

Luke 9:57 to End. Christ Replies to Three People.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The Savior's replies to three people reveal the importance of devotion to Christ and the willingness to lay aside earthly interests in order to follow him.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Proverbs 4:25, Matthew 10:37, Luke 9:57-61, Philippians 3:13, Hebrews 12:1, James 4:8, Revelation 3:15

Topics: "Following Christ", "Worldly Distractions"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delves into the encounters of three individuals with Jesus, each revealing their true character and intentions. The first man offered to follow Jesus but was not willing to endure hardships, while the second man, despite appearing hesitant, showed a sense of duty and obedience that pleased the Lord. The last man, though expressing a desire to follow Jesus, was hindered by his attachment to earthly matters, indicating a heart not fully devoted to Christ. Mortimer challenges the listeners to examine their own hearts, questioning whether they are truly prepared to serve Christ wholeheartedly or if they are holding back due to worldly distractions.

Transcript

Would not each of us like to know what the Savior would have "said to us had we lived upon earth at the time that he honored it with his bodily presence? We have just read of three people who had interviews with him, each of whom received an answer suited to his real character. The first and the last of these three offered to follow Jesus; the second was called to follow him. It is natural for us to suppose that those who offered to become his disciples were more attached to him than the man who did not offer himself, but who only received a call. Yet it is evident from the Lord's replies to each that he was most approved whom we might deem least earnest.

The first of the three appears to have mistaken the nature of the Lord's service. He said, "I will follow you wherever you go." But was he prepared to follow him to prison and to death? It appears from the Lord's answer that he was not. Jesus replied--"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests--but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." By this answer the Savior seemed to say, "If you desire a life of ease, you must not follow me; for I have no retreat from the malice of my foes." Had the man truly loved him, he would not have been deterred by any dangers from following his steps. As no further mention is made of this man, it is most probable that he was discouraged by the reply he received.

Those who cannot read the heart might have thought that the man who said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father," was unwilling to follow Jesus. But the Lord judged differently. He saw in the man the spirit that he approved. It was not unwillingness to obey his call, but a sense of duty to an aged, and perhaps a deceased parent, that prompted the request. The Lord replied, "Let the dead bury their dead." It is probable that this man had relations who were dead in sins. The Lord appointed that they should bury the dead father, and that the living son should preach the kingdom of God. He was not dead--he was made alive by the Spirit of God. Christ does not say to every one, "Preach the kingdom of God;" but when he does call a man by his Spirit to the holy ministry, every hindrance to his obedience to the call must be laid aside. Many who have gone forth as missionaries to heathen lands, have broken the dearest ties in order to pursue their sacred work! Some have left widowed mothers, others have sacrificed their brightest earthly hopes, rather than disobey the command, "Preach the kingdom of God."

The last of the three resembled the first in one respect. Like him he offered to follow Jesus. He resembled the second in another respect. Like him he asked permission to delay his coming for a little while; but the reason he gave was different. He wished to bid fare well to those at home in his house. Was this request wrong? Did not Elisha once make a similar request when called by Elijah? It is evident that in this case the motive was wrong. The Lord's answer showed that this man, like the first, was not prepared for the service he offered to engage in. His heart still clung to his earthly interests, and was not devoted to Christ. Therefore the Lord compared him to one, who, holding the handle of the plough, instead of fixing his eye upon the furrow before him that he may make it straight, turns his head round, and gazes on the scenes behind. Such a man, he declared, was not fit for the kingdom of God.

The first and last of the three appear to have been unsound at heart. The first was eager to set out, because he knew not the nature of the service; the last was unwilling to set out immediately, because he loved too well his earthly portion.

Let us examine our own hearts, to see whether we resemble any one of these three men! Perhaps we are eager, like the first, to undertake some Christian work. But are we prepared for sufferings, and persecution, and poverty? Or our case may resemble that of the last. We may intend some day to become devoted Christians, while we feel so much engrossed by our earthly enjoyments that we are continually putting off the time for beginning to lead a new life. The Lord Jesus knows our most secret feelings. It is useless to attempt to deceive him--if we do not really love him, and think it a privilege to serve him, he will not accept our services. If, like the second character, we really long to do something for his cause, but are hindered by other pressing duties, the way shall be made clear; a door shall be opened, difficulties shall be removed, and the desire of our hearts shall be granted.

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