

# Who Are You Following?

by John Healey

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing who we are truly following in our spiritual journey and the implications of that choice on our lives.*

**Duration:** 49:48

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:18, Romans 4:7-8, Romans 9:30

**Topics:** "Following Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of following Jesus wholeheartedly. He shares personal experiences of people who were touched by his preaching and highlights the need for Canadians to reach out and serve others. Jesus' teachings are explained, stating that if one tries to save their own life, they will lose it. The speaker warns against being drawn away by worldly trends and losing sight of who they are truly following. The sermon concludes with a call to examine one's heart and ensure that their confession aligns with their actions.

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## Transcript

There are needs that each one of us are feeling as we come together. Many of you come with busy schedules and in the midst of a busy schedule you have set some time aside because of the high priority you give to seeking God with people of kindred heart. Some of you may well be here tonight out of a dryness of spirit.

And I want to say from the outset that this business of revival is a rigorous business. This task of saying, I will follow hard after Christ comes with an incredible opposition and there's a war that goes on within us and a war that goes on without us. In these days, I have come through about three months of my life that have probably had more stress than I have ever felt in my life.

And I am absolutely persuaded that God is in the midst of it and He is accomplishing things in my life through the strain and the stress that He has not accomplished for years. And so I come and the things that I preach tonight, I preach as a testimony of the goodness of God. I want to talk to you tonight as we get into the Word, if you have your Bibles.

If we need a little bit more light, is that on a real stat as well that you can read your Bibles, Matthew chapter 16? Do we have those candles burning just as bright as they go? Matthew chapter 16, if you have your Bible. And I want to talk to you in a moment about leadership. When I talk to this group of people, I

want to talk in a particular direction.

The purpose that I want to talk to is not who is following you, that will come perhaps during the rest of the week. But as I begin to talk, I want to talk particularly about who it is that you're following. When I look at the early church and I would say, there is a church that was filled with the Holy Spirit and yet at the same time we see incredible struggles.

Some of our ministry has taken us into Venezuela over the last year or so and Cuba and Mexico City and other points. One friend said to me as I was preparing to do ministry in Cuba, they said, Oh John, you're going to have such a wonderful time. It's so much like being in the church that was in the book of Acts.

I'll tell you what I found, was I found a church that was growing and excited but a church that was much more similar to the church in Corinth. And here was a group of people that did not wake up one morning and everything was right in their spiritual life. They woke up one morning to the reality that there was a burning hunger and a passion in their hearts that only the person, the governance, the Lordship of Jesus Christ could satisfy.

They had lived their entire human life under an atheistic regime with all the horrendous hurts and pains and destruction in human relationship that an atheistic regime would bring into the experience of a person. And the hurt in their homes and in their lives and the fear and the suspicion that that atheistic regime has spread among them. And now as the gospel begins to be preached, it is being preached to hungry people but people with incredible hurts in their life and dysfunctionality that has to be overcome.

Tomorrow morning when we get into the word and I want to talk about how God uses His word to revive people and bring them back to a sense of health and strength in their lives. Much of it has come out of my experience in some of these trips overseas by seeing the hurt and the pain that they're going through. Just take a moment with me and let's ask God's help.

Father, as we open your word we confess it's the Holy Spirit that takes the presence of Christ and fills us as empty vessels with you and that you become the messenger and we simply become the voice of one crying in the wilderness. So Lord, minister to us, each one of us come with a hunger and thirst for your ministry upon our lives. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Who are you following? Matthew chapter 16. In 1784, we first heard, I didn't hear, that's when it was written, maybe some of you did, of the Pied Piper. Kevin, Kevin, I appreciate so much your help tonight.

I just met Kevin a few moments ago. And in 1784, in the city of Hamelin, in Germany, was it first mentioned, I don't know if it's legend, I don't know if it's history, I don't know if it's a wonderful story, but I do know that it caught my attention. And here is the story of the Pied Piper.

Later, in 1800, just south of England on the Isle of Wight, there was a similar story that burst onto the scene of this fella that they would call the Pied Piper. And in each case, the cities are said to have been overrun with rats. The city of the Isle of Wight was a very prosperous place where everything seemed to be seemingly going right.

And through the shipping business, all these rats came onto the island and they literally overran a town that was called Newtown. And the people became so desperate, the story goes, that they said that they would finally spend up to 50 pounds in English currency on anyone who could help them get rid of the rats. They had drowned them, they had beat on them, they had tried to poison them, they had tried everything

possible.

And out of nowhere appeared this strange looking figure. And he came with a funny pipe. And he went to the city officials and he said, I understand that if I rid this city of rats, you will give me 50 pounds.

And the deal was struck, the hands were shook, and he went up and down the streets and he played this most strange tune. And out of every corner these horrendous rats came and followed him. And the story goes that he went to the edge of the island, he stepped into a boat, it was paddled out into the deep, and the rats followed him into the ocean and they drowned.

Easy story. And so he went back to the town fathers and he said, your city is free of rats. He said, tell me.

He said, who is it that is going to pay me the 50 pounds? And the town fathers said, well it seemed like a very easy task, I don't think it was worth the 50 pounds, we have decided among us to give you 20 pounds. He said, no sir. He said, we shook hands, we struck a deal, it was to be 50 pounds for ridding the city of rats.

They said, no, if you want anything it is 20 pounds, or get your bones out of the city. And he left their audience and he spun on his heel, and the story says he walked out of there, and from that pipe came the strangest tune that anyone had ever heard. But this time as he moved up and down the streets, it wasn't the rats but the little children.

And the children moved out of their homes almost mesmerized, and they moved from where they were, and they began to follow this Pied Piper through the streets. And he finally left the town, but this time towards the forest. And they thought, well there is no harm, they are children, they are playing.

But they followed him into the forest, and the story goes that they were never to be seen again. Is it possible that our hearts and minds can be mesmerized by sounds and invitations, that we can be drawn away to the point that our lives are lost forever, in whatever the trend of the moment is? Is it possible that in our business of living for Christ, even us with a seriousness and an urgency of intent, that we can be drawn away, somehow so mesmerized, that we become unconscious of the fact that we have lost sight of who we really are following? Is it possible as a believer that we really don't know who we are really following? Are there stories among us that in the midst of all our walking, we are walking behind the wrong one? And I want you to see tonight in the scripture, the incredible conflict that happens in our heart, when our confession is right, but our living it out becomes in an incredible conflict. I want you to see the horrendous task of taking the confession of our mouth, of who we believe Jesus Christ is, and then beginning to flesh it out in the task of daily discipleship.

Because it is in that crucible, it is in that moment of challenge and of attack, where we break away from Christ, and although our confession may be repeated, and our theology may have an appearance of wonder and of orthodoxy, in our heart there has become a dissonance, if not a dysfunctionality, and we have picked up the tune of some pied piper, be it the tune of some bitterness, or the tune of some busyness, or the tune of some religiosity, or the judgmental spirit, or whatever it's been, but something has drawn us away, and we didn't realize it was happening until we were called up short, that our confession actually gave place to a conflict that revealed something that had to be dealt with deep in our heart. I want you, in Matthew chapter 16, if you have your Bibles open, I want you to begin in verse 13. Kevin, help me if you would.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, Who do people say the Son of Man is? And they replied, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But what about you? He asked. Who do you say that I am? Important things there.

I know when I look in the scripture, and they're talking about the Son of Man, it was Jesus, perhaps one of His favorite titles for Himself. But if I would have been raised in the day and age when those people were raised, it would have been so charged with imagination and with understanding. Let me give you one thought about the Son of Man.

In Daniel chapter 7, in verse 13, In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man coming with clouds of heaven. And He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. And He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All peoples, nations, and men of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

I saw before me one like a Son of Man. And Jesus said, Who do people say the Son of Man is? And if I would put it in our lingo today, I'd say, Were you in the coffee shop this morning? Did you go shopping yesterday? Were you at the auction market? Did you get caught in traffic? Did you hear Murray Woods on the radio? What do they say about Jesus Christ? Who do they say that I am? In the heart conversation, when everybody feels that they're safe to speak, what do they say about me? They say, well, they say a lot of things. Some people say you're a little crazy.

Some people say you're kind of like John the Baptist. Sometimes you just don't know. You're just kind of brash, and you're just kind of outspoken.

We just think you're kind of like John the Baptist. Some people think you're a little harsh. We think you should maybe back off a little bit.

We think you're like Elijah, and you know you're just going to bite somebody, or burn somebody. You're just going to walk in, and just kind of take over. And like, remember the time you went into the temple.

Like, they weren't really sure how to take you. And some people, they think you're like Jeremiah, or maybe one of the other prophets, that there's a brokenness, and there's a sorrow, and there's something churning in your heart that we can't quite identify with. And the word on the street is, is that people have all different messages about who you are.

And I don't know the timing of the conversation, but I have to think that as humans talk, there had to be a moment, and I think he had to have looked his men in the eye, and he asked them a question that had to have rung in their ears for the rest of their lives. If he's saying that's fair game, how could they possibly know the brokenness in my heart? How could they possibly understand the authority of the one who I speak, in whose name I speak? How could they ever understand the intensity of the corruption of these created in the image of God, and the offense that their life is to their Creator Father, and the one to whom I answer and give accountability? How could they ever possibly know? But let me ask you a question. Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? And I have to believe that there were many of those disciples that when they were pressed to say in a few concise words what Jesus Christ meant to them, I have to believe that they were much like us, that they were caught up in an activity, but they may well have struggled to enunciate in a few simple words what this great Creator God, now incarnate, standing among

them, meant to them.

I remember my father-in-law, when he was alive, he would often pray like this. And I never understood it as well as I needed to. He would pray, and at the end of his prayer, he would say, And Jesus, thank you for all that you mean to us.

I've heard him say it dozens of times. And thank you for all that you mean to us. And so Peter blurts out, and he comes out with a statement that we would call foundational theology, or orthodoxy.

Peter answered, he says, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And it's as if the demons of hell shriek and back off. Have you ever been in a situation where you're counseling and people have been either under oppression or some attack by spiritual entities, and when you walk into those places and you begin to read the scripture out loud, or you begin to sing praises and anthems like How Great Thou Art, and you exalt the name of Christ, or you stand there in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and you make a simple, clear declaration, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And perhaps my Irish imagination can just see the demons splattering on the wall. They can't stand when the name of Christ is lifted high and exalted Christ. And there was a spiritual statement there.

He says, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And when he says that, he has said a hundred things that form the definition of who we are. We are tied to the one who was promised to come.

He was the anointed one. That's what Christ means. It's Christos.

In our words, we say anointing. There is a very presence of the Holy Spirit saturating your life. You are here.

This is the promised one that God, from the very beginning, has promised to have among us. He says, when he says, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is saying, You are God, very God.

In John chapter 8, in John chapter 10, we see the very animosity of the Jewish people, because they understood that when Peter identified Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, they were saying, Here is God, very God, in the flesh. How can a human being, of all the things we were to ever discuss, of all the things that would ever capture our imagination, greater than the understanding of the putridness of sin, greater than the understanding of the lostness of man, greater than the comprehension of the incredible steps to salvation. No thought can ever be in the mind of a person that becomes greater that God has made himself present with me.

I cannot imagine a greater thought that the very creator God is present and revealing himself to me and doing whatever it takes for me to move into knowing relationship with Him. And Peter says it, he says, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Hebrews chapter 1, in verse 3, says, The Son is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.

North of Swift Current, oh, about a mile or two north of Swift Current, you will find the entire Swift Current forest. And it's one tree. One tree.

And we call it, everyone knows it's the Lone Tree. And often, on anything that has to do with promoting Speedy Creek, you'll see in the corner one tree. This isn't Lebanon, and you know, you see this one great cedar or something.

It is one big old tree about two miles north. And today, when I left Swift Current, I was driving there, and I had to smile, because here was a lady, her car was pulled into the approach by the tree, and she had the fanciest camera I'd ever seen on a tripod. And you could see that she had arranged for the light, and this was about 10 o'clock this morning, and she had this incredibly fancy camera trying to take a picture of the tree.

And she was doing whatever a professional photographer might do to capture an exact image of the entire Swift Current forest and its whereabouts. Okay? And it was funny, she could do it with one picture. And I thought to her, I thought, oh dear lady, after you do that, and we reduce it to whatever kind of fodder or paper or newsprint that we might later put it on, you might as well have taken it, you know, on some little disposable camera.

But she was trying to gain an exact representation. When Peter said, you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, I don't know how anything could get beyond that in our experience. Any confession could go beyond that.

And Jesus in fact affirms it. And he says things like this, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it.

And he begins to say that out of that very experience comes the very source of blessing that people can know. If you look in Romans chapter 4 in verses 7 and 8, it said, Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not count against him. Blessed is the man whose transgression has been removed.

When he says that a person is blessed, when a person has encountered Christ, and that experience of coming into such relationship with Christ has lifted the guilt and the transgression. And in one place when it talks about being blessed in Romans 4 and 7, it says that the very essence of being blessed is that your sin will never be counted against you. Your neighbors might remind you of it.

You might remember it. Your wife might once in a while get some mileage out of it. Whatever it might be.

But between you and God, it will never, ever, ever, ever be counted against you. Never will your sin be counted against you because you have come into that cleansing relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter had no idea how much he said when in fact prompted by the Holy Spirit, he said that which defines our life.

What a confession. What a confession. He said, this has not been revealed to you by man, it's been revealed by the Father.

It says in John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life. But then it says, no man comes to the Father but by me. He's talking about an experience where God literally so involves himself with people, even with unbelievers, even with rebels, even with the hardest of hearts.

I'm telling you He can so work in their hearts that He can drag them from their deadness and their dullness and their rebellion and He draws them to encounter until this person comes face to face with God the Creator in His Son, the person, the Lord Jesus Christ and the person for eternity is converted from a place of darkness to now belonging to God's own dear Son. There is something that my words will never fully explain, this experience of coming to know Christ. And this is Peter's confession.

What a confession! What a confession! And he goes on and he says in verse 19, he says, I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Peter, I have a plan that what you have experienced, that in your Spirit's eye, in your person, in your comprehension, in your experience, you now have a personal story of knowing in personal relationship the Creator God. You need to know that that will be the theme of your life because I want people loosed from all places and I want them to know the freedom that comes from moving back into becoming reflectors of the very One who is the perfect representation of the Father Jesus Christ.

And I want that true. And this business of spiritual liberty and spiritual advance, that's going to be the story of your life. But then something that was interesting before I go on to the counterpart this evening, he says in verse 20, then he warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

I think that's an amazing statement. And I think what's amazing about it is this, he's saying, do not demand, demand it become the testimonies of other people or their prayer until it is obviously yours. Peter, how can you possibly press upon other people that they need to begin to follow a behavior, a lifestyle, a rigorousness and a pursuit of life that comes out of an encounter with Christ unless they begin to be convinced that you truly have encountered Christ.

Don't tell anybody yet. Let it become so evident in your life that they're going to ask you of a reason of the hope that lies within you and then be so wise how you respond. But nothing has been so detrimental to the rapid advance of the gospel as the slow comprehension of believers of the simple truth that we have to live and see and respond to the reality that Christ is everything to us.

And until he becomes everything to us, very little of him will be seen in our preaching and in our testifying and in our working. He says, then he said, warned his disciples, this may not be the very best principle we'd say of evangelistic explosion. Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

How does that figure? Peter says, that doesn't sound very productive. I don't understand what you're saying. I would have thought that you'd say, now you've got some hint.

Why don't you quickly run with it? That's not what he had. Because the problem wasn't with Jesus, the problem was with Peter. He'd say, well look at the confession that he's made.

Look at the tremendous insight. He could go farther as a Jew than we as Canadians could go in an hour of explanation. He could begin to talk about the things that he learned as a little one.

He could begin to talk about the things he had learned in the synagogue. He could begin to talk about the years and the generations of waiting for this Christ. But he said, don't you tell anyone yet.

There's a couple issues we have to resolve that could ruin everything. Let me show you the problem that we're going to deal with in just a moment. It's a big problem.

If you have your Bible, it is worth your time to turn to Romans chapter 9 with me. Romans chapter 9 and verse 30. I have it on the overhead as well.

This is the problem. This was Peter's problem. This was the disciples' problem.

This is my problem. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have obtained a righteousness that is by faith? But Israel who pursued a law of righteousness has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as it were by works.

Here's the phrase. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written, See, I lay in Zion, a stone that causes men to stumble.

Deliberately placed there. Deliberately placed there. Like leaving a stump or a rock on a path in a dark room.

As it is written, See, I lay in Zion, a stone that causes men to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall. And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Let me tell you two problems I see too frequently in the body of Christ.

First of all, I find a believer who is so horrified that his non-Christian friends would question his identity. He is horrified over the question of his identity, scared to the point that he would never open his mouth and confess Christ among those that he's with at a given moment. He would be offended if somebody walked into that room of people who have no use for Christ and walk up to him and say in the midst of those people, Didn't we have an incredible time in prayer meeting last night? I'm trying to get close to these people and I don't want them to know that I'm too much associated with Christ.

And then that same person, if I put them in the fellowship of believers, even 15 minutes later, it's a Jekyll and Hyde, that they are so deeply, deeply, deeply wounded and offended if I do not give them all the praise and adoration that these are deeply spiritual Christians who have so fully identified with Christ that they should be given places of honor in the body of Christ. You say, John, that never happens? It happens on every continent I've ever preached. It's happened everywhere I've ever been.

There is something horrendously wrong in the human spirit and it was true in Peter and it is true in me and it is true in everyone who wrestles with this rigorous task of following heart after Christ. There's an enemy within. And the scripture begins to teach that Jesus has become a stumbling block and we trip over Him.

We would much prefer to have a relationship with Christ where something was gained by how wonderful a person I am or how much better I am than the other person or how much more I've achieved or how many more possessions I have or how much more power I have in a particular relationship or how much more position or whatever it might be. I want people to know that I have more standing or more education or more time or I've been here long whatever. It's as if we have unconsciously identified some rules that spiritual advance is absolutely dependent upon me persuading the person beside me to think more of me than I should ever dare have anybody think of me.

And when I begin to settle into a lifestyle where what I believe is that my sanctification or my transformation or my advance is dependent upon who I'm creating myself to be then Jesus becomes a stumbling block. The problem with Jesus Christ is that he is a stumbling block to developing a self-righteous overblown prideful case of unholy religion. Jesus is not helpful.

He is not helpful. He doesn't help. He has never helped me.

He has never helped me to look better in front of another person. He has never come to my rescue and defended my egotism in front of other people. He has failed me miserably.

He has not come to my rescue when I wanted to be puffed up with other people. He will not assist me in saving myself. For God put Christ in the midst of us to reveal not only his utter ability to save us completely but our complete inability to save ourselves whatsoever.

What a daring move for the Father to set the Son in our midst knowing the reproach that he would receive and yet knowing that there is absolutely no other way for a man or a woman to come to Christ unless that they see in Christ the only way of being satisfied before the Father. Here is the conflict. This is where following gets tough.

It is one thing to know Christ and it is something else to follow him. So let me ask you what do you think of Christ-like leadership? I took some people a while back through these verses and we were talking about some of the difficulties and things that Christ was asking of them. And in the midst of it I just threw out to the people I said, do you think that Matthew 16 is a good picture of Christ-like leadership? It was a mean miserable question.

It was a loaded question. But I thought being Irish I'll do it anyhow. I wasn't completely sanctified that night.

I did it. So I said, do you think this is a good picture of Christ-like leadership? And I want you to know that there have been so many strange tunes of what Christ-like leadership is that we get carried off on some other melody. And I actually watched as these dear people began to discuss whether or not Jesus' treatment of the disciples was in fact Christ-like leadership.

And before they dug the hole too deep I stopped them. I said, if this is not Christ-leading then what is it? And they said, well, He is making them feel uncomfortable. But who is it that's making them feel uncomfortable? But they, you know, and if I would have given them enough rope well He didn't follow all the educational principles.

Or He didn't follow the psychological possibilities. Or He didn't know all the laws of leadership. Or He didn't... Friend, I didn't ask is this trendy leadership? I didn't ask if this is secular leadership.

I didn't say if this is popular leadership. I said, is this Christ-like leadership? And if you want to follow Christ then you have to know what the other melodies are and you have to be able to distinguish Christ's voice from them. And Christ begins this way when He talks about leadership.

In verse 21, if you have your Bible there with you. Verse 21, And from that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples. To who did He explain? To the very people who had an incredible confession.

They had a testimony that could splatter the walls with demons. They could make statements. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

They were right. And Jesus took that confession and said, If in fact, I am the ultimate leader. If I am the one that you've always wanted to follow.

If I am the one that you have always prayed for. That I might come. If in fact, I am the desire of the nations.

Then now come follow me. And this is where I am going. He says in verse 21, From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples.

That He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law. And that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Notice what He asked them.

There are some things that I must do. I am going to Jerusalem. I am going to confront Jewish elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

I am going to suffer at their hands. I am going to be killed. And I am going to rise from the dead.

That's what I am going to do. I am going to go somewhere. I am going to deal with some people.

I am going to suffer incredible consequences. And I am going to demonstrate the absolute veracity of what I am saying. I am going to go somewhere.

I am going to confront people. I am going to pay an incredible price. And I will demonstrate the promise of the Father to me.

I am going to demonstrate things that people have never even imagined. I am going to walk in such conflict against the very powers and the trends and the patterns of this world that it is going to either cost them everything or it is going to cost me everything. Both was true.

And I want you to see that Peter has a new confession. And this is his new confession. Never, Lord, he said, this will never happen to you.

The old confession was you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You are absolutely without equal. You are without equal.

No one can measure up to you. And the new confession is I, a simple fisherman, am going to put you in your place. The first confession is you are absolutely worthy of all praise and adoration.

You are the desire of all nations. You are the one upon whose shoulders the government will rest. You are the exact reflection of the radiance of God's presence among us.

The second is this. Not you. Let me just kind of tune you in here real quick.

You don't know what you are talking about. Peter's new confession is never, Lord, this will never happen to you. Now let me give you Jesus' new response.

The old response was blessed are you, Simon Peter. Here's the new response. Get behind me, Satan.

You are a stumbling block. You ever heard that phrase before? You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.

I'm not saying that I hate you, Peter. But there is something of a diabolical twist that has taken hold of your thinking. And you actually believe that my obedience to the Father is a bad thing.

You would persuade me that absolute, sold-out obedience is a bad thing. Peter, there is something operative in the human heart that could not recognize Christ-like leadership and the Father's will if it hit you in the face. That is a horrendous problem for us.

We spend hours seeking God's will. Father, are you directing me here? God, you want me to do this. Father, is this a plan that we should follow? And the real issue is even before that.

The real issue is this. Do you so absolutely belong to God that He has absolute right to tell you where to go, who to talk to, what the price will be, and in fact, how He will vindicate His name, not necessarily your name. Jesus' new response was quite a twist from the old response.

Peter's real problem wasn't never, Lord, this will never happen to you. I think Peter's real problem was that I think he was saying this. Never, Lord, will this happen to me.

Because innately, we understand that as goes the leader, so goes the followers. As goes Christ, so goes me. As goes the one I've sold my heart out to, so goes my future.

And there comes an issue here that if following Christ is going to cost me something I have not been willing to yield, then Christ has become a stumbling block, and I don't want to follow Him. Because now I'm recognizing that even though I made a great confession at one point in my life, now I'm discovering there's an old operating system that's saying some very different things. What's true in leading and following? When Jesus becomes a stumbling block to me, it's only a moment until I become a stumbling block to Him.

That truth scares me to the depths of my being. It scares me because it uncovers areas of my life that I thought had been dealt with a long time ago. When Jesus becomes the stumbling block to me, Jesus is now in the way.

I just want to live out my evangelical faith. I just want to have revival at my terms. I just want everyone else to speak well of me.

I just want people to give me credit in such a way that it'll be credit to me for eternity. I don't want to have to follow Christ into uncomfortable places. I want to be able to live the life that I see others living.

I want all the advance of Christ in my life, but I want to walk the path that I personally prefer. And when Jesus said very other things, and Peter didn't like it, Peter, you must go to Jerusalem. Peter, you must deal with some unlikely people.

Peter, you must die. And Peter, you must entrust yourself to this truth. That those who live in me will rise from the dead.

And if I found you in a moment of fault of faith, or if I found you in a moment of unbelief, then you're struggling with whether or not I really have the power to raise you from the dead. So there is a dissonance. There is a distance between what you so easily confess that I am the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and the fact that you would follow me and say anything and pay anything to follow me.

There has become a distance between what you're saying and what you're living. And that is the very issue that is dealt with when a people are revived. When we talk about a time of revival, there has been a healing between what I say and what I walk.

There has been a healing between what I confess and what I do. Someone said accountability is what I say I do is in fact what I do. That leaders are called upon not only to speak the truth, but to act the truth.

And there becomes a hypocrisy. There becomes a distance. In fact, the sad thing in that moment in Peter's life, in the disciple's life, and in my life, is that Jesus knew that distance was there all the time.

And when He invites me to follow Him, He's asking me to follow Him from where I am to where He is. This is how He says it. He says it in just the next few verses.

If anyone would come after me. This is not guaranteed yet. It's a big if.

If anyone would come after me. Here's your confession. Here's where you are.

And if you're going to move from where you are where you're still saying I'm not sure if I go to those Jerusalem's. I'm not sure if I have the courage to deal with people. I don't know if I'm willing to let go of everything.

And I don't really know if He is more powerful than all the things that can come against me including death. But Jesus said when you begin to make that move if you make that move it's because you will say no to yourself. You will take up your cross and you'll begin to follow me.

If you decide to follow me that is a question that you will face every moment for the rest of your life. That is a question that you will face every moment for the rest of your life. And if you do you will have to deny yourself.

And the problem is as you get older as opposed to when you were younger when you were a teenager you probably only had one or two options. But you've had enough time by the time that you're thirty or forty or fifty or sixty or whatever your age might be that you know that there are hundreds of options. And for you to deny yourself and all the rabbit trails that you can go out on is a horrendous decision.

And it is a focused decision. And it is a contained it is a captivated decision. If you would deny yourself and then He says and take up your cross and if we could put it in our own words take up that task that He's given you that will result in the redemption in the salvation of other people.

In your participation in whatever it takes to see the gospel reach into other people's lives. And not only know about that particular calling upon your life but nail yourself to it. Oh, the violence in the kingdom of God is taken by violent men.

Nail yourself to the cross become so attached to the task that He's given you. Do not be surprised if that very task that He's been given you've been given will cost you everything including your death. And I must be killed He said.

I'm going to Jerusalem I'm dealing with a bunch of horrible people and it's going to cost me my life and I will rise again. And He said if anyone comes after me he must deny himself consider all the options nail yourself to the cross and follow me. Follow me simply means humble your heart and do what He asks you.

Humble your heart and do what He asks you. I know of nothing so difficult for us as Canadians. Reach out to that person.

Step back from the limelight. Give what it takes. Be, show up.

Be whatever a servant of Christ requires in the moment. Humble yourself. Follow me.

Follow me over to here. Follow me over there. Keep walking.

Walk into this situation. Step back out of this situation. Walk with me.

Follow me. In the next few verses Jesus gives a clear explanation and He asks a concise question and He gives a concrete reward and He gives a calculated promise. The clear explanation is if you save your life you'll lose it.

The only reason why you wouldn't follow me with all your heart is you're afraid you're going to lose your life. That fear of losing your life is a good fear but you're confused. You think that if you keep your life to yourself it will be safe.

I'm telling you that nothing is safer than following the One who is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And He asks a concise question. You're concerned about your security, your survival.

What should it profit a man if he gained the whole world and loses his own soul? That's the most foolish gamble in the world. He says you are being motivated by the fact that in your heart you want a reward. In your heart I'm telling you I will reward you.

And He gives a calculated promise. And you'll see my kingdom. You will see my reign.

And each of us who have followed Christ with all our hearts we look back at years and we're so amazed of how God has been able to use the likes of us to bring about the advance of His kingdom in other people's lives. Last week, a week ago, I was in Edmonton. On a couple of occasions people who I did not even know came up to me and they took me by the hand and they said, John, you were speaking in this situation and God touched my heart and it made all the difference.

I didn't know the person. I didn't know how to answer properly. But God will take your life and use you in incredible ways when we're completely sold out to the true confession that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

When our confession of knowing Jesus Christ as the hope and salvation of our life, when our confession of knowing Jesus Christ as the hope and salvation of our life collides with the personal price of following Him, we experience conflict. He ceases to be our hope. He is now the enemy of our plans and our desires.

We will never truly know Him as our hope and our salvation until we begin to follow. Jesus took somebody who was so dear to Him, Peter, and He said, Peter, there's a difference between what you're confessing and what you're willing to do. And I'm telling you the trip from where you are back here is by answering the question if you'll commit, if you'll follow me, if you'll stop following yourself, if you'll deny yourself, if you'll take up the task and the life that I've given you, and if you would simply, humbly trust me enough to follow me.

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