got less and less time, and even got the point where I was sitting the bench on the B-team. My eighth grade year I decided that instead of trying out, I would just volunteer to be the manager. That was the end of my basketball career.

Why is it that I never made the basketball team? What is because I was short? No, I was not the tallest person on the team, but I wasn't the shortest. I wasn't very big, either, but that didn't stop others from playing, and playing well. No, what I lacked was the motivation and determination to play well and better than I was playing. After school I spent time doing things other than shooting baskets and exercising. Had I spent an hour every day shooting free throws and doing layups, I perhaps could have been a better player. I didn't lack the physical ability to get better, just the impulse. If someone is going to succeed in something, it will take resolve, and the same is true for the Christian life. If you want to be used by God to do something for Him, it will not happen haphazardly or accidentally.

Now, I am not talking about salvation. There is nothing you can do, motivated or not, to earn salvation. This much is clear in Ephesians 2:8-9, which says: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." That verse says that there is nothing that we can do in order to be saved. It is a work of grace, done by God, which we access by faith. It even says explicitly "not by works." The same idea is presented in Titus 3:5, which says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." God saved us because of Him, not us. I am not speaking of earning your salvation, but I am talking about being motivated to be a disciple of Christ after salvation. There is a tremendous difference.

If you are interested this morning in knowing how you can have salvation in heaven, let me briefly explain what the Bible says. First, the Bible says we have sinned against God. Sin, says 1 John 3:4 is "the transgression of the law." When we sin, either by lying, stealing, taking God's name in vain, dishonoring our parents, or coveting, we break God's laws. There are some that believe that as long as they don't break the "big" sins, they will be OK. The problem is that God doesn't say that there are big sins and little sins, only sins. Some say that if they do good enough, God will let them into heaven. However, Isaiah 64:6 says "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Even the good things we do are not enough to save us. Furthermore, God says in James 2:10 that if we keep the whole law and break just one, we have broken all the laws in the Bible. On judgment day, we will all be guilty before God.

Second, because of our guilt and sin, God must punish us. God is perfect and holy, and cannot be around sin. The Bible says in Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Sin separates us from God not only the earth, but will separate us from God forever, through eternity. God is a God of justice, and must punish those who have broken His law. The Bible says in Matthew 25:41 that someday those guilty of breaking God's laws will hear: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is what we as sinners deserve because of our sin.

Third, however, is that although we have broken God's laws, God, in His love, sent Jesus to the earth. He died on the cross to take our sins upon Himself. Romans 5:8 says "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." 1 Peter 3:18 says: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." God put upon Jesus the punishment that we deserve so that we could be declared innocent by God. When Jesus rose from the grave three days later, God declared

Jesus innocent as well. Do you believe this? Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins? If it is true that Jesus died for the sins of the world, how can the blood of Jesus be applied to me? This is my fourth point.

The Bible says that we can receive this gift of forgiveness by faith. John 3:16 says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hebrews 10:38 says "the just shall live by faith." Romans 10:9-10 says: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If you, this morning, want to have your sins forgiven, simply accept, by faith, the free gift of salvation made available to you by the death of Jesus on the cross. Admit that you are a sinner and ask God to forgive you because of Jesus' death on the cross. That is how you can be saved. It is not earned by doing good, getting baptized, going to church or giving money to charity. It is through Jesus and Jesus alone.

After you have accepted Christ, however, the Bible says that you are expected to live for Him. I read for you Ephesians 2:8-9, but let me read verse 10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God wants Christians to live for Him. In this way, we are all disciples of Jesus. No one should be exempt. We should all be interested in becoming more like Jesus. This is one of the most important reasons for attending a good, Bible preaching church. I meet many people who say, "I can worship God in the woods. I don't need church." While it is certainly true that you don't need to be inside an actual church building in order to worship God, that statement misses the point. The reason you ought to go to church is to learn how to be more like Jesus. Worship is a part of it, but not the only part.

In the New Testament times, discipleship meant that you followed a rabbi and lived as he did. You observed what he did, heard him speak, and learned his perspective on who God was. This idea is supposed to continue today, where we not only learn from Jesus, but try to imitate Him in what He did. We are to obey His commands and walk in His footsteps. You many times left your own ambitions, desires, and even home to learn from your rabbi. Most of the time, the prospective disciple would go to a rabbi and ask to be a pupil. The rabbi would ask him questions regarding his knowledge of God and the Scriptures, and accept him or reject him. It is a similar process to our modern-day college application. Jesus, however, went against convention and went to seek out His own disciples. He wanted to take men who had already been overlooked and make them into great men for Him.

God is seeking people who will do great things for Him. He is seeking people who believe Him for what He says and obey no matter what. There are some that He calls to fill special roles for Him. Ephesians 4:11-12 gives some examples of some of these special roles: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There are two opposites to the spectrum of Christian service. Many times there are those who are not called, but try to minister anyway. God cautions against this in James 3:1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." God will call into question those who exercise authority, especially in spiritual matters. On the other end of the spectrum are those who are called by God, but refuse. Such is case for those in the story in Luke 9, which we will look at this morning.

Our text this morning is Luke 9:57-62. It says this: "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." This is the story of three disciples that converse with Jesus about being disciples.

Jesus called His initial twelve disciples. Their names were Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot. These men were called to follow Jesus, and were His primary focus. However, the next chapter says that Jesus chooses seventy disciples to go out all over Israel to proclaim His message. These seventy are probably who Jesus is talking about. Jesus wants men who will represent Him and His message, and is looking for special people. Often God calls men who are not necessarily extraordinary, but are willing to be sacrificial. Many missionary stories I read tell stories of people who are not talented, but are willing to give all for the cause of Jesus. This is who He is looking for here. Let us examine these three disciples.

The first disciple is found in Luke 9:57-58. The disciple here says this to Jesus: “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” This man says that he is willing to do whatever it takes to follow Him. There needs to be a willingness to follow Jesus wherever He leads and whatever He says. This may lead through very difficult times. The apostle Paul was under no pretenses that His call to service would be easy and problem-free. He said in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27: “Are they ministers of Christ?... I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Paul suffered unlike any Christian I have known.

Jesus told His disciples that they would have to give some things up. One of those things was certainty. People relish having certainty in their lives. They want stability and a modicum of a guarantee that life and comfort will be available in the future. Having this affinity for certainty is very natural. When Amy and I were engaged, I drove a 1984 Chevy Celebrity that had been given to me. It had been a good car, but she, for some reason, wanted a different car. She felt as though it was not reliable or trustworthy. She wanted some guarantees that it wasn't going to break down at a time that was impractical; namely, when she was driving it. We thought about it together and decided to buy a newer car and give the old one to our neighbors, who were just trying to get by. We bought our Saturn because it had more of a certainty that it would perform well and be reliable. As for that Chevy Celebrity, it broke down within a month of giving it to the neighbors.

We all want certainty in life, but this certainty is not guaranteed in the life of a Christian. Jesus made no such promises. He made it clear that life would not always be certain. He said this in reply to this man: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Animals generally make a place of rest, such as a nest or a den. Foxes and other animals will return to their places every night to rest and find shelter from the elements. They are guaranteed a place, but Jesus cannot guarantee this for His disciples. This is not to say that Jesus never had nice places to stay. Many times Jesus was able to stay with others, undoubtedly. However, whenever we see Jesus, He is sleeping in a mountain, in a garden, in a wilderness, or even in the middle of a boat during a storm. When God came to the Earth in the form of a human, He gave up the comforts of heaven, where He never needed rest and shelter.

Jesus was not telling His disciples to live a life free from anything that brings pleasure. Some religious people in the past have opted for this lifestyle, assuming that that is what will make God happy. The point is not to refuse oneself any offer of comfort or pleasure, but to not chase them. Jesus wants Christians to live by faith. We are to live in the belief that God will take care of our needs. We are to live believing that God loves us and will keep His promise to meet our needs. This was a teaching that was emphasized in Jesus' ministry.

He said this in Matthew 6:25-34: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one

cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”

God has promise that we would have what we need. A true disciple will trust that God will keep His Word and provide. Jesus is not saying that in order to be a true disciple one must not have a place to lay his head, only that he must give up the certainty of one every night and depend on God. It could be that your hesitation this morning to obey God and trust Him more fully is the fact that you cannot give up the certainty you have now. You do not want to step out and depend on Him for your daily needs. It is easier for you to put your trust in your bank account than in God. It is easier to look into your cupboards and refrigerator than to have faith that God will meet your needs. But this is what Jesus wants from you. He wants you to live by faith.

2 Corinthians 5:7 says: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” We are to live day by day in the faith we have in our God to keep His promises. We are not to rely on the things that we see, such as money, food, health, family, and houses. All of the things you can see can be taken away from you quickly. One tornado can take all these things from you in a matter of a few hours. But when you depend on God to meet your needs, trusting that He knows best for you, you are truly His disciple. God is calling out His people to live by faith and trust in Him for their needs. By all means buy insurance and put money in savings, but don’t let that be your trust. Jesus did not have a place to put His head, but trusted in God for all of His needs. This is the problem of the first disciple.

For the next disciple, Jesus comes to a him Himself and says simply this: “Follow me.” However, this disciple has reasons that he cannot do as Jesus asks. He offers this excuse: “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” On the surface, this seems like a reasonable request. The man simply wants to bury his father. After attending the funeral, he will be ready to follow Jesus. Surely this is not an unreasonable request. But we see that Jesus says this: “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” Why would Jesus say this to a man who had just lost his father? Was He being heartless?

If you notice, the man asks Jesus if he can “go” and bury his father. That implies that he wasn’t near where his father was. This has led many people to ask why. Scholars say that this man was not asking to go and bury a father who had already died, but one who was not yet dead. This is not to say that the father was dying, but simply that the father was still alive. Thus, this man is not asking for a few days in which to bury his father, but years. He is saying that once his father has passed and all the details of inheritance and living are meted, he will then think about following Jesus. But Jesus will have none of it. Jesus is not asking for people to commit years later, but now. This disciple is putting his family relationships, even ones projected into the future, as a higher priority than serving Jesus.

The closest relationships on this earth are those you have with family. In the plan of God, the priorities in life are spouse first, children second, and mother, father and siblings last. Often these are the closest bonds that we can have. We love our parents because they are ones who have cared for us since the minute we were born. We love our children because they are in our charge. We love our spouse because we have chosen them and made vows to them. This is natural, but this is speaking of earthly relationships. God wants us to consider more than our relationships with flesh and blood.

One day, a man came to Jesus and asked Him what the greatest commandment was. Jesus answered this way: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” He then said: “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” What Jesus was essentially saying is

that of all the commandments in the Bible, the command to love God with all that we have is the most important. He must be the first priority. The second is others, which would include family. As essential as family is, God wants us to put Him first in our lives. We need to consider His commands over the wants of our own families.

He said it this way in Luke 18:29-30: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” Jesus does not call everyone to leave family to serve Him, but He wants us to be willing to do so. Sadly, most people use their families as an excuse to not serve God. They say, “Well, when my kids are older I’ll be more serious,” or “Well, when I don’t have to take care of my parents I will serve God.” Some say, “We can’t really get to church right now because of our children.” Others say, “I don’t know what my family would say if I really served God more.” Friends, Jesus is worthy of your attention and service. If He has called you to serve Him in some fuller way, He intends to give you the grace to be able to do so. He will not expect you to do something that you cannot do.

Let us finally look at the third disciple. The story is found in verses 61-62: “And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” This third disciple approaches Jesus and offers to follow Him, but he has one condition. Before he goes to follow Jesus and be one of His preachers, he wants to be able to return home and bid his parents farewell. To what extent this farewell was we don’t know, but we know that it was an unreasonable request to Jesus. He responds by saying: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” What does this mean?

In ancient times, fields were plowed with a crude plow pulled by an ox. The farmer would walk behind the plow to make sure that it was straight and make sure the oxen were pulling in a straight line. Often, the farmer would fix his eyes on one spot in the distance to ensure he had a straight furrow in the earth. The first time I ever mowed the lawn at our church, the pastor advised me to look at a distant spot and look at it until I reached it, so that we would have straight lines in the lawn. This is what a farmer would do. However, if the farmer was careless and looked around while plowing, the rows would be crooked, not evenly spaced, and probably not parallel. This would make for a haphazard field, one that would not only be hard to cultivate, but one that would have wasted land. It was important for the plowman to keep his eyes on what he was doing.

Today, there is an epidemic of distracted driving. While they drive people eat, apply makeup, talk on cell phones, play with their GPS devices, or text. Because of this, thousands of easily preventable accidents happen every year. If people would focus on the road and wait to engage in other activities when they have stopped, the roads would be safer. When driving, our focus ought to be singular, and the same is true for a Christian. We ought to have the forefront of our vision what we can do for Jesus, and what He expects from us. We ought to be willing to give up our ambitions for the ambitions of God. This is what Jesus expects from this man, and it is what He expects from us.

“Well,” one might ask, “does that mean that I have to spend all my time going to church? That I can’t do anything else but read my Bible, pray, go to church and do other things? Does it mean I have to give all my money to the Lord and only use my time and resources for Him?” Friend, while Jesus does not expect us to abandon everything in life, He still expects all of our lives. Let me explain. If you are a business owner who is a Christian, God does not necessarily expect you to sell your business and move to China to preach the Gospel. But He does expect you to act like a Christian while you are a business owner. You ought to treat customers and employees with fairness and kindness. You ought to have a good testimony. If you have ways to do right with your resources and money, then by all means use them, if God is directing you. But do not hold anything back when God instructs you. There should never be a time where you say, “God, I’ll give you anything but that.” You ought to be fully surrendered to whatever God wants for you. He has promised to bless those who yield themselves to Him, though it might not be in a way you might expect.

These three disciples exemplify the attitudes of many people in the world, especially Christians. There is a lack of commitment that should be there. Why is this? Let me in our final minutes speculate why this might be. Perhaps the lack of commitment comes from the fear of losing other benefits. In our society, there is such a lack of commitment, which plays itself out in numerous ways. A lack of commitment between men and women results in people living together without marriage or the dissolving of the marriage. The divorce rate in our country is over 50%, and it is due to the fact that people do not keep the promises that they made “till death do us part.” It takes commitment to make a marriage work. Too many men do not marry their girlfriends because they do not want to commit. They want to enjoy the benefits of a physical relationship while being able to be free to do other things. This is not only selfish and shameful, but it is morally wrong.

The lack of commitment is the reason that our economy is in such a precarious condition. The thought in the minds of too many homeowners was that they did not need to keep their commitment to their bank or mortgage company. People just walk away from houses because they do not want to continue payments, because they don't believe in keeping their word or their commitments. The thought is that if I commit to one thing, that will exclude the possibility of ever having something else. If I commit to my wife, it means I can't be with any other woman. If I commit to one house, that mortgage company is going to demand my money. While it is true that you lose things when you commit, it is also true that you gain infinitely more. When you commit to a marriage you gain the companionship of someone who loves you and the security of someone with whom to go through life. When you commit to a house or a landlord, you gain the security of not being homeless. There are always risks involved in these commitments, but the benefits are tremendous. So it is with discipleship.

As a Christian, you may lose out on things that other people are doing. But God says in Colossians 3:2: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” God has ordered this world so that He can bless those who do right. You may know some dishonest successful people, but they have no promise of peace or long-term happiness. You do right, and those things that you are not able to do will seem trite or even unpleasant in the face of God's love for you.

The lack of commitment in our society is also due to uncertainty about the future. If I give up on all but one thing, how can I be assured that is the right thing? This is a fair question for unbelievers, but it should be one that is already settled for those who have become Christians. For you who have not trusted Christ as Saviour, I say this: “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” For those Christians who feel hesitant about committing to Christ because of the future, I say this: You already have. Those who have become Christians have already staked everything on the fact that Jesus died on the cross so that we could have the forgiveness of sins and be assured of a home in heaven. If you can trust Jesus for your eternal destiny, why can you not trust Jesus to take care of you here on earth.

The final reason someone may not want to commit as a disciple is simple rebellion. To this reason, I say this: Repent. Jesus Christ died on the cross, not simply so you could have a home in heaven someday, but so that you might show God's glory on this earth. You are not to just exist until Jesus comes or you die. You have been saved so that you can be a trophy of God's grace. He says this in 1 Peter 2:9: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Won't you commit to the one who committed everything for you? Be a true disciple of Jesus in every aspect of life. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. You can do so in the following ways:

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 W. 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. You can E-mail us at church@fbcpr.org. That's CHURCH at F B C P R dot O R G. Or you can log on to our website, which is www.fbcpr.org. If you would like to have a copy of this broadcast, either in audio or transcript form, you can find it on our website tomorrow. If you enjoy this program, let us know by contacting our church. Please join us this morning at 10:30 for our worship service. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by the First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, MN.