

Why We Follow, Part 3

Luke 9:26-27

Let's open our Bibles to Luke 9:23. That verse says, "He said to all, 'If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'" And that call sounds as radical in our day as it did in his. It strikes our ears as a severe and limiting call, especially in what can only be described as a fundamentally self-centered age; today's age, in which the individual and individual liberty is prized above all things.

The more we've been able to hear this call through first-century ears, the more we've come to realize how scandalous and offensive the call to cross-bearing and discipleship is. Jesus called the people to the cross, to execution by degradation and torture. The cross is something you didn't bring up in polite company. If you brought it up, mothers would cover the ears of their children. The cross was purposely designed and employed to, to heighten a sense of public humiliation of the victim, to increase individual torment of the crucified.

Really, it was meant to make an example of that condemned soul, so that everybody would know, this person, put on this cross, is rejected by us, rejected by the world. Jesus uses that imagery for a Gospel invitation. That's the picture that he puts on the evangelism tract that he hands out. He's not inviting would-be disciples to, only to initiation by suffering, but to a lifetime of suffering, starting with self-denial and continuing day after day after day of cross-bearing, following in his steps as he leads them step-by-step toward the cross. So due to the nature of this call to discipleship, due to its comprehensive and exclusive and permanent demands, Jesus takes some time, here, to provide any of these would-be disciples with reasons why they should follow him.

Let's read that again, Luke 9:23-27. "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.'"

So why deny self and follow after Christ? Because, first reason, verse 24, Jesus said you need to lose your life to save it. Second reason, verse 25, because Jesus said you need to release the world to gain your soul. But today, we're going to study the third and final reason that Jesus provides for following after him, and as you see there in verses 26-27, it has to do with what's future, with what's coming and to understand this reasoning, we have to embrace something that is very hard for us to do as modern people. To understand Jesus' argument, here, and his reasoning, and why this is a compelling reason to follow after him, we have to do something that is hard for us to do as American modern people. It's a concept called delayed gratification; means you invest now, you work now, you wait patiently, looking for a reward later then. And that's what Jesus is calling for in verses 26-27 as he encourages us to embrace the shame to see the glory.

When we say, here, in our point, embrace the shame to see the glory, we're really talking not about true shame. What does shame come from? Biblically speaking, theologically speaking, shame is a result of guilt. Guilt comes when we sin against God. Guilt comes when we transgress his commands, when we transgress what he's clearly revealed in Scripture. So if I commit sin against God, guilt is registered, whether I sense that guilt or

not. A number of sins we commit we don't even realize that we've committed them. Sometimes there are subtle things in the motives and intentions of the heart. We don't even notice. We keep passing on as if we did nothing wrong. We don't feel any shame about that even though guilt is registered before God.

But when we become aware of guilt, we feel that burning sense of shame. We feel ashamed of ourselves. We feel embarrassed. Our conscience strikes us and smites us and won't leave us alone. And the wise person will listen to the compelling voice of conscience and go before God and confess sin, you know, agree with what God says in his Word about their sin, agree and then confess it and repent of that sin, ask for forgiveness and repent of that sin.

The shame, here, the shame over Jesus Christ, the shame of the cross, the shame of being identified with him, the shame of repeating and speaking and living by his words, it's not true shame. God sent Jesus Christ. What's there to be ashamed of? This is just an apparent shame. It's a visible shame, which is really part of the first advent. It's what led to his crucifixion, his suffering on the cross. But you need to understand, here, as we approach this and talk about shame, it's not that there's anything shameful in Jesus Christ whatsoever.

There's nothing shameful about his person or his work. There's nothing to be ashamed of about his teaching, his miracles, his sinless perfection, his holiness, his purity. There's nothing shameful about his compassion and his grace, his truth, his justice. The perfection and the beauty of divine holiness, which was incarnated in Jesus Christ, embodied in him.

Because the world loves its sin, and therefore its standard of judgment is perverted and distorted from the very foundation, from the very beginning, the world rejected Jesus, putting him to open shame, crucified the Savior in the most heinous miscarriage of justice ever known. The world, blinded by its love of sin and idolatry, treated the love of God in Christ with contempt and scorn.

So when we turn from the world and its judgment against Jesus Christ, when we join him, we embrace that so-called shame. We make it our own. And we do so, as we've said, to save our lives, to gain our souls, to gain our soul's reward, which is God himself, because of the hope of future glory. We want to see the glory of God. What glory? What is the nature of this glory that we're hoping to see? Well, in a word, it is the glory of Jesus, comma, as the Christ. It's the glory of Jesus as the

Christ. In other words, it's the fulness of messianic glory, the glory of the Messiah.

And that's what we see in verses 26-27, which really describe for us, here, the first and second advents of Christ, and they're used, here, as motivations that compel us to discipleship, that compel us to deny the self, take up the cross daily, and follow Christ. Why follow Christ? Why deny self? Why take up our daily crosses. Why follow Christ all the way to the, very end, even it means our very life? Because that is how we will see the glory of the Messiah. That is how we will see the glory of Christ, our Savior and Lord. That is how we will see the Kingdom of God in its power and its fullness, from its beginning all the way to its consummation and beyond.

So look at verse 26 again, which gives us a snapshot, here, of the second coming of Christ, the second advent. "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." That is a clear reference to the second coming, the first reference, by the way, in Luke's Gospel. We know that because of the reference to the Son of Man, his coming in glory, to the accompanying glory of the Father and also of the holy angels, we know that this refers to the second coming.

We follow Christ, now, because of what will happen when Christ comes again. In verse 27, this is where Jesus motivates us with what happened at the first advent, which for the people listening here is still future to them. For us, we're looking back at this first advent, right? The first coming of Christ. He says, "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here," This is a promise to some of those present right there in front of him, "I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

As I said, both of these verses summarize the Messiah's ministry. The Son of Man in verse 26 and the kingdom of God in verse 27 make this abundantly clear to us. Son of Man is a, a messianic title, and the kingdom of God is what the Messiah came to proclaim, and to provide for, and to teach about, and then to inaugurate before returning to the father's side. In my study this past week, I looked up every New Testament use of the title the Son of Man and looked at it in its context.

What I discovered is how that title, the Son of Man, by the way, that's Jesus' favorite self-designation, that title, it tells us everything that we need to know about the person and the work of Jesus Christ. And just by reading every use of that title, the Son of Man, in the New Testament, each in its own

context, you'll see that the title tells us who he is and what he does. It tells us about his person and his work, who he is and what he does.

So who is he? The Son of Man is the one who descended from heaven, John 3:13. He is the one who speaks with heavenly authority, John 8:28. He's come from God, and he speaks for God. He's the Lord of the Sabbath, Luke 6:5, which means he is therefore Lord of all Creation. If he's Lord of the seventh day, he is Lord of all the days, one through six, as well. He has authority on earth to forgive sins, Luke 5:24, and those who do not heed his authority now will fall under his judgment because that's what the father gave him authority to do, according to John 8:26 and 8:28. "'I have much to say about you and much to judge,' Jesus said, 'but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.'" "When you've lifted up the Son of Man," Jesus says, "then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing of my own authority, but I speak just as the Father taught me."

So when Jesus finishes the work of his first advent, he will return to the heaven from whence he came, John 6:62, "ascending to where he was before." So who is he? The Son of Man is the one who has come from the father, he speaks with the



father's authority, he hears from the father, speaks to us. He's the Lord of Creation, who has authority on earth to forgive sins and to judge sins. To forgive and to judge. To forgive and to judge.

Those two prerogatives of the Messiah's authority become markers, dividing lines, of his messianic work here on earth. They really do summarize the work of his first and second advents. The first advent, to forgive; second advent, to judge. So what does he do? Well, as I said, the work of the Son of Man divides into those two advents, the two arrivals, the two comings of Christ, which we call, we'll just call for our purposes the first advent and the second coming.

The first advent we associate, rightly, with grace in salvation. Jesus came to announce, and to explain, and to provide for, and to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. The second coming we associate with judgment and retribution, in which Jesus comes to enforce the Kingdom of God. So first, he comes to win a people, winning them from the heart, providing for all of their needs for time and eternity.

Then he comes to enforce the Kingdom from the outside. He starts with the internal, and then he enforces the external. Quite the opposite of every worldly kingdom we've ever seen,

isn't it? So that's exactly what we see outlined for us, in verses 26 and 27, both advents, they're are like bookends on the career of the Son of Man. Both advents pictured in these two verses, but in reverse order; second coming is put first to emphasize the reality of coming judgment. The first advent, then, is put second to leave believers with the certain hope of a promise.

We've actually heard this outline already in Luke's Gospel, by the way. We've been prepared by the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist. He came baptizing with the baptism of repentance, preparing the way of the Lord. And as he came, the people were in expectation, Luke 3:15, "And all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ. And John answered them all, saying this, 'I baptize you with water,' I baptize you with water, "but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie, and,'" get this, "'he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'" "'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'"

John came with the authority of a mighty prophet. The Son of Man comes with the authority of God himself, being the divine second person of the Trinity, the Son of God. And when he comes,

he will baptize with the Holy Spirit, that's the mission of the first advent, to bring salvation to his people, to show them the Kingdom of God coming in power, and he will baptize with fire, that's the mission of the second coming, to bring judgment, to enforce the rule of the Kingdom of God on earth.

We want to get into the details of the text and see how Jesus uses this outline of messianic mission to motivate us and to encourage us to follow after him, very powerful motivation that we find, here. We need to embrace the shame of the cross now, in our lives today, which as I said is not true shame.

It's only shame and scorn heaped on by the judgment of the world, and the judgment of the world is based on unrighteous standards of judgment. So you have God's permission, in fact, you have God's command, that you need to reject the standard of the world. Reject it, reject its standard, reject its, its guilting, reject its shaming of you, and embrace his standard, embrace his Messiah, and let the world shame you; embrace the shame of the cross now, in our lives today. Why? So that we will see the full glory of Christ, Verse 26, We'll see the glory of Christ in judgment. We'll see the glory of Christ in judgment. No matter who you are, believer or unbeliever, no matter who you

are righteous or unrighteous, no matter who you are saved or condemned, we're all going to see the judgment of Christ.

And depending on your orientation to Jesus now, you'll either see Christ's glory in judgment as a target of his judgment, or you'll see it as one who has escaped the judgment because of the cross, which you have embraced your whole life long. Again, verse 26, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words" ashamed of his person and of his teaching, "whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Not that I can improve upon what Jesus said, here, but let me restate that just in another way, hopefully to make the meaning plain, here. Reject Christ now, and he will reject you then when he comes in judgment. Reject Christ now, and he will reject you then when he comes in judgment. Listen for, for judgment to come upon anyone who is ashamed of Jesus and of his words. And by the way, in case you aren't aware, speaking some of Jesus' words about marriage today, speaking Jesus' words about roles of men and women, speaking Jesus' words, biblical words about anything to do with sexuality and gender and all that, that will get you run out.

There is a cost to pay, and I think more and more in our culture and in our world, we're feeling the heat, and I think it's good for us because that fire and that heat refines. It clarifies who are truly his. So for judgment to fall upon anyone who is ashamed of Jesus and of his words, you need to understand, that judgment is absolutely just. That verb, ashamed, in the active voice it means, to put to shame or to make someone ashamed, but here it's in the passive voice, to be ashamed, which can refer to feelings of shame or embarrassment when we fear the ridicule and the bad opinion of other people.

And we've got to ask, again, why would anyone, why in the world would anyone be ashamed of Jesus Christ? What in him evokes feelings of embarrassment? Is it his sinless perfection? Does that embarrass you? Is it the beauty of his holiness? Is it his absolute purity? Is it the truthfulness of his speech? Is it the faithfulness of his life? What about, what about the love demonstrated in his selfless sacrifice of his own flesh and blood, giving himself for the salvation of sinners. Any of that? If you're a believer, here, absolutely not. You, you know that nothing in him gives us reason for shame or are we ashamed of his teaching. Ashamed of teaching that presuppositionally just embarrassed all of his opponents, stumped the greatest minds of his day. Are we ashamed of his kindness and compassion toward

weak, hurting people? Are we ashamed of his identification with sinners, with the lowest of the low?

Again, we've got ask, what is there in him to be ashamed of? Nothing. Nothing! Listen, to be ashamed of this perfect life is to indict ourselves for the greatest injustice. To be ashamed of Christ is to identify with those who put him on the cross. It's to prefer the fallen, corrupt, dead, rotting world and its judgments and opinions over Jesus. So for anyone who would dare to be ashamed of Christ, listen, their condemnation is just.

But I want to speak just a quick word to any of you who, maybe those of you with sensitive consciences, you who may think this has to do with, with you as a believer in your temporary, momentary lapse of loyalty to Christ, maybe that time you failed to speak up for Christ at school or in the workplace, or in public, or around an unbelieving family gathering. Maybe your conscience is convicting you about the time that the Spirit prompted you to testify to the truth and share the Gospel with someone who was ripe for the picking, and you didn't do that out of embarrassment. That's not what Jesus is talking about, here.

In fact, I believe that's one of the reasons in the kindness and the mysterious sovereignty of God that he allowed Peter to deny Christ three times! And then plastered the story

all over the Gospels. And Peter, understanding now, he says, "All praise be to Christ! All praise be to God because of the encouragement that my temporary, momentary lapse provides for all the elect." We see that Peter loved Christ, John 21, albeit imperfectly. He had a temporary lapse in loyalty. He had a momentary descent into cowardice as he failed to stand for Christ. You and I understand that perfectly, don't we? But Jesus forgave Peter. He died for that very sin on the cross. And then he restored him as a true disciple into Gospel ministry. What an encouragement to all of us as believers, right?