

Pastor Writes

Greetings to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is, 'Whole-hearted service of God.' This morning we are going to look at some people who want to be disciples but have numerous excuses. Luke records for us three cameos. In the first cameo Luke talks about the voluntary disciple, in the second, of the procrastinating disciple and in the third, the reluctant disciple. Luke records three responses from the three would be disciples.

Luke says that as Jesus was walking along the road a man said to him, 'I will follow you, wherever you go.' The first would-be follower makes a spontaneous, enthusiastic, offer of allegiance. He was ready to follow Jesus anywhere, everywhere, and wherever Jesus went. This disciple probably saw the crowds that have been following Jesus. He may have thought that Jesus was surely going to be a very powerful person and that if he could be one of the disciples he too would have got his share of power and popularity. The desire for power may have been his driving force. Another possibility is that he may be thinking of security. He may have thought that being one of his followers he would have been part of the 'best of Israel' and invited for a lunch. Jesus replies, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head.' Jesus knows that the would-be follower had not understood the gravity of discipleship. Power, security and influence in human terms were not going to be the outcome of following Jesus. Jesus was forcing him to count the cost before following him.

The second disciple can be termed as a procrastinating disciple. Jesus said to another man, 'follow me' but he replied, 'Lord first let me go and bury my father.' Jesus replied, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' There are two possible ways of interpreting this request: The first is that the father is dead and all that he wants to do is to bury his father and then come and follow Jesus. The burial of the dead took precedence over all other duties including the study of the law, the temple service, the killing of the Passover sacrifice, observance of circumcision and the reading of the scroll. Burial of one's own father was a religious duty of the utmost importance. To leave it undone is something scandalous. When Jesus says, 'Let the dead bury their dead' he is saying that the spiritual dead should bury the physically dead. The claims of the kingdom are above the claims of filial duty.

The second possible way of interpreting this passage is that the man's father has not yet died. This seems reasonable because the man was already in the crowd looking at what Jesus was doing. So when Jesus calls him, 'follow me' he is in fact telling Jesus, 'Not now Lord! My father is getting on in age. Now after he dies and I settle all things I will follow you. I am in the peak of my youth just now.' This is particularly true of the west Asian situation where it was the duty of the sons to take care of their elderly parents and thereby fulfill their filial duty. This disciple is in fact procrastinating as he postpones following Jesus to a distant future- after the death of his father. 'Not now Lord! But later!!' is in fact his unsaid reply. Jesus is calling us to follow him immediately without any delay. There is no room for procrastinating-let the dead bury the dead but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

The third would be disciple is the reluctant disciple. He said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.' Jesus replied, 'no one who puts the hand to the plough and looks back is fit in the kingdom of God.' This disciple is reluctant in taking a decisive step. He probably wants to take permission from his family and wants their approval. He is not sure on his own whether he is doing the right thing. He needs some reassurance. It sounds like Elisha when he was called by Elijah who flings his mantle over him to be his successor. He says, 'let me kiss my father and mother goodbye and then I will come with you.' Jesus says 'that no one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.' There is no room for double mindedness. The kingdom has no room for those who look back when they are called to look forward. The radical claim of the kingdom of God makes family ties and peer pressure lower in the order of their priority. A decision to follow Christ cannot be merely one of emotion and enthusiasm but one that calls for resolute determination. There are no part-time offers in following Christ he wants our all – he wants total commitment.

As we looked at these would-be disciples may we not make excuses for not being a follower of Jesus. May we take time this morning to surrender and commit our self to the whole- hearted service of God.

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