

# The Cost of Discipleship

## Աշակերտութեան Գինը

Luke 9:57-62

### Intro for Sermon

**Robert Turner** told a story about a hen and a pig who became very good friends. One seldom saw them apart. One day as they strolled about the barnyard lot, the hen suggested that since they had never eaten breakfast together, that they do that the next morning. Never being one to turn down a meal, the pig readily agreed and asked, “What will we eat?”

The hen stood in deep thought for a while, then said, “It appears to me that if each **of us contributes something to the meal** it will be more meaningful to each of us.” “Fine,” said the pig, “and what do you suggest?”

Again, the hen stood as if in deep thought for a while and then said, “I have an idea, let’s have ham and eggs. I’ll provide the eggs and you the ham.” “Hold on,” said the pig,

“What you offer to contribute is the **fruit of your labor**, but what you’re asking of me **requires total commitment!**”

Our topic is **the cost of discipleship**. You can read a book by this title written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He stood against the evil regime of Nazism and Hitler. It was highly costly; it cost him his life.

Three disciples came to Jesus. The first and the third volunteered, and the second was invited by Jesus.

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup> Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to

him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Welcome back

Jesus invited people to become his disciples. Officially, there were the twelve disciples, but apart from the twelve, there were many who followed Jesus and became disciples. Paul, for example, became a disciple of our Lord after his death. We read in Acts that there were 120 gathered to receive the Holy Spirit. Both men and women were in the group who had been following Jesus.

Today we have three unnamed disciples of Jesus.

Two of those volunteered while

the third was invited by Jesus. (I will use Dr. Kenneth Bailey’s interpretation.)

### **-The first disciple:**

The first volunteer came and said two things:

“I will **follow** you wherever you **go**.”

Two verbs, to **follow** and to **go**.

Jesus replied with a **parable**.

If I were Jesus, I would do it differently. I would probably ask, “Are you sure? Do you know what it means to follow me? This is a serious commitment...” and so on. Jesus has his way to respond to this man. He uses a parable and his response is stronger.

The parable has three characters.

-The first animal is the **fox**. “Foxes have holes.”

Foxes represent the **Herodians**. In the Bible, Herod is described as a fox.

Herodians were a large ruling family. Jesus was actually telling this volunteer that **if he wanted political authority, he could get it from the well-known “foxes.”**

-The second animal is the **bird**. “The birds of the air have nests.” We can find literature from the First Century describing **Romans** as birds. One could not express negative things about the Romans directly, so they used the word “birds” to refer to them.

It is possible that Jesus was telling this volunteer that **if he wanted military authority he could turn to the “birds.”**

The third scene is about the **Son of Man**. “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

The title “The Son of Man” comes from the book of Daniel chapter 7. The Son of Man comes from God. He comes with power and authority over all nations. Yet, this “Son of Man” will be rejected. As Isaiah describes it, he will be the suffering servant.

The question Jesus is somehow asking this unnamed volunteer disciple is, **“Are you ready to follow this kind of ‘authority’?”**

### **-We move on to the second scene.**

This time Jesus asks this person to **follow** him. Instead of responding, “OK”, he says but “Lord, let me **go** first and **bury** my father.”

We all know that when someone’s father dies, we do not go around, meet with people and chat with them around the day. In the Middle East and even here, burying a dear person is a priority. I mean if this man’s father was dead, he would be at the funeral near to his father’s coffin.

Dr. Bailey illustrates this with such a story. Suppose someone likes to emigrate from his/her community. The community will ask him, “Aren’t you going to stay until your parents die and then feel free to move on?”

This person is saying to Jesus:

“OK, I would love to follow you. But first I need to get **permission from my community**. First, **I should fulfill the expectations of my peers**, my community. First, I should finish my community duties, and then I can follow you.”

Jesus cannot be second place. Jesus was direct. There are enough people to “bury” dead people. Jesus challenged the person: **“I want you to come and proclaim the Kingdom of God.”**

We need to be careful here. We should not be insensitive to the community’s needs. When I served in Ainjar, they asked me not to wear shorts; it would offend the community. Why would I? it is a secondary thing. But if they had asked me to compromise my message, that would not be possible. The community’s pressure should not take priority over God’s calling to us to be Christ’s disciple.

## -Third scene

Like the first disciple, we have a new volunteer to become a follower of Jesus.

“I will *follow* you, Lord

But first let me *go* and *take leave of* those at my home.”

The verb **GO** is here, but instead of asking Jesus **where he would be led go**, this person has another agenda.

The Greek word for **farewell** that is used in this sentence is not simple a goodbye. The word is **apotassō** and it has various explanations: to set apart, separate, to separate one's self, withdraw one's self from anyone, to take leave of (Thayer's Lexicon).

In Arabic there are two ways for saying farewell:

-Goodbye, I am leaving, bye.

-or take leave of, by your permission, *bikhaterkon*, *biiznkom*, (in Arabic) *tzer ardonoutyamp* (in Armenian), and usually the answer is “May God go with you”, *Allah maak* (Arabic).

I think this disciple likes first to ask permission from his family, and then follow Jesus. The authority of his family is more important than God's calling.

Again, let us not misjudge Jesus. In the Bible, it is required that we honor our father and mother. **Taking care of our family is an important priority.**

Listen to what Paul says to Timothy:

**“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”** (1 Tim 5:8)

Having said this, we should come back to our context. Jesus is not against supporting our families and communities. In fact, we should minister to them also, that is our duty.

**Yet, nothing can come before the calling of Jesus, nothing.**

I felt bad when I was leaving home to serve the Lord. Always I tried to reach out to my family and tried to give them time. But I could not compromise my calling in order to be with them all the time. People (including my family members)

misunderstood my move from one church to another, and until now they do not understand. That is sad, but I am accountable to our Lord.

Jesus answered this disciple with a parable. The story comes from farm life. No one can plow by looking back or around. One has to look forward when the plow is in action. “No one who puts his hand to the plow and **looks back** is of any use in the kingdom of God.” Focus, and look at Jesus who invited you in the first place.

**In summary, many are called but few are ready to carry the cross and follow Jesus.**

It is not easy to be a disciple of our Lord. It is not impossible; it is possible not based on our effort, but because of His GRACE.

There are many authorities.

“**Foxes,**” political maneuvers are all over; “**Birds,**” powerful authorities, **community pressures**, family pressures, are always chasing us.

We follow the **Son of Man, the supreme authority**. What is demanded from us is not success. What is demanded from us is our faithfulness to our Lord in all circumstances.

Dr Bailey concludes: “In Christ, there is no authority higher than the authority of Our Lord Himself.”

Are you a disciple of Jesus?

Will you volunteer to be his disciple?

Are there any obstacles that do not allow you to follow Him?

Amen

## **The Request of James and John**

<sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” <sup>37</sup> And they

said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”<sup>38</sup> Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”<sup>39</sup> And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,<sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”<sup>41</sup> And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.<sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.<sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”