

Follow the King

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- [0 : 00] Our Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for Jesus. Help us today to learn how to follow our King Jesus and what it means for us to follow him.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So I'm going to start with asking you guys a question. If your answer is yes, you raise your hand.
- And if your answer is no, then just sit where you are. That's okay. How many of you would trust me with a knife? How many of you? Oh, that's quite a lot.
- How many of you would trust me with a knife? That is great. Let me pick one of you. You might be lucky. Oh, a few hands. Blow it. Okay, okay. I'll pick Noon because I know him quite well.
- So Noon, can you step up a bit? Let's give Noon a round of applause. That's good. Now Noon, thanks for trusting me.
- [1 : 01] I really feel the friendship, the value of it. And as a reward, as a reward, I'm going to give you \$10 for trusting me.
- But, you see, I'm going to run a test of loyalty. So I'm going to give a test on him to see whether he really trusts me or not.
- So if you could put your hand on the table. Could you put, choose a hand, choose a hand. Alright, is this your writing hand? No, it's my other hand. Okay, good. Okay. It's not your writing hand.
- I was deciding between. So what I'm going to do. It's okay. I thought you trusted me. I trust you.
- I trust you. Could you put your fingers a bit wider? You know the YouTube video of the person going with the knife, just going in between the gaps of the fingers? I decided to practice for a week.
- [1 : 58] So I'm going to practice it on him. Now, Noon, let me ask you one more time.
- Do you trust me with a knife? Alright, alright, alright. Maybe this is too big. If I have a butter knife, would that be better?
- Would you still trust me? No? Alright. I get to keep my \$10. That's great. It's so easy to follow someone, isn't it?
- It's so easy to trust someone. And all you have to do is to press the follow button on social media or just simply say that you trust him. But talk is cheap.
- Talk is cheap. Like just now, it's one thing to say you follow someone. But if it comes down to the wire, when you actually have to risk something to follow that person, it's a whole lot more difficult, isn't it?
- [3 : 03] And what if it's not just your hand, but maybe your limb, maybe your feet, maybe your sanity, maybe your life? How many of us would still say yes?
- How many of us would still raise our hand? Today in our passage, the disciples encounter something similar with Jesus, their leader, who begins to tell them of his plan to save them.

Would they still follow him? So for the past few weeks, we've seen from Luke that these disciples, they've been following Jesus for some time. And they've seen what he can do.

Now these disciples have seen Jesus control nature. They've seen demons cower before him. They've seen how Jesus supernaturally supplied bread faster than the bread top bakery.

Some of them have even seen the dead pop up to life. So this Jesus is no normal man. He's a powerful one. And with great power comes great...

[4 : 09] fame. I got you right there. With great power comes great fame. So along the way, the disciples would have heard what the crowds with them would have said about Jesus too.

They might have talked about the latest miracle he did, or the latest strange thing that he said. But one question was on everyone's mind. Who on earth is this Jesus?

The disciples themselves asked this back in chapter 8, verse 25. And even Herod, the premier of the day, asked the question. In our passage today, it's Jesus himself who asked this question.

Look with me to verse 18. Once when Jesus was praying in private, and his disciples were with him, he asked them, who did the crowd say I am?

And the answer comes in verse 19. Well, Jesus, some say that perhaps you're John the Baptist reincarnated. Some say you're Elijah, the great Old Testament prophet who, like you, had raised the child to life.

[5 : 19] Perhaps another prophet like Elisha. Well, who do you say that I am? It's here that Peter boldly states who he believes Jesus to be.

Jesus is God's Messiah. Or in other versions, the Christ, or the Anointed One. Because back in the time, he didn't crown the King of Israel.

You anointed him with oil. So what does Peter believe? That Jesus is not just a prophet. He is the long-awaited King promised by the prophets.

He's not John the Baptist who came to prepare the way of the Lord. He is the Lord Himself. And for these disciples, they've been waiting for this Messiah King for quite some time.

For far too long, they've been suffering under their enemies, the Roman Empire. And now that their King has arrived, it's finally time to take revenge. It's finally time to be saved.

[6 : 24] So what's the plan, Jesus? Are you going to make our enemies suffer? Are you going to gather our leaders, the leaders, the elders, the chief priests, the scribes? Are you going to raise a great army?

Are you going to defeat all the Romans? Are we, the disciples, going to be generals in your army? And to that, Jesus says, Shh! Keep quiet.

Shut up. Don't tell anyone. Talk about a bus kill. What kind of publicity strategy is this?

Come on, Jesus. Come on, Jesus. Tell us of your real plan to save us. And that He does. Look with me to verse 22. And He said, The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law.

And He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. It just doesn't make sense, does it? At least for the disciples, Jesus sounds crazy, bonkers.

[7 : 34] What kind of king are you if you suffer and die before defeating any enemies or saving any of your people? It's like Superman, but with chronic fatigue syndrome.

Or the flesh, without legs. Just doesn't make sense. You see, these disciples, they were expecting the Psalm 2, enemy-breaking, conqueror kind of Messiah.

But that's the wrong idea. And that's why Jesus tells them to shush, because they don't get it yet. So don't say what you don't understand.

Rather, Jesus reveals that God's way of saving His people is for Him, Jesus, the King, to suffer and die. Shocking news.

But in fact, it shouldn't be a surprise. After all, it was prophesied by Isaiah. And in our Old Testament reading today, Isaiah says that this person from God, this King, He's more a servant King than a political conquering King.

[8 : 49] He'll be despised and rejected by men. He'll be tortured beyond human resemblance. And that like a lamb to the slaughter, He will die.

Why? Look with me to Isaiah 53, verses 5 and 6. It should be up on your screen. But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities.

Punishment for our peace was on Him. And we are healed by His wounds. We all went astray like sheep. We all have turned to our own way.

And the Lord has punished Him for the iniquity of us all. Jesus' main concern, unlike the disciples, isn't a political victory.

It isn't with saving His people from Roman rule. Well, Jesus was focusing on another problem. The bigger problem of humanity's rebellion against God.

[9 : 57] A rebellion that warrants God's rightful punishment, not just for the Romans, but for all people. You and I included. So yes, you and I, we are rebels.

And that is why Jesus came. His mission really is to selflessly take our rightful punishment on Himself so that we would have peace with God.

And that's how He will save us. By selflessly denying Himself and taking up His cross to die. Well, if you're here today and this is your first time that you've heard this, then please consider who Jesus is today.

He's not just some prophet or a teacher like what many say about Jesus today. He is King. And He comes to save.

And we, like the disciples, need to be saved from the punishment of rebelling against God. And that's what Jesus suffered and died for. So, will you consider Jesus today?

[11 : 03] If you're not sure and you need to find out more, then please take the time to do so. Feel free to approach me or Mark behind after the service and we'll gladly share with you more.

Now, for the rest of us, we already know who Jesus is. So, how then shall we follow the King? How then, as Christ followers, shall we follow the Christ?

Now that Jesus has revealed His unexpected mission, He goes on to tell His followers what it looks like to follow Him. Come with me to verses 23 to 25.

Then He said to them all, whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it.

But whoever loses their life for Me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose and forfeit their very self? Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

[12 : 09] Now, hang on, Josh. I thought that the Bible teaches us that we are saved by faith alone. After all, isn't that what Jesus has been saying all this time? To have faith in Him?

Didn't Mark Chu tell us last week too about having faith? Why is it that we now need to lose our lives to follow Jesus? Is Josh preaching a gospel plus?

He needs to be flogged. Someone get out the whip or the chopper here. Well, before you come up to the stage, please don't. Before you get your pitchforks out, yes, you're right.

We are saved by faith alone. But like what James in his letter says, faith by itself without works is dead.

If we say that Jesus is our Lord but we don't want to submit to Him, what does that show? If we say that Jesus is King over our lives and continue on doing only what we want, it's a bit jarring, isn't it?

[13 : 11] It's like what happened earlier on when Noon said he trusts me with the knife but wouldn't allow me to do that test on him. Talk is cheap.

Similarly here, the disciples can claim that Jesus is Christ as boldly as they like. But when it gets hard to be a Christ follower, when following Jesus, the King gets difficult.

Well, we know how the disciples will respond. At least at first it's rejection, then fleeing. At this point, the disciples haven't quite got it yet.

And that's why Jesus makes it clear to them now that if they believe He is Lord, then their faith will show by how they follow Him. And it's by walking a similar path.

Like Him, followers of Jesus can expect life ahead to be hard. Like leader, like follower, there will be suffering.

[14 : 15] suffering. And what does that suffering look like? Well, Jesus says that they have to deny themselves and take up their cross daily. What does Jesus mean by that?

First, denying ourselves. We all know that denying means saying no. We can deny ourselves certain things like gelato or KFC when we're on the diet and then go back to it after a week and then fail.

or saying no to sleep or watching Netflix when we have to work. But Jesus isn't just saying deny yourself from some things. Jesus is talking about denying self.

Self-rule. You want to follow the King? Then hand in your keys to your kingdom. The control of your world to Him.

Believe that Jesus is Lord? Then you cannot be. It's a total denial of self-rule. And it's not just a part-time thing.

[15 : 17] There's no clock in, clock out. There's no denying just 80% of ourselves. It's full-time self-denial. A hundred percent. And so that means as Christ followers, we've got to ask ourselves not just what to give up but what's hard for me to give up.

Ownership to Jesus. Is it that part-time job to pay the bills? Is it a good relationship with a friend or a colleague or a boss? Is it being comfortable where we are right now?

Is it our dreams, our agenda? We'll be prepared to give them up. Not because they're evil, don't get me wrong, but because they rightfully belong to Jesus, our King, right now.

We're His disciples and He's the King. Next, taking up our cross daily. Back then, if you saw someone carrying their cross, they were on their way to be executed.

It was like seeing someone marching blindfolded to a firing squad in World War II. They were going to die. So if you want to follow Jesus, then do the same.

[16 : 30] Follow the leader. Well, not physically, but be prepared to die to the world. Be prepared to die to your own life.

Again, Jesus is saying give up everything, even your life. 100% self-denial. But now, He adds to that something else.

Do you notice the key word? Do you notice what's different? It's the word daily. following Jesus means denying ourselves not just once, but day after day after day after day.

And this kind of self-denying, cross-carrying life is a life that will result in the same shame and rejection and suffering and difficulty which Jesus Himself suffered every day.

You know, to be honest, sometimes I think that since I'm in ministry, I've 100% self-denied myself.

[17 : 37] But as I think about it more, I'm really a hypocrite. If you ask me honestly, yes, there are times where I genuinely do ministry stuff like lead Bible studies or one-to-ones for the right reasons, but sometimes it's more because I want to look good.

I want to look good. So in my mind, sometimes I'll say, yes, yes, learning about God is great, but look at me. Do you see how wise I am?

How smart I am? How great is myself? Sing with me, how great? Arrogant, aren't I?

So arrogant. And it's really subtle too. Once I was with a friend and I began telling her how hard doing ministry stuff was and she called me out for it.

You see, for that day, I wanted to show how hard I worked, how much effort I put in. And what about what God has done or what I can thank Him for? Not a word.

[18 : 47] For me that day, it was self-glory, not self-denial. At least for that day, it wasn't really denying myself or carrying my cross.

So Josh, the great Josh, as Nguyen introduced, so maybe I'm not such a great follower of Christ after all. In fact, I'm far from it.

And I need to repent. And it's hard. It's difficult. So yes, following Jesus will be hard now.

There's great cost in following Him. There's great cost. Or is there? It might be so to us now. But in the end, if we choose to follow Jesus, what do we really stand to lose?

What do we really stand to lose? Well, that most may be our old life with our old things, our old property, our old relationships. But Jesus promises us a new one.

[19 : 54] A better, more eternal life with better peace, better freedom, better love, better everything. Not now, but in the future when Jesus comes back.

So, there's not really much to lose in the end, isn't there? In fact, it's worth it. It's worth it.

And the opposite is true as well. Anyone who unfollows Jesus, who wants to save their life now, who wants to gain the whole world, well, it's wasted effort.

They only stand to lose everything at the end, when Jesus comes back. Whatever it is, we can't have it all. It's this life or new life.

It's the world's approval or Christ's approval. So, we've got to choose, you and I. Either be ashamed of Jesus or be unashamed.

[21 : 02] If Jesus approves you, well, the world won't. And if the world approves you and you gain it, then Jesus won't. But only one choice lasts forever.

In case you still find Jesus hard to believe, then take confidence in what He has done. Back in verse 22, Jesus promised that after all the suffering and rejection He will go through, He will be raised to life.

And we know that He did. He also promises that as for these disciples, some of them will see the kingdom of God before their deaths. And some of them did see that.

in seeing Christ, the King of the kingdom, in His glory. They caught a glimpse of that in the following passage in chapter 10.

And then when they saw the risen Jesus after His death, they saw His full glory. And then one more time when He comes back again. So how shall we respond?

[22 : 12] Well, just like the disciples, many of us too say that Jesus is Christ. Some of us have grown up in church and we know all the stories, all the songs you sang really loudly just now and you're so good.

We sing it every Sunday that Jesus is Savior. Jesus is Christ. Some of us have heard this bit about taking up our cross daily for the billionth time.

Yep, following Jesus equals die for Jesus equals give God everything. Got it, Josh. some of us have, might have even gone one step further to think about one area in our lives that we really need to give up for Jesus.

And that's great. That's hard, difficult work. And we should be doing that. But, what do we do after? What do we do once we've thought about it?

Let me tell you about what I usually do after a sermon like that. All I would think about is, oh, Mark, that was a good message.

[23 : 19] Maybe I should give up something and something. And then I never think about it again. No one knows because I never tell anybody. And no one asks me about it too.

And if the off chance that someone like Noon asks me about it, as pesky as that is, I'll probably casually mention something and I'll just forget about it the next day.

I'm pretty sure that he or she will never ask me about it again. Whew! Brothers and sisters, that might be you too.

But talk is cheap. Like the disciples, we can claim that Jesus is Christ as boldly as we like, but even the demons can say that.

And they have, haven't they? Talk is cheap. So here's the challenge. Put your money where your mouth is.

[24 : 20] Talk is cheap. Put your money where your mouth is. Church, since we believe that Jesus is our Lord, then let's be serious about our faith in Him.

Let's repent and start seriously thinking about counting our costs. And let's not stop there. Let's work hard as a family by helping each other obey Christ's words today of living self-denying, cross-carrying lives.

Not just in one area, but in all areas. Both in public, and in private. Not just in a one-off moment, but doing it daily.

After the service, instead of leaving straight away, why not talk to the person next to you about what you've heard? I encourage you, if you can, to pray about it together, as a family.

You might even want to keep up with that person as the week, or the month, or even the year goes by. And finally, when we do count the cost, many of us will feel discouraged.

[25 : 29] This call to discipleship, it's challenging, it's hard, it's 100% self-denial sacrifice. we will feel like giving up.

But be assured of what Jesus has said today, because he's already conquered death. He's already given us eternal life.

So yes, giving up self-rule will be hard, but we already have a better king. Losing our old lives now is difficult, but new life is waiting for all of us who believe in Jesus.

Be assured that every drop of sweat, every tear, every milliliter of blood, every sacrifice we shed to follow Christ, it's worth it.

It's worth it. Life, eternal life, is guaranteed. Let me end with a story about my friend.

[26 : 33] She's from Belarus, a country that forbids people to share the gospel publicly. She and her friends, they're in full-time paid ministry there, and to do that, they have given up things you and I would normally take for granted.

So beyond the pay and the comforts of life, they've denied their freedom. Some of her friends are in jail now for evangelizing to others.

They've laid down their need for their family and their friends who don't want to be linked or associated with them. They've denied their home. My friend, she's in Australia now, but when she goes back to Belarus, the police might be waiting for her at the airport to bring her to jail like her friends.

And she still wants to follow Jesus because to her, it's worth it. It's worth it. So what about you?

Will you follow Jesus? Let's pray. Father, we thank you from your word today that you have taught us how to follow Jesus.

[27 : 45] Help us today to consider denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.