

Totally Committed!

Luke 9:23-26

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Greenwood Wesleyan Church

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In a few moments I will be asking you to turn in your Bibles to Luke Chapter 9. We will begin reading at verse 23. We are discussing the matter of what it means to be Totally Committed to Christ.

As you are locating that passage of Scripture -- I want to tell you about a young husband who was having some problems at home. So he went to see the psychiatrist about those troubles. "The problem" -- the doctor said, "is that you are not totally committed to your marriage. You don't have to let your wife bully you and push you around. Go home and show her, who's boss!" That evening the young man went home. And the first thing he did was to slam the door. Then he shook his fist in his wife's face and growled, "from now on, you're taking orders from me! When I get home from work, I want my supper on the table. I want my clothes laid out. I will be going out with the boys. You will be staying here at home. And another thing, do you know who's going to tie my tie?" "Yes," she said, "the undertaker!" Well, that's not really Total Commitment is it? It's certainly no way to behave in a marriage.

Total Commitment to Christ is a much more serious issue in the church. I've been reading a book entitled -- Hard To Believe -- dealing with the high cost and infinite value of following Jesus -- by Rev. John MacArthur. In his book, Rev. MacArthur informs the reader that he believes the world is filled with millions of people who think they are headed for heaven -- according to Rev. MacArthur they are deadly wrong. Rev. MacArthur goes on to say that what is especially sad, is that many of those people sit in evangelical churches misinformed! This is indeed a very sobering thought. According to Rev. MacArthur, this is the Truth of God's Word.

Today we are talking about being totally committed to Christ, and the True Gospel -- The True Gospel is a call to self-denial. Now, I admit that that doesn't sound consumer friendly. I will admit that it would be difficult to run that kind of Sales Campaign Theme on shiny, glossy advertisement pages in most magazines. Self-denial does not really fit with our modern culture. It does not really leap out and grab you. Who wants to die to the world? Who wants to be separated from worldly values? Who wants to be separated from the world's lifestyle? Perhaps we should ask, "Who wants to go to heaven?" The world asks the question: "Who wants to be a millionaire?"

I recently read the story of Dale Hayes. He told about his trip to the country of Haiti. While in Haiti, he heard a Haitian Pastor illustrate to his congregation the need for total commitment to Christ. It seems that a certain man wanted to sell his house for \$2000. Another man wanted very badly to buy it. But because he was poor, he couldn't afford the full price. After much bargaining, the owner agreed to sell the house for half the original price with just one stipulation: he would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door. After several years, the original owner wanted the house back, but the new owner was unwilling to sell. So the first owner went out, found the carcass of a dead dog,

And hung it from the single nail he still owned. Soon the house became unlivable, and the family was forced to sell the house to the owner of the nail. The Haitian Pastor's conclusion was this: "if we leave the devil with

even one small peg in our life he will return to hang his rotting garbage on it, making it unfit for Christ's habitation." This is one reason why we need to Totally Commit our lives to Christ...

We are talking about Total Commitment! Wherever He leads, you will go. His way of life becomes your way of life. His values become your values. His activities become your activities. Many Christians today are involved in many worthwhile causes. Many actively involved in their churches, yet they remain uncommitted in their relationship to Christ. How unfortunate!

Lou Holtz, head football coach at the University of South Carolina once said, "The kamikaze pilot who flew 50 missions was involved-but never committed." Being a disciple of Jesus Christ requires a complete follow through.

READ TEXT -- Luke 9:23-26

Have you ever wondered how many kinds of Christians there are in the world? Churches often divide them into different categories. For example, Active and Inactive, spiritual and carnal, committed and uncommitted. However, Jesus seemed to recognize only one kind of Christian -- the fully committed Christian. In the preceding verses of the passage of Scripture we've just shared with you -- Jesus has announced to His disciples that He was moving toward an inevitable rejection by the Jewish leaders and a shameful and violent death. It is in the middle of these discouraging words that Jesus makes a call for full commitment. These are perhaps the most important words Jesus ever spoke. Here in this chapter, Luke the physician cuts to the core of the question of what Christianity is all about.

These words of Jesus make it clear what is required to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is all about aligning ourselves with God's will through a humble renunciation of our own agenda. It's really pretty simple. Anyone who wants to come after Jesus into the kingdom of God -- anyone who wants to be a Christian -- has to face these three commands: 1) deny himself, 2) take up his cross daily, and 3) follow Him. This is not a friendly invitation. Actually these are very hard words to follow. But following Jesus is not about you and me. Being a Christian is not about us; it's not about our self-esteem. It's not about our self-fulfillment in life. Jesus never said, "if you follow Me, you will be happy, healthy, wealthy, prosperous, and successful." Following Jesus, is about being sick and tired of our sin and our desperation for forgiveness. It is about seeing Christ as the priceless Savior from sin and death and hell, so that we willingly give up as much as it takes, to reach heaven. Do you want to follow Jesus? It will cost you absolutely everything! If you're not willing to make that complete break with the world and its values, then Jesus isn't that valuable to you. It truly is an all-or-nothing proposition!

I'm not talking about legalism here. I'm talking about being true to Scripture. I'm afraid sometimes we make becoming a Christian a little too easy. Just say the magic words and you're in the club! In the ancient world, choosing for Jesus meant certain opposition from people in the world. That opposition might express itself in the type of scorn Jesus experienced. It was the type of opposition that ridiculed the early church. It was the type of opposition that beat the apostle Paul. It was the type of opposition that stoned Stephen to death. But what about our faith today? What type of persecution do we experience? Is there a cost to discipleship? The fact of the matter is -- our call to discipleship is a call to walk differently from the walk of the world. It will mean a walk of integrity. It will mean a walk of purity. It will mean that we will walk as new creatures -- old things have passed away, all things have become new. Our attitudes will be different, our behavior will change -- our vocabulary will change. God can clean up our language. He saved us to change us, to make us

different in the world than we were before we came to know Him. Discipleship means being a learner, a follower. It means we become a spiritual person being transformed to be more like Jesus. Discipleship is a full-time job, not a weekend hobby. It doesn't take a holiday or vacation. It's a lifestyle and commitment. It's all about entering at the 'Narrow Gate.' Jesus is the Gate. And it's that narrow. At the very heart of the Christian gospel is a cross -- the symbol of suffering and shame, sacrifice and death, of hurt and pain and humiliation and rejection. These are the hard sayings of the Gospel, let us not pretend that they don't exist. Let us not gloss them over. May God help us to look long and hard and count carefully the cost of Discipleship. One of the problems that we often encounter is this: It's hard to get through the narrow Gate because it's so hard for us to deny ourselves. What I'm preaching this morning are the hard words of Jesus that call for total and absolute self-denial; the recognition that we do not deserve God's grace; That we cannot earn God's favor; That all our efforts at self-righteousness fall short of God's divine expectations. So we must turn to Him in simple faith -- so that His Fountain of grace will open and flow into our hearts and lives.

As a police chaplain I know about the burden of delivering bad news! I would much rather deliver good news! It's more fun! I know that what I'm sharing this morning may be difficult for some of you to accept. But in all kindness -- Total Commitment is the only way to be accepted by Jesus. Some of you are trying to sneak into the kingdom based solely upon outward appearance. That in and of itself will never work. Some of you may be here believing that you're a pretty good person -- and that will gain you some extra points on Judgment Day. Some may be here, and you've made a total wreck of your life, you've hit the wall and crashed. Your dreams are shattered -- life is spinning out of control. You may be thinking that you can still make it on your own. That won't work. You need heaven's Advocate. Some may be here, hoping that Dad and Mom's Christianity will gain you something in the end. That won't work because each and every one of us must individually appear before Him. Whatever the reason -- I have good news for you this morning. You no longer need to struggle. Jesus wants to redeem you. He wants to lift you from your fallen condition. He is waiting for you to totally commit your life to Him! Will you do that this morning?

Will you deny yourself?

Take up your cross?

And follow Him? Would you like to begin that journey today?