

## “Easter: Giving Back... Circumstances in My Life”

The Reflection Series

**Scripture:** Luke 9:57-62(NIV)

<sup>57</sup> As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

<sup>58</sup> Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup> He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup> Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

<sup>62</sup> Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

**Subject Question:** What three-step formula does Jesus teach us as His disciples concerning our ability to get back on track in our Christian life in spite of our circumstances?

**Compliment answer:** Return, Refocus, Restart...

**Big Idea:** The three-step formula Jesus teaches us as His disciples concerning our ability to get back on track in our Christian life in spite of our circumstances are to: Return, Refocus, and Restart.

**Homiletical Idea:** “Return, Refocus, Restart...”

**Purpose:** I want the congregation to understand and respond to the unique life-call of Christ to truly be a life-long, committed, follower of His.

**Introduction:** The very best way any of us can give back to Christ is to give the one thing that all Christians deeply desire to give to Him ; our full selves. Many of us have been Christians for a long time. It isn't that we are not saved and headed for heaven; it's that we have somehow drifted.., somehow lost our zeal and our awe of His calling to begin with. Circumstances have beat us down and pulled us away from our great Love. How can we get back to where we want to be? Today we explore an obscure teaching of Christ that reveals the answer.

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

## Groundwork:

## Benson Commentary

**Luke 9:57-62.** *And it came to pass as they went in the way* — This and the following seem to be the same occurrences with those mentioned by Matthew, which took place as Christ was in the neighborhood of Capernaum, going from that town to the shore, where he proposed to embark, in order to cross the lake, and not on his way to Jerusalem through the country of the Samaritans. See notes on Matthew 8:19-22. *And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes, &c.* — Jesus, knowing that the man proposed to himself riches and honors in the expected kingdom of the Messiah, thought fit to make him sensible of his mistake. As if he had said, understand the terms: consider on what conditions thou art to follow me. *He said to another, Follow me* — About the same time, our Lord meeting with one who had often attended him, and thereby showed an inclination to become his disciple, he ordered him to disengage himself altogether from worldly affairs and follow him; *but he said, Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father* — The man excused himself on pretence that he was bound in duty to wait on an aged father, till he should pay him the last office in his burial. *Jesus said, Let the dead bury their dead* — Let those who are dead in sin, or who are so immersed in worldly affairs that they are dead to God and divine things, employ themselves in committing to the dust their deceased friends and relatives. *But go thou and preach the kingdom of God* — It is justly observed by Dr. Doddridge, that, “as our Lord called him now to follow him, we must conclude that this commission which he gives him to preach was not directly to be put in execution. The circumstance was plainly extraordinary, and might turn on reasons unknown to us. Christ might, for instance, foresee some particular obstruction that would have arisen from the interview with his friends at his father’s funeral, which would have prevented his devoting himself to the ministry; to which he might refer in saying, *Let the dead bury their dead.*” *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee* — Unto a third, who of his own accord offered to follow him, if he would allow him to go home and take leave of his family, Jesus gave such an answer as teaches us that no domestic affair should hinder the care of our salvation; that the calls of religion are so very pressing, that they admit of no delay or excuse whatsoever; and that all who set themselves to seek the welfare of their souls should pursue the work assiduously, without looking carelessly around them, as if they neglected what they were doing. *He said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, &c., is fit for the kingdom of God* — Either to receive and become a subject of it, or to preach it. “Hesiod has given it as the character of a good ploughman, that, ‘he keeps his mind intent on his work,’ that he may make ‘a straight furrow,’ and does not allow himself ‘to gaze about on his companions.’ Our Lord, on the like obvious principles, may use the phrase of one that looks behind him while his hand is on the plough, as a kind of proverbial expression for a careless, irresolute person, who must be peculiarly unfit for the Christian ministry. How happy had it been for Christ’s church had this lively admonition been regarded, without which it is impossible, **ορθοτομειν τον λογον της αληθειας**, to divide, or rather *direct the word of truth aright,*” 2 Timothy 2:15.

## Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

9:57-62 Here is one that is forward to follow Christ, but seems to have been hasty and rash, and not to have counted the cost. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world. Let us not try to join the profession of Christianity,

with seeking after worldly advantages. Here is another that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he begs a short delay. To this man Christ first gave the call; he said to him, Follow me. Religion teaches us to be kind and good, to show piety at home, and to requite our parents; but we must not make these an excuse for neglecting our duty to God. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a little time to talk with his friends about it, and to set in order his household affairs, and give directions concerning them. He seemed to have worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and he was willing to enter into a temptation leading him from his purpose of following Christ. No one can do any business in a proper manner, if he is attending to other things. Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to go on, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back, leads to drawing back, and drawing back is to perdition. He only that endures to the end shall be saved.

### **Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers**

(62) **No man, having put his hand to the plough . . .**—The image which our Lord used was, as usual, one that went home to the personal experience of His hearers. They were of the peasant class, and they knew that the eye of the ploughman if he is to do his work well, must look straight before him at the line of the furrow which he is making. To look back, while working, is to mar the work entirely. The man who so looks is therefore, *ipso facto*, disqualified for the work of God's kingdom.

### **Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges**

**60.** *No man having put his hand to the plough*] He who would make straight furrows must not look about him (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 11. 60). The light ploughs of the East, easily overturned, require constant attention.

*fit*] Rather, well-adapted. By way of comment see [Luke 17:32](#); [Psalm 78:9](#); [Hebrews 10:38-39](#). The general lesson of the section is, Give yourself wholly to your duty, and count the cost, [Luke 14:25-33](#). Christ cannot accept 'a conditional service.' Neither hardship, nor bereavement, nor home ties must delay us from following Him. Is it more than a curious accident that the last four incidents illustrate the peculiarities of the four marked human temperaments—the Choleric ([Luke 9:51-56](#)); the Sanguine ([Luke 9:57-58](#)); the Melancholic ([Luke 9:59-60](#)); the Phlegmatic ([Luke 9:61-62](#))?

### **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary**

62. No man, &c.—As ploughing requires an eye intent on the furrow to be made, and is marred the instant one turns about, so will they come short of salvation who prosecute the work of God with a distracted attention, a divided heart. Though the reference seems chiefly to ministers, the application is general. The expression "looking back" has a manifest reference to "Lot's wife" (Ge 19:26; and see on [1621]Lu 17:32). It is not actual return to the world, but a reluctance to break with it. (Also see on [1622]Mt 8:21.)

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

## Opening Illustration: 3 Chairs...

- 1) **Focused Chair: Hebrews 12** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.* Life- Attitude: Celebratory.
- 2) **Familiar Chair:** Life- Attitude: Comfortable.
- 3) **Frustrated Chair:** Life Attitude: Critical.

Honestly... Where am I at? Where do I want to be?

## Consider the Bookmark... where am I really...?

(Giving back is impossible not to do)

- A. **Return. (Vs. 57-59a)** <sup>57</sup> *As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."* <sup>58</sup> *Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* <sup>59</sup> *He said to another man, "Follow me."*
- B. This man asked a good question... But... like you and me, Jesus looked past the initial question to the good heart of this good man... and knew that time and circumstance would be a challenge for Him to do what He originally desired, And so it is with you and me. How do we then somehow gain the spiritual energy to finally get back to where we once were and wish to be again? First and foremost, like we talked of last week, we need to establish who is going to be truly in control of our lives. (Mind, Heart, Hands). Christian maturity is not about Harder striving as much as it is about Heart-felt submission. (Little by little... day by day). Not constantly attempting to justify ourselves and our actions as it is just agreeing with God that we have let the most important thing: our desire to grow in our relationship with Him somehow wane... slip away, as the tyranny and circumstances of the immediate, have begun to take occupy more and more of our mind, heart and time.
- C. Again, it isn't that we haven't made some headway in our Christian lives: Most of us have! We are not the same person we were before we came to know Christ. PTL! We were climbing the mountain of our new life but somehow reached a plateau where it was much easier to rest for a while. But somehow that "rest" has gone on for weeks, months and for lots of us, years...
- D. Jesus simply whispers to us, exactly what we told this one who had said: *"I will follow you wherever you go."...* (Isn't that how we once felt... Isn't that what we once believed... with all of our hearts?), will you really? Will you

really follow me, trust in me, rely on me, even as your life gets comfortable and **you** have a nice home and a place to rest **your** head? Again, Jesus wasn't scolding Him or us... He's simply and lovingly reminding us all, to not forget our initial experience with Him... how we once felt, how we once lived, and basically... where our focus truly was... With great patience and greater love, He is inviting you and me to again, come back... come home, come back by my side... get back to following me... we haven't run away as much as we've simply run away; return if you will, to me, your first and best and most cherished love... The treasure of your life. What a divine surprise to find Him whisper... to your heart and mine... "I'm here, I'm willing, I'm ready. Follow me once again." How? How can we put some feet to our desire? The short answer is: One small step at a time:

**1. 4 Basic Back to's:**

- a. Back to the Bible (Word: spent time daily, 1<sup>st</sup> in AM, Last in PM)
- b. Back to Prayer (Reopening that once familiar conversation w/ God)
- c. Back to Church ( Sharing and Serving with like hearted people)
- d. Back to Sharing (Sharing with others what Christ has done 4 U)

**Return...**

- A. **Refocus.** (Vs. 59b-61) *But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." <sup>61</sup> Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."*
- B. Refocusing is more about Reprioritizing than anything else. Think about it; all the things that these good people talking with Jesus wanted to do were legitimate, reasonable, responsible requests. What was the problem? Why didn't Jesus say, "OK, go do that and then... follow me?"
- C. I think Jesus knew them better than they knew us... in fact, If these folks were anything like you and me, one thing would have led to another and slowly but surely, life itself would pull us away from the presence of Jesus; they like us are always tempted to take the path of least resistance and many of us would probably have done what these guys were inclined to do, simply get back into the familiar routine of life, where life is calling the shots and directing our attention and Christ... although He may be a "part" of our lives, He would not be the "priority" of our lives... and for a Christian, there is a world of difference!

D. To walk the Christian life takes determination, dedication and diligence. Salvation is free and doesn't cost you anything. Discipleship however, is costly, and will cost your time, your treasure, your convenience and your comfort. The real question then is... why... why put Christ first? Why live such a diligently devoted life of a true follower? Isn't there an easier way? Jesus understood and still understands our human nature... He also knows full well that when we asked Him to come into our hearts, our hearts were changed, our lives were changed as well, in such a way that to live some way other than deeply devoted to Him will leave us unsatisfied and frustrated...; we won't walk **with** Christ, we'll continue to **follow** Him, but not surprisingly, at a greater and greater distance... perhaps we'll be prosperous but we'll live this life with an increasing purposelessness. Maybe the answer is not as complicated as we might want to make it: Becky Harling in her blog gives us some insight:

*Lately, I've been asking the question, "What does it look like to live as a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ?" 2 Chronicles 16:9 reads, "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." this morning I was reading about George Mueller. He lived during the 1800's and is one of my heroes because he took care of more than 10,000 orphans during his life time! He wrote after his ninetieth birthday about what it meant for him to live as one who is fully committed to the cause of Jesus Christ. "The love of money was gone, the love of place was gone, the love of position was gone, the love of worldly pleasures and engagements was gone. God, God alone became my portion. I found my all in Him; I wanted nothing else. And by the grace of God this has remained, and has made me a happy man, an exceedingly happy man... .." I wonder if I'll be able to say that on my ninetieth birthday?*

*Wow! So often, in spite of the fact that I claim to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ, I look to find my happiness is the place I live, the people I am in relationship with, the accomplishments I may or may not achieve, the amount of Starbucks I can have or the amount of shopping trips I can take... ..sigh. So, the question I am asking myself today is, does my life reflect an all-consuming passion for Jesus Christ? Can I say that He alone is my source of happiness? Do I live my life completely for the praise of His glory?*

*Today, I am reflecting on what I might need to surrender in order to be fully devoted. What about you? What gets in the way of you being a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ?*

<http://beckyharling.com/what-does-it-look-like-to-be-a-fully-devoted-follower-of-jesus-christ/>

**Return, Refocus...**

A. **Restart.** (Vs. 62) *Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*

B. Many of us think that this is a stern warning from Christ, but in reality it is more of a plea, a tear-filled observation that He mutters to each one of us...

**Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary**

62. No man, &c.—As ploughing requires an eye intent on the furrow to be made, and is marred the instant one turns about, so will they come short of salvation who prosecute the work of God with a distracted attention, a divided heart. Though the reference seems chiefly to ministers, the application is general. The expression "looking back" has a manifest reference to "Lot's wife" (Ge 19:26; and see on [1621]Lu 17:32). It is not actual return to the world, but a reluctance to break with it. (Also see on [1622]Mt 8:21.)

C. Lots of life to be lived, lots of people to touch, lots of great plans to be fulfilled and realized... lots of consequences, however, to not having our eyes fixed on Jesus... Keep your hand to the plow! Keep focused on who and whose you are. Keep concentrated on the task of knowing and being known as His...

D. C.T. Studd:

Only One Life Twill Soon be Past

Two little lines I heard one day,  
Traveling along life's busy way;  
Bringing conviction to my heart,  
And from my mind would not depart;  
Only one life, twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, yes only one,  
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;  
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,  
And stand before His Judgement seat;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, the still small voice,  
Gently pleads for a better choice  
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,  
And to God's holy will to cleave;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, a few brief years,  
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;  
Each with its clays I must fulfill,  
living for self or in His will;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,  
When Satan would a victory score;  
When self would seek to have its way,  
Then help me Lord with joy to say;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Give me Father, a purpose deep,  
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;  
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,  
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Oh let my love with fervor burn,  
And from the world now let me turn;  
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,  
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, yes only one,  
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";  
And when at last I'll hear the call,  
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last. "

**Conclusion:** Where are we at? Where do we want to be? 3 chairs  
**Consider the Bookmark... where do I really want to be...?**