

- **Sermon: “Jesus, King of Kings”**

Luke 9:18-62

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February 11th, 2018

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Australian born missionary **Graham Staines** had spent decades as a missionary serving lepers in northern India.

On January 22, 1999, Graham and his two young sons, Philip (10) and Timothy (8), slept overnight in their station wagon. Soon after midnight, the vehicle was attacked by an angry mob. They beat and stabbed the father and his two little boys before lighting a fire beneath their vehicle, incinerating them.

Are you this committed to Jesus? Would you serve him even to the point of death?

In Luke 9:20 Jesus asks his disciples:

- *“Who do you say I am?”*

Jesus knows that his disciples won't be ready to follow him if they don't understand who he is. So in verse 22, he reveals to them his plan:

- *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”*

The disciples don't understand this, because they don't yet understand the sort of King Jesus is. What sort of King would have a plan to lay down his life and die? Yet this is what King Jesus will do. Because he is a sacrificial King. Which means that if we are to follow him, we are to be sacrificial people. Listen to what Jesus expects from his followers - Verse 23:

- *23Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny** themselves and take up their cross **daily** and **follow** me.24For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.25What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?*

Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow Jesus. This is the commitment call for a Christian. Try to hold on to your earthly life, and you will lose your self. But lose your life for Jesus and you will be saved, eternally. Try to hold on to your life and its like trying to hold on tightly to a fistful of sand. The tighter you hold on to this life, the more it slips away. But LET GO of your life for Jesus, to serve him – let go of YOUR

plans and YOUR hopes and YOUR dreams, and take hold of GOD'S plans, and you will gain his eternal kingdom.

What good is it, says Jesus, if you gain the WHOLE WORLD but lose your self? What good is it? This is the challenge for a believer of Jesus. We follow a sacrificial King. So we are sacrificial people. If we really know who he is, we know that he requires a life of sacrifice. What good is it to gain the world but lose your self? What good is it to have all the money, all the power, all the family, all the education, all the fun, all the holidays, all the "things" if you don't have Jesus? If you don't have a secure eternal future?

Who is Jesus? He is the sacrificial King.

Who are we to be? Sacrificial disciples. People who deny our self and take up our cross, daily, and follow him. **If** we understand the sort of King Jesus is, we will understand the sort of people we are to be.

Verse 28:

The Transfiguration is perhaps one of the most incredible, and weird, parts of the gospel. Jesus appears for a moment in all his glory. He is temporarily revealed for who he really is.

I want you to think of 2 of your biggest heroes. Think of two people you really look up to, people you admire, people who you are in awe of. Dead or alive. Now imagine that you go out to lunch with those 2 people. They sit down to lunch with you in a nice restaurant and everyone sees you together. There's Albert Einstein and Martin Luther King with Bruce Stanley. There's Al with the Queen and Prince Phillip! What will people think of **you** being in that company? What will people think when they see you together? They might ask – "Why are those people with him?" They might think: "You must be really important!"

This is the impact of the Transfiguration. Jesus goes up a mountain with James and John and Peter. He appears in all his glory – as the heavenly King. But he's in the company of the prophet, Elijah, and the lawgiver, Moses. Two of the Old Testament greats. Some people thought Jesus WAS the prophet Elijah come back to life. Others questioned Jesus because he was acting like he was better than Moses who gave God's people the 10 commandments. So here is Jesus appearing WITH Elijah and Moses. He is NOT Elijah. He is NOT Moses. He is **in their company**. But he is greater. What the Transfiguration does is place Jesus in the company of the great prophet and the great law giver, but positions him ABOVE them both. He is in their company, but he transcends them. He eclipses them.

Peter and James and John witness this when they hear the voice of God from heaven saying: "This is my son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

God himself identifies Jesus as his son. Listen to him. There is Elijah and there is Moses. But listen to Jesus.

- “Listen to him.”

This is who Jesus is – he is the one to listen to.

Yet, only shortly after this, two of the disciples start arguing about who is the greatest disciple. They just don't understand Jesus and his mission. So Jesus takes them aside and says this:

(48) ... it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

Jesus is telling them again who he is and what it means to follow him. It means sacrifice. It means putting aside all the worldly pursuits. All the worldly gain. All the worldly wealth and praises and “things”. Even the glorified Jesus lays it all down to become the least, to become the servant. Following Jesus is about being the least. The servant. The one willing to sacrifice. The greatest in Jesus' kingdom is the one who is least in this world. In other words, Jesus himself is the greatest. And to be great, we need to follow him – by laying down our worldly greatness.

And now for the big **turning point** in the gospel – verse 51:

- *51As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

He resolutely set out for Jerusalem. Resolutely set out to die To sacrifice his life.

I recently bought some fans for Church on the internet from a company called Kogan. It's an online store. Since doing that, they have sent me SO MANY emails. Sometimes one or two a **day**. Even when I take myself off their mailing list, the emails just keep coming. They are relentless. They are resolute. Unyielding. Steadfast. Tenacious. And quite annoying. But they have a mission. A very worldly mission. From what I can see, their mission is to have a presence in my email inbox every single day! Their Jerusalem is my email. They have resolutely set their heart on my email inbox. They want to be in my presence every day. They want me to think about them every day. They want me to be their customer every day.

When Jesus **resolutely** sets out for Jerusalem, it means he is not wavering. He is determined to go to Jerusalem where he knows he will face betrayal and death. But also resurrection. He knows that he will lose his life. He knows that he will become *the least* as he is mocked and spat on and crucified. All the things he has called his disciples to be – **he will be**. He is heading to Jerusalem to take up his cross and give up all he has to save us.

And here's the point of this chapter...

When Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow him,... he does it first.

When Jesus calls us to give up the things of the world and focus on the things of heaven,... he does it first.

When he calls us to be the least so that our greatness will be measured in the kingdom of God,... he does it first.

He shows us the way of the cross.

He shows us the path to heaven.

He shows us the life of sacrifice.

So, our question is this: Are we fit for service in the kingdom of God?

Have you ever used a plough?

It's a farming tool that's used to push the soil to the side to make a small furrow to plant things. It's pulled forward by an animal. It doesn't go backwards. And if you're ploughing, you need to look where you're going. It needs to be straight. You look straight ahead because you're preparing the soil for planting seeds.

So think of what Jesus is saying here. If you're following him, you're preparing to plant a harvest. Don't look back. This is the task at hand. Prepare the soil and get ready for planting. Keep going. That is the way to serve in the kingdom of God.

We make a mistake, we keep going.

We get distracted, we refocus and keep going.

We stumble, we fall, we suffer, we get up and we keep going. Forward.

Even when what is in front of us seems impossible, we know God is able and we trust him so we keep going in his direction. But there is no easy way to put this word from Jesus. Following him means denying our self.

So let me ask us all to wrestle with that this week. Let the words sink in and challenge us again. But also let me encourage us with this final thought – the more you deny yourself, each day, the more you accept Jesus, each day.

Deny self. Accept Jesus.

Are you fit for service?

The identity of Jesus:

9:20 “Who do you say I am?”

The call of Jesus

9:23 “Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny** themselves and take up their cross **daily** and **follow** me.²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.²⁵What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?”

The company of Jesus

Moses – lawgiver

Elijah – Prophet

9:35 “Listen to him”

9:48 “... it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

The journey of Jesus

9:51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”

Our journey

Hand on the plough – which way are you looking?