

01312021 Beware the Wolves...

One of the more difficult aspects in following Jesus ...is getting used to and eventually embracing the spiritual concept of delayed gratification....**Delay of gratification**, is the act of resisting an impulse to take an immediately available reward in the hope of obtaining a more-valued reward in the future.

the reason this is difficult is that it requires great self control...The ability to delay gratification is essential to following Jesus...as everything he does has the end in sight from the beginning....where as we often have the beginning in sight ...gratification ...rather than the delay in sight to achieve the ultimate goal which will be far more satisfying...

it is the opposite of What is the Meaning of Instant or Immediate Gratification? Instant (or immediate) gratification is a term that refers to the temptation, and resulting tendency, to forego a future benefit in order to obtain a less rewarding but more immediate benefit.

so how do we do that...well quit thinking of the harvest and stay focused process...kill immediate gratification...focus on long term gratification or accomplishment!

Hebrews 10:35 So do not throw away **this confident trust** in the Lord. **Remember the great reward it brings you!** ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need **now**, so that you will **continue** to do God's will. **Then** you will receive all that he has promised. ³⁷ "For **in just a little while**, the Coming One **will come and not delay**. ³⁸ And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in **anyone who turns away.**"

Now...present tense ... **continue**...keep doing it...**then** future tense... you will receive all that he promised... When? **in a little while**...future tense... **will come and not delay**..the future tense is not a delay, but a planned delivery...so, **my righteous ones will live by faith... will live...present tense... so don't turn away ...**

Do you realize that as a follower of Jesus**You are on a mission of**

planting spiritual seeds for a future which will not be your ownmuch of which is sown will not be reaped until much later....it is called delayed gratification...

MK 4:26 Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. ²⁸ The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. ²⁹ And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

First of all...Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant. Robert Louis Stevenson

Sumer 2016 Pastor David Wignington visited Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. His goal was to investigate the possibility of planting a church there. When he reached his hotel room there was a small gift bag on the desk...besides the usual water, some snacks, breath mints and a map of the area ...was a small bottle of olive oil. He asked his host at dinner that night about the unique gift.

The host proceeded to educate him on the olive oil industry in Tunisia. Tunisia is the fourth largest olive oil producer in the world. Behind only Spain, Italy and Greece. Olive oil is a big deal in the smallest country in north Africa and a source of national pride. It is a major industry there, but it was not always so.

The host shared a Latin inscription found on a tombstone a little down the coast of Tunisia. The inscription is over 1500 years old. The Latin inscription translated to English reads..."Here lies Dion, a pious man, he lived 80 years and planted 4000 olive trees." The life of Dion does not appear in any chronicles anywhere else. Apparently, he was not remarkable in a historic sense : he did not conquer empires, or rule a nation. He was just an ordinary guy. He lived, love God, planted trees, he died. That's it.

But it seems Dion understood sowing and reaping...planting and

harvesting....an olive tree may take more than a decade to start producing olives. We don't know if Dion lived long enough to see all of his olive trees, or any of his olive trees, start to produce fruit. Apparently that was not the motive for Dion...his inscription did not say here lies Dion, he lived 80 years and made fortune in the olive oil business.

He simply planted. But today because of unknown people like Dion, there is an olive industry large enough to impact the world's commodities market. An olive tree can live 2000 years . many of the olive trees Dion planted are likely alive today and produce olives that contribute to a major export in Tunisia. Dion planted so someone else could harvest. **HE WAS A planter for a FUTURE which wont be his own...** AND SO ARE WE!! I AM NOT THERE YET BUT I AM LEARNING TO BE A SEED PLANTER AND TRUSTING GOD TO DO THE REST.

Would it be enough for you if what you planted today didn't produce much fruit in your lifetime? IT WAS ENOUGH FOR DION AND IT SHOULD BE FOR YOU AND ME... the most important thing is we follow the Lord.... in planting the seed he calls each of us to plant... seed... in Luke 10 Jesus is getting ready to send 72 disciples on their seed planting journey...

LK 10:1 **10** *The Lord now chose seventy-two^[a] other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. ² These were his instructions to them: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. ³ Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.*

Normally, we speak about following in the footsteps of Jesus. here the roles are reversed...The 72 disciples are sent out ahead of Jesus to prepare His way.

He wants their destinations to be set by their own dreams, goals, passions, and inner stirrings. Peter and Andrew were fishermen so maybe they would head for the fish markets and coastal communities. Matthew was a tax collector for the Romans so perhaps he might head for the Roman

communities and military postings. In any case they were going where God was showing their dreams and aspirations for the Kingdom of God here on earth.

More importantly Jesus was telling them to go! 20 years from now I would hate for any of us to say with regret.....‘Why didn’t I go?’”

Don’t miss the boat! Don’t recognize the call to move in upon your calling, your dreams, your hopes for a better future, a better you and not act upon it! Listen closely to that inner voice and when Jesus says go, then go!

That is the purpose of what he wants to do...but as always there is the set up....before you plant you have to be planted ...and that is all about following Jesus... and it starts with responding to his call...these people did not know what was in store for them...just like us....but the truth is you must follow him...to get where he wants you to go...but you will deal with the wolves... however the most dangerous wolves prowl around your mind! the wolves of your past are strong! and when you follow Christ it is new territory you are entering and you will feel weak and feeble and inadequate like a lamb among wolves...but don't worry go!

....quit making decisions on your past and start making them for your destiny!

and we get a perfect example of this in chapter 9 of luke...the set up to chapter ten...though the people did not know this...

so...People asked Jesus to let them follow him...to be used in the Harvest...and they run into the discouragement wolves of their own making!

Luke 9: 57 As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.”⁵⁸ But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.”

This man proclaimed a decision to follow Jesus *I will follow you anywhere ... but Jesus knew his heart...and spoke loving truth to him... if you follow me...your security is in me...period*

- none of the other seeds planted in your life will be able to sustain you ...Jesus knew his heart... He wanted guarantees of security ...He wanted to follow Jesus but he want to do it in a way that was safe.
- Jesus tells him the only sure security you have is in Him...not not in what you possess or don't possess....
- We all find ourselves distracted from meeting more long-term goals by enjoyable and secure short-term activities.
- When we want to follow Jesus, we must first decide to commit our future security fears to God's hand...and then for the rest of our lives keep forcing ourselves to leave it there...there is no instant gratification...Just long term gratification
You want to fully participate? write a letter to God...entrusting him with your service for His Security...

...Jesus asked people to follow him...

Luke 9:59 He said to another person, "Come, follow me." The man agreed, but he said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father."

- I cannot think of a greater honor or show of love or expression of acceptance than for God in the flesh to ask a person to follow him, the fact that he would bid anyone to come be with him is quite astonishing.
- A person would feel significant in His presence. The only thing more astonishing than Jesus great estimation of a person's worth and his desire to include them is their low esteem of him to procrastinate or reject the offer...amazing.

Jesus tells this man to follow him...he replies I will... then adds a “But First”... I want to follow you but there is a FIRST before you! ...

- It all starts with follow...our world enters his world..this man said I would but then adds I want to stay in my world longer...
- He possessed a false image of Jesus...and I think we all do...He thought he could follow Jesus but dictate the timing of His obedience to follow, I do not have time to follow you...yet...I really want to...but not right now...but I am all in later!
- Let me wait until my father dies at some future time, take care of his business and then meet up with you
- This man’s father is not dead...Now if the man's father has just died, the man would not be hanging around Jesus? He should be home making funeral arrangements! I
- t's obvious that **his father isn't dead** -- yet. Most likely not even seriously ill, or the man would be asking Jesus for healing.
- **What the man is saying is this: I have responsibilities to my father as long as he lives. I'm not free to follow you right now. But when my dad dies -- and he is getting on in years -- then I'll follow you right away. I just can't follow now.**
- Jesus found him and He had Jesus ...But He was about to lose Jesus

Jesus responds... ⁶⁰ *But Jesus told him, “Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead! Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God.”*

He now has to rethink Jesus....Jesus was not concerned with what he was concerned about... ..but was concerned with what he wanted him to do...and in no-uncertain terms, even stating that what he wanted to do was dead...that its time was expired.....

- **it was time to move into Kingdom work...**
- The spiritually dead put family, business, social, and other responsibilities BEFORE their responsibilities to Jesus. But the spiritually alive are to follow -- NOW!

- **On the human level...Speaking the truth to his family that he was changing professions was a scary thing to this man and like many of us we put it off...surely Jesus understood the magnitude...**
- **Following Jesus is a NOW thing. It is immediate.**
- **Jesus does not want this man to miss the opportunity of his life time...They are no longer able to be recaptured....**

Bottom line...

Jesus did not say follow me or return to a horrible way of life...he says lukewarm service or half hearted following ...(I want to follow but can't make up my mind when) is no service at all.

Willingness to do what Jesus asks... without doing it..is the same as not doing it... not doing it.

Jesus said I want you to go and proclaim good news to people...not hang out with that which is dead in your life...

What this man did not know at the time was Jesus is about to send Seventy two of his followers to go from village to village to carry the message of the Kingdom. and they were not to take anything on this journey...they would see the miraculous take place...what an adventure!

- **Jesus needs this man ready and committed to be in a certain place at a certain time, even though Jesus hasn't announced the mission yet. But the man can't be counted on.**
- **the same with this other man...how tragic! indeed the workers are few...**

LK 9:61 Another said, "Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family."

This appears to be a harsh response, All the man wanted to do was go home and say good-bye. That's all. What's so wrong with that?

- **In light of the immediate mission ahead -- the sending out of the Seventy two to the villages of Judea -- for the man to go home will mean that he will miss out, though his request seems reasonable enough.**

- **This man said, “I will follow you Jesus, but...” There are many people who say I will follow Jesus but...**
- **This man wanted to have a farewell ceremony with his family. Then he wanted to watch his favorite TV show one more time, and go shopping at his favorite store, and so on.**
- **It refers to a life with a divided heart.**

Jesus challenged his motives....

LK 9:62 But Jesus told him, “Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.”

The Greek verb To "put a hand to the plow" means to begin the task of plowing. it is a past tense complete action) and then looks back (Present tense, is not fit for the kingdom of God" (9:62, KJV).

- **The key word here is plow...which means act of service**
- **whether your plow is pulled by a mule or work horses, a car, or a diesel tractor there is one no-no:**
- **You never try to plow while looking over your shoulder. If you do, your rows are crooked and your field is difficult to work.**
- **If you try to plow while looking back, you're not fit to be in the field. You'd be fired in a hurry by the farmer.** Plowing crooked lines is being a detriment to the job...you lose lines the field will not produce as much as it could... In other words, you've made a total mess of the field.
- **A person who plows has to keep his eyes straight ahead or he'll botch the job. Rather, plowmen fix their eyes on a point at the far end of the field and move steadily toward it, not veering to the right side or to the left.**
- **Jesus isn't saying you can't glance back. But he is saying you can't continue to look back once you've begun to plow. If you do, you're not "fit," suitable, usable, not in the proper shape for Kingdom work!**
- **The point here is that if you have already thought it through and you know the right thing to do because it is obvious, but you continue to**

agonize over it, the opportunity will pass and you will have many regrets.

- You should think things out carefully, and you should not make rash decisions you might regret later on. **However, as soon as you have thought it out and have decided for the Kingdom of God, you have put your hand on the plow.** Do not second-guess yourself into paralysis. If you look back, you'll just mess the whole thing up.
- **The thing to do is the right thing and the time to do it is now.” Second-guessing yourself when the path is clear only defeats you.**

My question to us... **What are you possibly doing that could be more important right now than doing immediately that the Lord has been asking you to do????**

quit making decisions on you past and start making them for your destiny!

Look at what happens next!!!

LK 10:1 **10** The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit.

Jesus has plans to visit the places he sends you too... Jesus follows in our footsteps, too. Many of the people we encounter along life's path may never get to meet Jesus, if they are not first attracted by our example. Our lifestyle, values and beliefs must be in accord with Jesus' message.

² These were his instructions to them: “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.

Normally, we speak about following in the footsteps of Jesus. Immediately the roles are reversed...The 72 disciples are sent out ahead of Jesus to prepare His way.

He wants their destinations to be set by their on dreams, goals, passions, and inner stirrings.

Peter and Andrew were fishermen so maybe they would head for the fish markets and coastal communities. Matthew was a tax collector for the Romans so perhaps he might head for the Roman communities and military postings. In any case they were going where God was showing their dreams and aspirations for the Kingdom of God here on earth.

More importantly Jesus was telling them to go! 20 years from now I would hate for any of us to say with regret..... ‘Why didn’t I go?’”

Don’t miss the boat! Don’t recognize the call to move in upon your calling, your dreams, your hopes for a better future, a better you and not act upon it! Listen closely to that inner voice and when Jesus says go, then go!

This is what following Jesus is all about... you will embark upon an incredible journey...their task of entering every city and place where Jesus desires to come. We have the same call

Jesus follows in our footsteps, too. Many of the people we encounter along life's path may never get to meet Jesus, if they are not first attracted by our example. Our lifestyle, values and beliefs must be in accord with Jesus' message.

If you go God will show a new world to you....If you go God will build great character in you.

If you go God will show changed lives because of you....If you go God will produce miracles to sustain you.

You will be crushed like a rose whose fragrance fills the air you will know a God who won't be an image of your own making...But you will experience the Real God, you will know the real Jesus you will give the real Jesus...and that Is attractive to a world in need of the real God! End

end

What is God calling you to approach with the spirit of a lamb...when surrounded by wolves...I will tell you this...

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alternate end

LK 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.

- The key word here is Service....
- whether your plow is pulled by a mule or work horses or a diesel tractor there is one no-no:
- You never try to plow while looking over your shoulder. If you do, your rows are crooked and your field is difficult to work.
- *If you try to plow while looking back, you're not fit to be in the field. You'd be fired in a hurry by the farmer.* Plowing crooked lines is being a detriment to the job...you lose lines the field will not produce as much as it could...

- Rather, plowmen fix their eyes on a point at the far end of the field and move steadily toward it, not veering to the right side or to the left.
- To "put your hand to the plow" means to begin the task of plowing. The Greek verb tenses underline the point. Literally, "No man, having put (Aorist tense, past complete action) his hand to the plough, and looking back (Present tense, continuous action), is fit for the kingdom of God" (9:62, KJV).
- Jesus isn't saying you can't glance back. But he is saying you can't continue to look back once you've begun to plow. If you do, you're not "fit," Greek euthetos, "fit, suitable, usable, convenient for something."
- I don't know if you have ever mowed the lawn, but if you push off and then look back, you'll discover that you have mowed in a crooked line.
- That's not so bad, because you can correct it by mowing over your mistake, but if you are plowing, you've made a crooked furrow and that means that you have to keep making crooked furrows to match.
- In other words, you've made a total mess of the field. A person who plows has to keep his eyes straight ahead or he'll botch the job.
- **The point here is that if you have already thought it through and you know the right thing to do because it is obvious, but you continue to agonize over it, the opportunity will pass and you will have many regrets.**
- You should think things out carefully, and you should not make rash decisions you might regret later on. However, as soon as you have thought it out and have decided for the Kingdom of God, you have put your hand on the plow. Do not second-guess yourself into paralysis. If you look back, you'll just mess the whole thing up.
- **The thing to do is the right thing and the time to do it is now." Second-guessing yourself when the path is clear only defeats you.**

My question to us... **What are you possibly doing that could be more important right now than doing immediately what the Lord has been asking you to do????**

Proverbs 20:4 ...A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing."

Look at what happens next!!!

LK 10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

Normally, we speak about following in the footsteps of Jesus. Immediately the roles are reversed...The 72 disciples are sent out ahead of Jesus to prepare His way.

He wants their destinations to be set by their own dreams, goals, passions, and inner stirrings. Peter and Andrew were fishermen so maybe they would head for the fish markets and coastal communities. Matthew was a tax collector for the Romans so perhaps he might head for the Roman communities and military postings. In any case they were going where God was showing their dreams and aspirations for the Kingdom of God here on earth.

More importantly Jesus was telling them to go! 20 years from now I would hate for any of us to say with regret..... ‘Why didn’t I go?’”

What if Simon turned to Jesus and said, “If they want to go that’s o.k. but, I think I will just stay here where I know that it is safe.” Jesus would be like, “I am offering you the riches of life in its fullness and wonderment. Why would you just want to stay here and settle for the scraps? the Kingdom of God has come near be a part of it’s expansion.”

Don’t miss the boat! Don’t recognize the call to move in upon your calling, your dreams, your hopes for a better future, a better you and not act upon it! Listen closely to that inner voice and when Jesus says go, then go!

This is what following Jesus is all about... you will embark upon an incredible journey...their task of entering every city and place where Jesus desires to come. We have the same call As Jesus leads us we will travel farther and higher than we thought possible... we will be stretched in ways that make us uncomfortable; we will meet traveling companions we never thought we would and grow to love them like we never thought we could..., we will experience more adventure, overcome more challenges, we will realize that no matter how much we have learned there is much more to learn..

We embrace the reality that what ever terrain I am traversing ...I will make it through... and when it looks like the end of the road...it’s only a bend a bend in the road...that there is always farther to go, more to grow, and better to come, and most importantly arrival comes at the end and only our leader knows when that is.

² He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

I believe Jesus was not only describing the toughness of the situation when he described it as lambs going among wolves, he was giving them the spiritual posture he wanted them to assume. They were not to go with a plan of attack like a pack of wolves, but in a spirit of love, humility and peace. Gentle as a lamb..

Jesus follows in our footsteps, too. Many of the people we encounter along life's path may never get to meet Jesus, if they are not first attracted by our example. Our lifestyle, values and beliefs must be in accord with Jesus' message.

What is God calling you to approach with the spirit of a lamb...when surrounded by wolves...I will tell you this...

If you go God will show a new world to you.

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If you go God will show a New You, you never thought existed...! (put the blanket around your shoulders) were like the blankets on the wall behind me...

He say to us today come and ride on my shoulders and face your incredible destiny...and we balk...yet that is what some do...but today we witnessed seventy two who did not...and as they were sent out by Jesus embarked on the incredible life changing journey of their lives...

I will walk by Faith

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each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world? ⁴When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting just like people of the world? ⁵After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. ⁶I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. ⁷It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. ⁹For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.

What we are doing is strategizing how and where we (in the human realm) can:

1. **Serve**...as the Lord assigns each his/her task
2. **Plant** seed...as the Lord assigns... in this case scattering (Paul traveling everywhere)
3. **Water** it... provide what is humanly possible...the resources... in this case water...in this case Apollos staying and (regularly) watering

Observe what only God can do:

1. **Make it grow**

so what does planting and watering look like?

First of all...Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.

Robert Louis Stevenson

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[1 Timothy 6:18-19](#) NLT ¹⁸Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. ¹⁹By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

verse 59 of Luke Chapter 9 ...

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LK 9:59 He said to another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

- I cannot think of a greater honor or show of love or expression of acceptance than for God in the flesh to ask a person to follow him.
- For those with low self esteem there is no greater affirmation of acceptance, the fact that he would bid anyone to come be with him is quite astonishing.
- It must have been wonderful to spend time with Jesus...with somebody who liked you, believed in you, and sought closeness with people...something foreign for most of us.

- A person would feel significant in His presence. After all, those who knew Jesus personally went on to accomplish amazing feats, demonstrating unwavering devotion.
- It must have been thrilling to look into the eyes of God and have him look back and communicate that human beings down to the individual, are of immense worth and beauty and worthy of intimacy with each other and the God head.
- Such an understanding fueled a lifetime of joy and emotional health among the disciples that neither crowds of people jeering, nor prison, nor torture, nor exclusion could undo. They were faithful to the end, even to their own deaths.
- People don't go out and get tortured and arrested for somebody who doesn't love them. In fact if somebody loves us we will do all sorts of things in their name, for them and because of them.
- They will make us who we are.

The only thing more astonishing than Jesus great estimation of a person's worth and his desire to include them is their low esteem of him to procrastinate or reject the offer...amazing.

LK 9:59 He said to another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus asks this man...he replies I will then adds a "But"...a disqualifier...

Jesus responds... *LK 9:60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

- **It all starts with follow...our world enters his world..this man said I would but then adds I want to stay in my world longer...**
- **It really is a timing issue...I do not have time to follow you...yet...I really want to...but not right now...**
- This man's father is not dead...Now if the man's father has just died, what in the world is the man doing hanging around Jesus? He should be home making funeral arrangements! It's obvious that **his father isn't dead** -- yet. Most likely not even seriously ill, **or the man would be asking Jesus for healing.**
- **What the man is saying is this: I have responsibilities to my father as long as he lives. I'm not free to follow you right now. But when my**

dad dies -- and he is getting on in years -- then I'll follow you right away. I just can't follow now.

- Just last week I heard someone in her twenties say, "When I'm young I want to be free to enjoy myself. Later on, then maybe I'll settle down." This is common. I believe in Jesus, but I'm not ready to get too serious about it right now. When I get older I will. What an insult to Jesus!
- **The dead put family, business, social, responsibilities BEFORE their responsibilities to Jesus. But the spiritually alive are to follow -- NOW!**
- Speaking the truth to his family was a scary thing to this man and like many of us we put it off...
- For most of us, our call to follow Jesus does NOT mean we have to physically leave loved ones.
- But we may need to leave them behind spiritually in order to follow Jesus.
- You can't say: When my husband gets saved and decides to follow Jesus then I'll be the most faithful disciple you can find anywhere. I just don't want to get ahead of him spiritually. It doesn't work that way.
- You aren't to choose when you are to follow. Today is the day.
Following Jesus is a NOW thing. It is immediate.

Secondly...this man wants to do something new...wants to follow Jesus ...but is afraid...
The stuff with his dad died, ...sometime earlier...it now needs to be buried so he can move on...

- If you are anything like me and like most of the people I know, we have things in our past that are dead, but are not buried.
- We have old sins - things done and things left undone - old sins that are long dead, but not buried; and they cause us anguish and guilt.
- We have old relationships, long-gone and long-dead, but not buried; and they still cause us pain, guilt, and other strong emotions.
- We have long-ago and long-gone missed opportunities. Jesus does not want this man to miss the opportunity of his life time...They are no longer able to be recaptured.
- They are gone, and they are dead; but they are not buried, and we continue to be plagued by regret and doubt.
- His other commitments keep him from doing Jesus' immediate will for his life. Commitment to Jesus must come first...
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- their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Bottom line...

Jesus did not say follow me or return to a horrible way of life...he says lukewarm service or half hearted following following...(I want to follow but can't make up my mind when) is no service at all.

Willingness to do what Jesus asks... without doing it..is the same as not doing it... not doing it.

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Coaching football...trying to catch the ball...is not catching the ball

- What this man did not know at the time was Jesus is about to send Seventy two of his followers to go from village to village to carry the message of the Kingdom (10:1-24).
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LK 9:61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." LK 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.

- This appears to be a harsh response, All the man wanted to do was go home and say good-bye. That's all.
- What's so wrong with that?
- In light of the immediate mission ahead -- the sending out of the Seventy two to the villages of Judea -- for the man to go home will mean that he will miss out, though his request seems reasonable enough.
- This man said, "I will follow you Jesus, but..." There are many people who say I will follow Jesus but...
- This man wanted to have a farewell ceremony with his family. Then he wanted to watch his favorite TV show one more time, and go shopping at his favorite store, and so on.

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Jesus challenged his motives....Jesus has the ability to challenge with kindness...

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- The key word here is Service....
- whether your plow is pulled by a mule or work horses or a diesel tractor there is one no-no:
- You never try to plow while looking over your shoulder. If you do, your rows are crooked and your field is difficult to work.
- *If you try to plow while looking back, you're not fit to be in the field. You'd be fired in a hurry by the farmer.*
- Rather, plowmen fix their eyes on a point at the far end of the field and move steadily toward it, not veering to the right side or to the left.
- To "put your hand to the plow" means to begin the task of plowing. The Greek verb tenses underline the point. Literally, "No man, having put (Aorist tense, past complete action) his hand to the plough, and looking back (Present tense, continuous action), is fit for the kingdom of God" (9:62, KJV).
- Jesus isn't saying you can't glance back. But he is saying you can't continue to look back once you've begun to plow. If you do, you're not "fit," Greek euthetos, "fit, suitable, usable, convenient for something."
- Plowing crooked lines is being a detriment to the job...you lose lines.....I don't know if you have ever mowed the lawn, but if you push off and then look back, you'll discover that you have mowed in a crooked line.
- That's not so bad, because you can correct it by mowing over your mistake, but if you are plowing, you've made a crooked furrow and that means that you have to keep making crooked furrows to match.
- In other words, you've made a total mess of the field. A person who plows has to keep his eyes straight ahead or he'll botch the job.
- My sister found that out when she was learning to drive. She waved at some of her friends by the side of the road so they could see she was driving. Cars (like the lawnmowers and plows) tend to go in the direction where you are looking.
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The point in both these situations...

- The point here is that if you have already thought it through and you know the right thing to do because it is obvious, but you continue to agonize over it, the opportunity will pass and you will have many regrets.
- You should think things out carefully, and you should not make rash decisions you might regret later on. However, as soon as you have thought it out and have decided for the Kingdom of God, you have put your hand on the plow. Do not second-guess yourself into paralysis. If you look back, you'll just mess the whole thing up.
- If you have determined that you are doing the right thing, do the right thing! Second-guessing yourself when the path is clear only defeats you.

The **thing to do is the right thing and the time to do it is now.**"

My question to us... **What are you possibly doing that could be more important right now than doing immediately what the Lord has been asking you to do????**

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Jesus is always honest with people. You may not always like what he says, but it's the truth. You may not want to hear it, but it's the truth. Jesus is a man of integrity, a friend who will always prove faithful, a counselor whose words will never prove false.

When Jesus speaks or bears witness concerning a person or any particular state of affairs, or expresses an opinion or issues a warning, he can always be counted on for accuracy and honesty. When Jesus promises, he can always be trusted to follow through. He will never withhold from you what is needful for your spiritual growth. If he reveals something, it must be essential for your life, even if it's painful and demanding.

Honesty is the Lord's policy. That's why honesty needs to be our policy too. ^{EPH}

^{4: 15...} *Instead, speaking the **truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

*EPH 4:25 Therefore each of you must **put off falsehood and speak truthfully** to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

- **Honesty is very difficult for us for it is a balancing of entering into another's world and hanging on to yourself...and the tension of hanging between those two worlds.**

Most conflicts involve how we enter another's world and how we hang on to ours simultaneously...loving others and loving ourselves

- Love your neighbor as you love your self
- The challenge is to hold on to ourselves and not to lose ourselves when we enter another person's world.
- To do so is to be like Jesus...

One of our greatest desires is to be known and loved anyway... that is why we spend so much energy presenting ourselves in such a way to be liked by disguising those qualities that would lead to rejection.....that's why we fear intimacy (familiarity) so much...if we are really exposed we are very vulnerable to being hurt...by having our faults, failures, weakness, used against us..

It is no secret we are terribly protective of our hearts, the closer we are to another person, the more vulnerable we are and the more we feel a sense of risk. Couples can take years to finally trust each other, and many of us will close ourselves off at the slightest hint of danger. Introductory conversations are always shallow. "where did you go to school"? How old are your children? What kind of work do you do? ...are always safe places to begin.

Start an initial conversation with...How is your walk with God? What problems are you dealing with? Or When do you feel least loved by your husband? .. and you will have a tough time making new friends...

It seems that we feel we must trust people before we let them know anything remotely vulnerable about us, and to ask for more before trust has been built is to circumvent a social etiquette dating back to the fall of man.

And yet it is with ease That Jesus seems to walk right through this system of defense, never seeming to fear that he would damage a person's complex identity. Instead he goes nearly immediately to our greatest fears, our most injured spaces and speaks into those places with authority, truth and love.

How did he do this? Jesus really loved people and wanted to relate to them...and they could sense that...I believe when someone talked to him...he intently listened and looked at them eye to eye...people knew he really did care...how often do we speak to people ...and look right past them or around them...distracted by our own thoughts, or feeling interrupted because we have something else on our mind. Jesus had to be busier than any of us...but people were his priority...he really liked them!! And they knew it...

Jesus was connected to people's heart...where they really lived...as we talked about before...

And that is exactly what drew people to Jesus...he really loves them and they feel it...so much that some people wanted to follow him...but Jesus who a truth teller...welcomed them but told them the truth about what they were thinking about embarking upon... Today we expand on that as Jesus speaks to more potential followers..

- life with Jesus is a journey..

we pick up on verse 59 of Luke Chapter 9 ...Jesus asked people to follow him...

LK 9:59 He said to another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

- I cannot think of a greater honor or show of love or expression of acceptance than for God in the flesh to ask a person to follow him.
- For those with low self esteem there is no greater affirmation of acceptance, the fact that he would bid anyone to come be with him is quite astonishing.
- It must have been wonderful to spend time with Jesus...with somebody who liked you, believed in you, and sought closeness with people...something foreign for most of us.
- A person would feel significant in His presence. After all, those who knew Jesus personally went on to accomplish amazing feats, demonstrating unwavering devotion.
- It must have been thrilling to look into the eyes of God and have him look back and communicate that human beings down to the individual, are of immense worth and beauty and worthy of intimacy with each other and the God head.
- Such an understanding fueled a lifetime of joy and emotional health among the disciples that neither crowds of people jeering, nor prison, nor torture, nor exclusion could undo. They were faithful to the end, even to their own deaths.

- People don't go out and get tortured and arrested for somebody who doesn't love them. In fact if somebody loves us we will do all sorts of things in their name, for them and because of them.
- They will make us who we are.

The only thing more astonishing than Jesus great estimation of a person's worth and his desire to include them is their low esteem of him to procrastinate or reject the offer...amazing.

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Jesus asks this man...he replies I will then adds a "But"...a disqualifier...

Jesus responds... *LK 9:60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

- **It all starts with follow...our world enters his world..this man said I would but then adds I want to stay in my world longer...**
- **It really is a timing issue...I do not have time to follow you...yet...I really want to...but not right now...**
- This man's father is not dead...Now if the man's father has just died, what in the world is the man doing hanging around Jesus? He should be home making funeral arrangements! It's obvious that **his father isn't dead** -- yet. Most likely not even seriously ill, **or the man would be asking Jesus for healing.**
- What the man is saying is this: **I have responsibilities to my father as long as he lives. I'm not free to follow you right now. But when my dad dies -- and he is getting on in years -- then I'll follow you right away. I just can't follow now.**
- Just last week I heard someone in her twenties say, "When I'm young I want to be free to enjoy myself. Later on, then maybe I'll settle down." This is common. I believe in Jesus, but I'm not ready to get too serious about it right now. When I get older I will. What an insult to Jesus!
- **The dead put family, business, social, responsibilities BEFORE their responsibilities to Jesus. But the spiritually alive are to follow -- NOW!**

- Speaking the truth to his family was a scary thing to this man and like many of us we put it off...
- For most of us, our call to follow Jesus does NOT mean we have to physically leave loved ones.
- But we may need to leave them behind spiritually in order to follow Jesus.
- You can't say: When my husband gets saved and decides to follow Jesus then I'll be the most faithful disciple you can find anywhere. I just don't want to get ahead of him spiritually. It doesn't work that way.
- You aren't to choose when you are to follow. Today is the day.
Following Jesus is a NOW thing. It is immediate.

Secondly...this man wants to do something new...wants to follow Jesus ...but is afraid...
The stuff with his dad died, ...sometime earlier...it now needs to be buried so he can move on...

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Proverbs 20:4 ...A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.”

Look at what happens next!!!

LK 10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

Normally, we speak about following in the footsteps of Jesus. Immediately the roles are reversed.. .The 72 disciples are sent out ahead of Jesus to prepare His way.

He wants their destinations to be set by their own dreams, goals, passions, and inner stirrings. **Peter and Andrew were fishermen so maybe they would head for the fish markets and coastal communities. Matthew was a tax collector for the Romans so perhaps he might head for the Roman communities and military postings.** In any case they were going where God was showing their dreams and aspirations for the Kingdom of God here on earth.

More importantly Jesus was telling them to go! 20 years from now I would hate for any of us to say with regret.....‘Why didn’t I go?’”

What if Simon turned to Jesus and said, “If they want to go that’s o.k. but, I think I will just stay here with you Jesus where I know that it is safe.” Jesus would be like, “I am offering you the riches of life in its fullness and wonderment. Why would you just want to stay here and settle for the scraps? Nevertheless, the Kingdom of God has come near.”

Don’t miss the boat! Don’t recognize the call to move in upon your calling, your dreams, your hopes for a better future, a better you and not act upon it! Listen closely to that inner voice and when Jesus says go, then go!

This is what following Jesus is all about... you will embark upon an incredible journey...

As Jesus leads us we will travel farther and higher than we thought possible... we will be stretched in ways that make us uncomfortable; we will meet traveling companions we never thought we would and grow to love them like we never thought we could..., we will experience more adventure,

overcome more challenges, we will realize that no matter how much we have learned there is much more to learn..

We embrace the reality that what ever terrain I am traversing ...I will make it through... and when it looks like the end of the road...it's only a bend a bend in the road...that there is always farther to go, more to grow, and better to come, and most importantly arrival comes at the end and only our leader knows when that is.

² He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

I believe Jesus was not only describing the toughness of the situation when he described it as lambs going among wolves, he was giving them the spiritual posture he wanted them to assume. They were not to go with a plan of attack like a pack of wolves, but in a spirit of love, humility and peace. Gentle as a lamb..

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks were masters at going out as lambs among the wolves. Their peaceful resistance to the unjust "Jim Crow" laws of segregation serve as examples to all of us. These leaders were master students of the Bible, and their activities sprang from their faith in God...and belief that love conquers everything even our fear...

What is God calling you to approach with the spirit of a lamb...when surrounded by wolves...I will tell you this...

If you go God will show a new world to you.

If you go God will build great character in you.

If you go God will show changed lives because of you.

If you go God will produce miracles to sustain you.

If you go God will show a New You, you never thought existed...!

He say to us today come and ride on my shoulders and face your incredible destiny...and we balk...yet that is what some do...but today we witnessed seventy two who did not...and as they were sent out by Jesus embarked on the incredible life changing journey of their lives...

I will walk by Faith

[Proverbs 11:25](#) ESV / 10 helpful votes

Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.

Planting and Watering

^{MK 4:26} He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

^{1CO 3:1} Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

^{1CO 3:5} What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

What we are doing is strategizing how and where we (in the human realm) can:

4. **Serve**...as the Lord assigns each his/her task
5. **Plant** seed...as the Lord assigns... in this case scattering (Paul traveling everywhere)

6. **Water** it... provide what is humanly possible...the resources... in this case water...in this case Apollos staying and (regularly) watering

Observe what only God can do:

2. Make it grow

How do we plant and water?

The Field—Quantity (3:5–9a)

Paul was fond of agricultural images and often used them in his letters. “Ye are God’s husbandry” simply means, “You are God’s cultivated field, God’s garden.” In the parable of the sower, Jesus compared the human heart to soil and the Word of God to seed (Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23). Paul took this *individual* image and made it *collective*: the local church is a field that ought to bear fruit. The task of the ministry is the sowing of the seed, the cultivating of the soil, the watering of the plants, and the harvesting of the fruit.

How did this image of the church as a “field” apply to the special problems of the Corinthians? To begin with, the emphasis must be on God and not on the laborers. Paul and Apollos were only servants who did their assigned tasks. It was God who gave life to their efforts. Even the faith of the believers was a gift from God (1 Cor. 3:5). It is wrong to center attention on the servants. Look instead to the Lord of the harvest, the source of all blessing.

Note the emphasis in this paragraph on *increase* or *growth*. Why compare preachers or statistics? God is the source of the growth; no man can take the credit. Furthermore, no one man can do *all* the necessary work. Paul planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but only God could make it grow (1 Cor. 3:6).

Three main lessons appear from this image.

First, diversity of ministry. One laborer plows the soil, another sows the seed, a third waters the seed. As

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time passes, the plants grow, the fruit appears, and other laborers enjoy reaping the harvest. This emphasis on diversity will also show up when Paul compares the church to a body with many different parts.

Second, unity of purpose. No matter what work a person is doing for the Lord, he is still a part of the harvest. “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1 Cor. 3:8). Paul, Apollos, and Peter were not competing with each other. Rather, each was doing his assigned task under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Even though there is diversity of ministry, there is unity of purpose; and there ought to be unity of spirit.

Third, humility of spirit. It is not the human laborers who produce the harvest, but the Lord of the harvest. “God gave the increase.... God that giveth the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6–7). Granted, God has ordained that human beings should be His ministers on earth; but their efforts apart from God’s blessing would be failures. The Corinthians were proud of their church, and various groups in the assembly were proud of their leaders. But this attitude of being “puffed up” was dividing the church because God was not receiving the glory.

Jesus expressed the same idea as recorded in John 4:34–38. The sower and the reaper not only work together, but one day they shall rejoice together and receive their own rewards. There can be no such thing as isolated ministry, because each worker enters into the labors of others. I have had the privilege of leading people to Christ who were total strangers to me, but others had sown the seed and watered it with their love and prayers.

“And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Cor. 3:8). What men may think of our ministry is not important; what God may think is of supreme importance. Our reward must not be the praise of men, but the “Well done!” of the Lord of the harvest.

God wants to see increase in His field. He wants each local church to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23), holiness (Rom. 6:22), giving (Rom. 15:26), good works (Col. 1:10), praise to the Lord (Heb. 13:15), and souls won to Christ (Rom. 1:13). Along with spiritual growth, there should be a measure of numerical growth. *Fruit has in it the seed for more fruit.* If the fruit of our ministry is genuine, it will eventually produce “more fruit ... much fruit” to the glory of God (John 15:1–8).

Those who serve in ministry must constantly be caring for the “soil” of the church. It requires diligence and hard work to produce a harvest. The lazy preacher or Sunday school teacher is like the slothful farmer Solomon wrote about in Proverbs 24:30–34. Satan is busy sowing discord, lies, and sin; and we must be busy cultivating the soil and planting the good seed of the Word of God.

The Temple—Quality (3:9b–23)

The usual explanation of this passage is that it describes the building of the Christian life. We all build on

Christ, but some people use good materials, while others use poor materials. The kind of material you use determines the kind of reward you will get.

While this may be a valid *application* of this passage, it is not the basic *interpretation*. Paul was discussing the building of the local church, the temple of God. (In 1 Cor. 6:19–20 the individual believer is God’s temple; but here it is the local assembly that is in view. In Eph. 2:19–22, the whole church is compared to a temple of God.) Paul pointed out that one day God will judge our labors as related to the local assembly. “The fire will test the quality of each man’s work” (1 Cor. 3:13 niv).

God is concerned that we build with quality. The church does not belong to the preacher or to the congregation. It is *God’s* church. “Ye are God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). If we are going to build the local church the way God wants it built, we must meet certain conditions.

First, we must build on the right foundation (vv. 10–11). That foundation is Jesus Christ. When Paul came to Corinth, he determined to preach only Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1–2). He laid the only foundation that would last. In more than thirty years of ministry, I have seen “churches” try to build on a famous preacher or a special method or a doctrinal emphasis they felt was important; but these ministries simply did not last. The Corinthians were emphasizing personalities—Paul, Peter, Apollos—when they should have been glorifying Christ.

The foundation is laid by the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The foundation is the most important part of the building, because it determines the size, shape, and strength of the superstructure. A ministry may seem to be successful for a time, but if it is not founded on Christ, it will eventually collapse and disappear.

I am thinking now of a pastor who “discovered a great truth” in the Bible (actually, he read it in some books) and decided to build his church on the promotion of that “great truth.” He split his church and took a group with him who were “devoted to the truth” he had discovered. But the new church never succeeded. Now his group is scattered and he goes from church to church, trying to get converts to his cause. He built on the wrong foundation.

Second, we must build with the right materials (vv. 12–17). Paul described two opposite kinds of materials, as the chart reveals.

Gold, Silver, Precious Stones

Permanent Beautiful Valuable
Hard to obtain

Wood, Hay, Stubble

Passing, temporary Ordinary, even ugly Cheap
Easy to obtain

What did Paul want to symbolize by his choice of materials? He was not talking about *people*, because Christians are the “living stones” that make up God’s temple (1 Peter 2:5). I personally believe Paul was

1 Corinthians 3

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1 Corinthians 3

referring to the *doctrines of the Word of God*. In each section of this chapter, the Word is symbolized in a way that fits the image of the church Paul used. The Word is food for the family, seed for the field, and materials for the temple.

The book of Proverbs presents the wisdom of the Word of God as treasure to be sought, protected, and invested in daily life. Consider these passages:

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies. (3:13–15a)

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seek- est her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowl edge of God. (2:1–5)

Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. (8:10–11)

When you remember that Paul has been writing about *wisdom* in these first three chapters, you can eas ily see the connection. The Corinthians were trying to build their church by man’s wisdom, the wisdom of this world, when they should have been depending on the wisdom of God as found in the Word.

This says to me that ministers of the Word must dig deep into the Scriptures and mine out the precious gold, silver, and jewels, and then build these truths into the lives of the people. D. L. Moody used to say that converts should be weighed as well as counted. God is interested in *quality* as well as *quantity*, and Paul made it clear that it is possible to have both. The faithful minister can work in the field and see increase, and he can build with the Word of God and see beauty and lasting blessings.

It is a serious thing to be a part of the building of God’s temple. First Corinthians 3:16–17 warn us that if we destroy (“defile”) God’s temple by using cheap materials, God will destroy us! This does not mean eternal condemnation, of course, because 1 Corinthians 3:15 assures us that each worker will be saved, even if he loses a reward. I think Paul is saying that each of us builds into the church *what we build into our own lives*. Veteran missionary to India Amy Carmichael used to say, “The work will never go deeper

than we have gone ourselves.” So we end up tearing down our own lives if we fail to build into the church the values that will last. We may look very successful to men, but “the day shall declare it,” and on that day, some ministers will go up in smoke.

It is unwise to compare and contrast ministries. Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 4:5, “Therefore, judge nothing before the time.”

Young ministers often asked Dr. Campbell Morgan the secret of his pulpit success. Morgan replied, “I always say to them the same thing—work; hard work; and again, work!” Morgan was in his study at six o’clock each morning, digging treasures out of the Bible. You can find wood, hay, and stubble in your backyard, and it will not take too much effort to pick it up. But if you want gold, silver, and jewels, *you have to dig for them*. Lazy preachers and Sunday school teachers will have much to answer for at the judgment seat of Christ—and so will preachers and teachers who *steal* materials from others instead of studying and making it their own.

Third, we must build according to the right plan (vv. 18–20). It comes as a shock to some church mem bers that you cannot manage a local church the same way you run a business. This does not mean we should not follow good business principles, but the operation is totally different. There is a wisdom of this world that works for the world, but it will not work for the church.

The world depends on promotion, prestige, and the influence of money and important people. The church depends on prayer, the power of the Spirit, humility, sacrifice, and service. The church that imitates the world may seem to succeed in time, but it will turn to ashes in eternity. The church in the book of Acts had none of the “secrets of success” that seem to be impor tant today. They owned no property; they had no influence in government; they had no treasury (“Silver and gold have I none,” said Peter); their leaders were ordinary men without special education in the accepted schools; they held no attendance contests; they brought in no celebrities; and yet they turned the world upside down!

God has a specific plan for each local church (Phil. 2:12–13). Each pastor and church leader must seek the mind of God for His wisdom. First Corinthians 3:19 warns that man’s wisdom will only trap him (a quota tion from Job 5:13); and 1 Corinthians 3:20 warns that man’s wisdom only leads to vanity and futility (a quo tation from Ps. 94:11). Though the church must be identified with the *needs* of the world, it must not imi tate the *wisdom* of the world.

Finally, we must build with the right motive (vv. 21–23). That motive is the glory of God. The mem bers of the Corinthian church were glorying in men, and this was wrong. They were comparing men (1 Cor. 4:6) and dividing the church by such carnal deeds. Had they been seeking to glorify God alone, there would have been harmony in the assembly.

Paul closed this appeal by pointing out that each

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believer possesses all things in Christ. Each one of God’s servants belongs to *each* believer. No member of the church should say, “I belong to Paul!” or “I like Peter!” because each servant belongs to each member equally. Perhaps we cannot help but have our personal preferences when it comes to

the way different men minister the Word. But we must not permit our personal preferences to become divisive prejudices. In fact, the preacher I may enjoy the least may be the one I need the most!

"All are yours"—the world, life, death, things present, things to come! How rich we are in Christ! If all things belong to all believers, then why should there be competition and rivalry? "Get your eyes off of men!" Paul admonished. "Keep your eyes on Christ, and work with Him in building the church!"

"Ye are Christ's"—this balances things. I have all things in Jesus Christ, but I must not become careless or use my freedom unwisely. "All things are yours"—that is Christian *liberty*. "And ye are Christ's"—that is Christian *responsibility*. We need both if we are to build a church that will not turn to ashes when the fire falls.

How we need to pray for ministers of the Word! They must feed the family and bring the children to maturity. They must sow the seed in the field and pray for an increase. They must mine the treasures of the Word and build these treasures into the temple. No wonder Paul cried, "And who is sufficient for these things?" But he also gave the answer: "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5).

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Tough Love... love your enemies...Luke 6:

I have entitled this message, "Tough Love," The "tough love" we are dealing with is not the kind of love which justifies being "tough" on the other person (which is sometimes required), but rather is a love which is incredibly tough on us to live out.

RO 13:8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

- A debt is something we owe more to then we have already paid...
- And a continuing debt...means it will not be paid off..
- And this debt is to love our fellow man...and that debt remains everyday...

Now this is interesting...

Most of us spend great energy trying to "under love", as opposed to outdoing the other in love.

- **The reason is that love has obligations and so the one who loves most owes most.**
- **To be free from the debts of love one must love less, making the other partner more in debt to you than you are to them.**
- A kind of "unbalance of payments" scheme.

*Romans 13:9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.***

If we are right in assuming that love has its debts, then we will probably be dismayed to learn from our Lord just how great a debt we owe. In this case, however, we are not dealing with the our debt of love for a husband or wife, or of a friend, or even of a neighbor, but of an enemy....

It is instructive that Jesus begins the introduction to discipleship for the masses not with a foundational study of beliefs, but with demonstrable actions, and explicitly states that those who *act* on his words will be sturdy, like a house with a good foundation.

This is good Why? because when our beliefs are feeling shaky and doubt-ridden, we can fall back on the actions we know are real: *love my enemy, turn the other cheek, give to all, expect nothing back. As we will study today*

As We pick up on Jesus sermon on the mount today...Jesus speaks of three activities where His "kingdom ethic" is most manifest:

- + Loving our enemies by Doing good to others when they have done evil against us**
- + To Give without expectation of Repayment**
- + Because This reflects God and He will repay our acts of mercy**

LK 6:27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ^{LK 6:31} Do to others as you would have them do to you.

- + Loving our enemies; by Doing good to others when they have done evil against us.**

The practices which our Lord requires here all pertain to our "enemy," the one who hates, curses, mistreats, attacks, and takes advantage of us.

Our enemy, is the one who is not seeking our best interest at their expense, but who is striving to achieve their best interest at our expense.

God has given us protection and recourse against those who commit criminal acts against us...this is more geared to those who act hatefully toward us.

- The follower of Jesus is to surpass the world's minimum standard in the matter of loving others.

- The world gladly responds in kind. Sinners/everyone loves those who love them.
- But the follower of Jesus must love those who hate him.
- This is by far the more difficult path. If others reciprocate in kind, we are to respond otherwise.
- We are not only to give love for love, and good for good, we are to love our enemies, and to return good for evil.

This idea went against the ethical system of Jesus' day...

- **one's behaviors were bound by obligations, by balanced reciprocal obligations, both legal and social.**
- **In other words...You give *expecting* to be repaid; you invite to your table those who not only are able but *will* invite you in return.**
- **You do a favor for someone only if s/he can repay you in turn.**
- This ethics of **reciprocal obligations** greased the economic wheels of the world.
- **And still do today...**most would say it isn't too different from the system of obligations in our own world.
- **We tend to respond to others in kind. Those who love us, we love. Those who are kind to us, we are kind to.**
- Those who are harsh with us, we tend to be harsh with. The "golden rule" teaches us that that given the human tendency toward reciprocity we should treat others in the same way that we want them to respond to us.
- If we want people to be kind and gracious toward us, we must be kind and gracious toward them.
- **There is nothing particularly noble about following this principle, since we serve our own best interest by being kind toward others.**
- Kindness shown toward others tends to be reciprocated toward us. We gain from what we give.
- Much of any kind of counsel in how to relate toward others is based upon the principle of the golden rule.
- It does not rise above the standard which unbelievers set for themselves.

The golden rule, however, is but a minimum requirement. It relates toward with the expectation that our kindness will be returned. It does good so that good will be done for us.

The **golden rule can be followed by any self-seeking person. Obedience to it has little virtue, for it sets a standard which all men would try to keep.**

The golden rule is not bad—it is simply not good enough. Thus, our Lord presses on to other (higher) principles.

Which Jesus hits on....

LK 6:32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' lend to `sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full.

- **People do good to those who can reciprocate. People lend to those who will repay them.**
- You give to those who are expected to give back
- And, Jesus uses a wonderful word that has both economic and theological overtones to describe the result.

³⁴ *And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you?*

- **What "credit" is it, he asks, if you do these things? The word "credit" is "*charis*," a word that can equally be translated as "credit" in the economic sense or "grace" (i.e., God's extension of "credit") in the theological.**
- **That is, the "world" has its form of *charis*, but he will show the more excellent way of divine *charis*.**

Give without expectation of Repayment

LK 6: 35a But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back . ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. LK 6:37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven..

The central thought of this most important passage is embedded in the middle of the text. It is contained in, 35:

" love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back

- **this new community will be characterized by *giving without expectation of return.***
- **Therefore :**
- **We will be merciful...not giving a person (enemy) what they deserve**
- **we will not Judge (pronounce final verdict) room and hope for change**
- **we will not condemn... assassinate their being..character or name**
- **we will give all that to God...**
- **and in our hearts drop the case...**

The things Jesus required require faith and supernatural enablement. These are not acts which one does in his own strength, in order to be saved, but are acts which one who has been saved does, due to the new mind and the new strength Christ gives through His Spirit.

This is really the central point of Jesus' new kingdom. You do good things for people *regardless* of whether they can pay you back or will pay you back...

You do for them *what you would like them to do for you*, but you don't first check their credit rating or their club memberships.

- **Why are the disciples to act like this?**
- **Because :**

✚ This reflects God and He will repay your acts of mercy

- **Jesus' new vision is thus rooted deeply in theology--in the character of God.**

³⁵ ...*Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.* ³⁶ *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

- **God sheds grace on the world, gives gifts richly and freely to the creatures *regardless* of the fact of whether we can repay God.**
- **God is merciful not because God hopes that by shedding mercy we might return that mercy to God, but simply because it is God's nature to overflow in acts of loving kindness.**

As Paul tells us...

*1TI 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown **mercy** so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

*TIT 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his **mercy**. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life*

*JAS 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of **mercy** and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

*1PE 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received **mercy**, but now you have received **mercy**.*

II. Jesus' New Kingdom

But in what does Jesus' new Kingdom consist? What will be the essence of the values of the world to which he invites disciples to enter?

*LK 6:39 He also told them this parable: "**Can a blind man lead a blind man?** Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*

- **The first thing to note is that the new *Kingdom has loose boundaries.***
- **This kingdom is the blind leading the blind**
- **That is, it isn't easy to perceive who the insiders are and who the outsiders.**
- **One is to love the neighbor, to do good to those who hate, to bless those who reproach.**
- **Who, then, is really a member of the new community? The members are the ones who bless others...**
- **Those who bless, which can be just about anyone.**

End with...Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy tells a story of an old cobbler named Martin. After the death of his wife and child, he cried out in despair to a godly old friend, "What now is a man to live for?" His friend replied, "For God, Martin. For God." "And how must one live for God?" Martin asked. "Christ has shown us the way," said the believer. "Buy the Gospels and read. There you'll find out how to live for God. There everything is explained," he said.

So that same day Martin bought a New Testament and began to read. The more he read, the more clearly he understood what God wanted of him and what it meant to live for God. And his heart grew lighter and lighter.

Then one day Martin read Luke 6:27-35, and it suddenly hit him that Jesus' words were hard sayings. He pondered the command in verse 29, "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also." As he began to see how his life didn't measure up to Jesus' words, he cried out, "O Lord, help me!"

We also may feel that obedience to Jesus' words is too difficult for us. His hard sayings seem impossible to obey. Like Martin, we must cry out, "O Lord, help me!" Without Him we can do nothing. —[David H. Roper](#)

Obeying Christ can seem too hard,
But we must come to see
That all He asks is for our good
To make life full and free. —D. De Haan

Knowing that one had made the commitment to practice these precepts would have a great impact on his conduct. For example, if I knew that I were not going to strike a person back who hit me, I would be encouraged thereby to become a blessed "peacemaker" and "gentle" person (cf. [Matt. 5:5, 9](#)). Those who choose to carry firearms in their cars know that this does not tend to make them

mEEK, just as those who choose a more pacifistic lifestyle tend to avoid developing chips on their shoulders. The conscious chose to obey Jesus' commands here will also tend us to develop other godly characteristics.

III. The Reward

One of the remarkable things about Jesus' teaching in this passage, however, is how he accommodates himself to human weakness.

- Jesus knows this, and therefore tells us that our acts of mercy toward others *will* be repaid, but not necessarily by the recipients of our acts.
- **Instead it will be God who will repay us.** " *Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked (v. 35).*
- If God's kindness reaches even to those people, the reward for the disciple will be great indeed.
- And, lest we miss it, Jesus reiterates the reward in the last few verses of the passage. "*A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.*" (v. 38).

*JAS 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of **mercy** and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

*IPE 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great **mercy** he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Jesus' new ethic is almost too much for us to understand, but there it is, in simple, direct and clear terms. That is the Gospel for today. Can you teach it? Can you believe it?

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

^{LK 6:39} He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Generally speaking, the actions required of our Lord necessitate the surrender of our personal rights. To put it in other words, we could file charges against our enemy for their doing to us what they have done.

But instead are to reflect our teacher who laid down his rights as God...to show mercy to people... and our reward will come from God

In simplest terms, **Jesus is saying that it is necessary for His followers to "march to the beat of a different drum," to live life by a higher standard, to have their practice be better than that of others, who are not His followers.**

END

