

**Bumper** – Debbie Roof

God is great and greater things are yet to come! Oh how I want to be a part of something so great that the only explanation for it is God?

*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, b/c I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:12-13*

A few of weeks ago we started a series – ***Greater Things***. The intent of these lessons is to invite us to see God move in and thru us in such a way that the only explanation is God.

I believe for this to occur, it'll require that we apprehend the (4) most vital teaching of Christ regarding the ideas of ***knowing*** God, ***loving*** God, ***following*** God, and ***serving*** God.

In week 1 we discussed God's equation for ***knowing*** Him. In Matthew 12, said, "*Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me – for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"

In this exchange, Jesus explains a simple spiritual equation for grace/salvation – **COME + TAKE + LEARN = REST**. Come to Christ alone; take up His yoke of grace by faith; and follow His leading and you'll discover His salvation.

**But life w/ God doesn't end w/ salvation – it begins.** So beyond knowing God, we discover in Mark 12 that Jesus invites us to love Him w/ all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Jesus taught us that loving God involves – acknowledging God for who He is, accepting Him for what He did, aligning your life w/ His life, and then acting out His life to others by loving them to His truth.

One of the key nuggets from last week is the understanding that Jesus doesn't accept us for who we are – as if to say that He is okay w/ our sin. What Jesus does is meets us where we are to draw us to His grace – He accepts us based solely on His death, burial, and resurrection.

As we continue today, I want to invite you to turn to **Luke 9** for what might be the most challenging teaching of Christ in Scripture on the idea of followers. (Read **Luke 9:18-27**)

**Talk about a loaded statement.** Let me begin w/ a vital truth that must be grasped if we're going to have any hope of following Jesus: **Every heart has a throne and every throne has a god – the question is who (or what) is sitting on the throne of your life?**

Whether you're 6 mo., 6 yrs., or 66 yrs., you have a throne inside of you that demands that someone or something sits in the seat of authority. **And make no mistake – whoever or whatever sits on the throne – calls the shots in your life!**

God has designed each of us w/ an internal throne where He wants to sit. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment, He calls us to keep this throne clear for Him alone, *“You shall have no other gods before me.”* And God will not share this throne w/ anyone or anything. He wants to be your only God. **And until we settle the issue of who's on the throne, we'll struggle w/ the idea of following.**

This means that Christianity isn't just a cultural phenomenon or set of rules to engage, but a relationship w/ a loving God who desires for us to know and serve Him. **It's not about what we can do through our abilities, but what God can do in and through us when we follow Him.**

But the idea of following isn't as easy as it looks. Have you tried following anyone in Atlanta traffic?

How about on snow skis? Several years ago I was in Austria skiing and we decided to play follow the leader. The leader took off down a mogul run and popped a jump. Being 2<sup>nd</sup>, I popped the jump too. The next thing I remember was some German man standing over of me saying, “Kumpel die verletzt hatte.” Translated means – “Dude, that had to hurt?”

**No, following isn't always such an easy task.** Nonetheless, in reviewing the words of Jesus – we discover a simple, yet challenging spiritual teaching about followship – Jesus said, **ABANDON + ACCEPT + ADHERE = DISCIPLE**

**Let me set the stage of this marvelous exchange.** Jesus is conversing w/ His disciples after a busy day of ministry. Keenly aware of their day and of what was about to take place, he asked them a (2) poignant questions – who do the crowds say that I am? And who do you say that I am?

**These are critical questions b/c whoever Jesus is to you will determine His place in your life.** If He's God, then He has all rights/authority over you. It means you accept He's the only One worthy and able to sit on the throne of your lives. But if He's anything less than God, then you'll never consult or be concerned w/ His will.

After probing the issue of who was on the throne of their lives, Jesus laid out the essentials elements to follow Him.

*If anyone would come after me (be my disciple), let him **deny** himself and **take up** his cross daily and **follow me**.*

Luke 9:23 contains an interesting sequences of tenses in the Greek. All (3) verbs (*deny, take, follow*) are imperatives – meaning they're emphatic commands – they must be done!

But the call to *deny* and *take up* are aorist tense verbs while *follow* is present tense. Meaning that fellowship w/ Christ requires a definitive point-in-time decision to *deny* and *take up* that never wains while the commitment to follow is a present minute-by-minute constant.

In other words, we don't just decide to follow Christ and then put it on *auto-pilot* – we are required to walk daily in the present tense seeking, expecting, trusting, and obeying.

## I A Call to ABANDONMENT

*...let him deny himself...*

deny – a volitional act of surrender. *It means to give up or abandon your personal desires and ambitions for a cause greater than yourself.*

The word was used by John the Baptist when he vehemently denied he was the Messiah and when Peter denied that he was a disciple of Jesus – it means to **DISOWN**.

Jesus was saying to that follow Him requires a conscious decision to disown every right to yourself. You have to lay aside your ambitions, attitudes, and actions – any confidence and dependence upon yourself – and place your entire dependence and confidence in Christ. It is a final decision to abandon every aspect of your life for Christ alone.

## II A Call to ACCEPTANCE

*...take up his cross daily...*

Cross-bearing is a powerful ancient image that signified the idea of rejection and punishment. In most instances, the cross-bearer had committed a severe crime deserving of elimination – a capital offense. Criminals would bear their own cross as they walked to their death. It was adding insult to injury. **So for the 12 hearing Jesus' words, there was no mistaking what He was saying.**

I believe there is a primary and secondary lesson here. The primary lesson is the call to be willing to lay everything down including your life to follow Christ.

**take up** – a direct reference to picking up and dragging a horizontal beam to a shameful death.

Talk about an exciting a proposition! But notice what we're pick up? Not His cross, but **Our cross**! Which leads to the secondary lesson, We can't take up His cross b/c we're not capable of carrying His cross, but we can carry a cross God affords us to point others to His cross.

Your cross is anything you must bear to bring glory to God. It's any blessing or difficulty you must carry to reveal to others the cross of Christ.

We often don't see our crosses as privileges but as problems. Yet the cross God allows us to carry serves as a platform for developing our intimacy w/ Him and our ministry to others that our lives might shine a light on His cross.

Oklahoma Tornado – If you need help go to the cross.

### III A Call to ADHERENCE

*...and follow me.*

**follow** – an invitation to get in the game and put yourselves in a position for God to work in and through your life by bringing your life in alignment under His word and will.

**Follow** carries the idea of a continual pattern of obedience. In other words, a true follower of Jesus willingly obeys the God's commands: *if you love me you'll keep my commands.*

It's learning to trust God and follow His leading in your life. It's not living under the notion of – “**God, I'm going to do this will you bless it,**” but under His influence asking, “**God, what do you want me to do and I'll do it – speak!**”

We follow by obeying Scripture, being accountable to others, serving His church, and allowing the H.S. to guide.