



This Sunday we continued our series in Luke 9-12 by considering how we might misunderstand Jesus' command to "follow", thinking it means merely taking up a new habit or hobby or signing a pledge, or thinking that it is primarily a one-time past tense decision. We saw that Jesus demands that *he* set the terms on what it means to follow him. To follow him, says Jesus, means to join in with his mission. But this comes at a cost, as three wannabe disciples learnt in 9v57-62.

1 – With Jesus ...there is no place to call home (v57-58)

In his response to this first eager, over-confident young man Jesus reveals that to follow him is to live like he lived, and that's with no earthly home to call his own. Followers of Jesus can lay claim to no earthly comforts. They are not to call on their rights but are to be prepared to live in less comfortable circumstances than the foxes and the birds!

2 – With Jesus ...no excuse will do (v59-60)

The second man warmly received Jesus' invitation to follow, there is just one small thing he wants to get out of the way first. His request seems entirely reasonable – to fulfil Scripture's command and do his duty by burying his father. It may be, however, that his father isn't actually dead, or maybe even sick or dying, but simply elderly. There could be something of the 'best possible excuse' here. But even if his dad *has* just died, Jesus still, astonishingly, says that the man has something more important to do, in following Christ, than honouring his parents. Jesus calls us to give up our *very greatest* earthly responsibilities to follow him.

3 – With Jesus ...there is no looking back (v61-62)

The third man gives a reasonable excuse, too. He wants to say goodbye to his friends and family before he follows Jesus. But again, Jesus gives a striking 'no' as the answer. To turn back now would be to reveal that this man's heart was in an entirely different place, it would be to mark him as completely unsuitable for kingdom service. You're all in, says Jesus, or you're not in at all.

But if this sounds too hard, we must remember the one who makes this call: the Son of Man (v58). He is the one who counted the cost in a way far greater than he asks of us, than we could even imagine. He gave up the splendour of heaven for the squalor of a borrowed stable and the shame of a cross. Having become human, he left behind friends, family, a career, a home to call his own as he travelled around Judea and Galilee proclaiming God's kingdom and teaching and healing people over three years, before being abandoned by everyone who had ever loved him and forsaken by his Father on the cross.

And he promises us everything. Those who join his mission don't finish empty-handed because he didn't just die on the cross. He died and rose again. And we will be raised with him. We will be given the crown of life when we finish, and we will know far more blessings in this life and the next than anything we have given up (Luke 10v28-30). We will look back one day and only consider it privilege to have been called to give up so much for him.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group or for personal reflection...

1. What do you make of each of these 3 excuses for not following Jesus? What might be commendable in them? What is less so? What might they look like in Oxford 2023 talk?
2. Which of these excuses most tempts you?
3. How did Jesus count the cost for us? How did he give up all the things he says we must be willing to give up? How did he give up far more?
4. What does Jesus promise to us (Luke 10v28-30)? What difference does that make to how we hear this difficult call?