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COME FOLLOW

‘Come after Me’ (Luke 14:27).

To follow Jesus Christ is the greatest adventure you could ever undertake. Pursuing Him fulfills your greatest purpose, which is to magnify His glory. Trusting Him meets your greatest need, namely, the forgiveness of sin. Loving Christ gives you the greatest pleasure, the supreme joy of knowing Him.

Being taught by Christ gives you the greatest wisdom, the divine truth that He alone possesses. Abiding in Him imparts the greatest power, His all-sufficient grace for daily

living. Walking with Him provides you with the greatest fellowship, the sheer delight of communing with Him. And traveling this one path leads to the greatest destination beyond this life—into His immediate presence in heaven.

There is no journey that can compare with this one. Pursuing Christ will take you from where you are to where you need to be. It will take you through all of life's many experiences, from your greatest moments to your darkest nights, with Jesus by your side. As you follow in His footsteps, you will discover the abundant life He came to give. And it will ultimately lead you home to heaven, to the very throne of God. No pursuit in life can compare to this journey of following Jesus.

A Spiritual Journey

When Jesus calls you to come after Him, He is comparing the Christian life to the path that you must walk. He personally invites you to embark on this spiritual journey. By this summons, He is not calling you to a mere *physical* walk with Him. He is not urging you to put one foot in front of the other and, literally, keep in step with Him. What He is requiring is far deeper than for you to travel a dusty road with Him. He is instead speaking in spiritual terms. He is inviting you to follow Him in your heart. He is calling you to take steps of faith and follow His direction for your life.

This spiritual journey determines how you live your daily life. It concerns the direction that you take in life. Jesus is referring to the road you take in this world. Involved in this journey are your motives, desires, thoughts, choices, and actions. Jesus is addressing what is driving and directing you.

When the Master Calls

Our focus will be upon one particular encounter that Jesus had with a large crowd that was accompanying Him. For the most part, they gave every impression of being His disciples. They were walking with Him and were attentive to His words. They had close proximity to Him. But the reality was that most of them were only curious about Jesus and largely remained uncommitted—and unconverted.

Following Jesus had become the popular thing to do, and He knew it. With a genuine concern for them, Christ stopped and turned around to address them. His words were strong as He made it not easier, but harder, to follow Him. Jesus called for the full-scale commitment of their lives to Him when He said:

‘If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be

My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. 'Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear' (Luke 14:26-35).

Not Sugar-coated

These provocative words were spoken near the end of Jesus' three-year ministry, during His final journey to Jerusalem. In only a few months, He would be crucified upon a Roman cross in this very city, which was the headquarters for the religious establishment in Israel. Jesus knew He had little time remaining on this earth. This was not a moment to mince words. Nor a time to sugar-coat the message. Jesus was not here to smooth-talk the crowd. The issues were too great, and the time was too short.

In this critical moment, Jesus spoke words that were direct and demanding. They were no doubt difficult for His followers to hear. But these words were necessary and appropriate to the moment. His forceful tone was demanded by the eternal weight of the subject matter. The impact of these words was intended to awaken the spiritually dead among them. Jesus had to speak as He did in order to capture those who were lethargic. He called them to follow Him in a new journey that would one day lead them to the throne of God. What Jesus said to His listeners, He now says to you.

Where the Journey Begins

This journey of faith begins the moment you come to faith in Jesus Christ. Becoming a follower of Jesus starts when you

first devote your life to Him. This new relationship does not commence when you simply join a religious crowd. Nor when you try to become a good person. Instead, it starts when you come to entrust your life to Him.

To begin this journey costs you nothing. There is no amount of good works you could ever perform that could earn you a place on this narrow path. There is no toll fee for you to pay to enter onto it. There is no moral standard for you to meet. There is no spiritual ladder for you to climb. There are no rituals for you to perform. There are no ceremonies for you to attend. There is absolutely nothing you can do to merit starting this journey with Christ.

You may only enter into this spiritual relationship by faith. The Bible says: 'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast' (Eph. 2:8-9). This could not be any clearer. Entering this journey cannot be earned by your good works. Instead, it is entered into by faith in Him.

How the Journey Continues

This commitment to Jesus Christ is the beginning of a whole new life. Previously, you had been walking according to the course of this world. You had been going in the direction of the world. You were in a life pursuit of doing your own thing. You did what you wanted, how you wanted, when you wanted, with whom you wanted. You were traveling on the broad path that accommodated any manner of life. But when you come to Christ by faith, this new journey begins that takes you in an entirely new direction.