

## “True Believers and Followers of Christ”

Luke 9:23-26

**Read Luke 9:23-26...** Jesus speaks of the real costs of following Him; but what is He really saying to us?

A genuine believer of Christ will openly confess by his life and his words, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Jesus says (**verse 23**) “anyone,” (**verses 24, 26**) “whoever,” i.e., anyone and everyone who belongs to Him will proclaim that relationship openly.

**Romans 1:16**, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” All those who are unwilling to acknowledge Christ to their friends and family will not be affirmed by Christ before the Father.

**1John 4:15**, “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.”

True followers of Christ will openly identify themselves to other believers, but they should also acknowledge Christ as Lord to unbelievers, even hostile ones.

When hard times come the genuineness of our relationship with Christ can be exposed, even the most committed believer may become fearful or experience doubting faith, at times; as did Peter when he denied the Lord three times the morning of Jesus’ arrest; and yet later he would stand before Israel and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (cf. **Acts 2:21-24, 36-38**).

We may deny Christ, at times, simply by not speaking up, or by trying to be incognito, hoping no one will ask us what we really believe. Shame on us for not openly confessing Christ and being a witness of the forgiveness and new life we have received from God. Our love for God should be demonstrated by the way we live.

**Matthew 5:20**, “Unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus told a parable illustrating the self righteousness that condemns, and God’s righteousness that commends (**Luke 18:9-14**), “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get. ‘But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner! ‘I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

You can’t get to heaven by your own righteousness, or through religious rituals, or by living a pious life that expects justification by keeping the Laws of God.

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**Romans 3:19-24**, “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

Salvation comes through confession of sin and belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

See **Matthew 7:13-14**, “Enter through the narrow [stenos] gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Jesus said all who belong to Him, are those who enter the small gate and walk on the narrow road that leads to eternal life; in contrast to unbelievers, all who enter the wide gate onto the broad road that leads to destruction.

Those who come to Christ repenting of their sin and believing in Him for forgiveness, will demonstrate through their life that they belong to Him, for their desire will be to do that which pleases God. True believers and followers of Christ will live by God’s Word; we will do that which is pleasing to the God, according to His Word.

See **Matthew 7:15-23**, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. *Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.* Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

True disciples of Christ will confess Him and exemplify the character and nature of God (**Ephesians 5:1-2**), “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

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Many may profess Christ, but genuine believers will confess Him by living in a manner that agrees with and seeks to obey God’s Word.

See **Luke 9:23-26** again... Every true believer of Jesus Christ will seek to deny himself, and take up his/her cross and follow Christ. Anyone living in Palestine at the time of Christ would have understood the “cross” to symbolize death, i.e., following Christ here on earth could bring dire consequences, because the world hates Him.

There were over 30,000 crucified Jews during the life of Christ; the condemned person walked to the site of execution with their own cross on their back, one way only, there was no going back (**Matthew 7:13** “stenos”).

Picking up your cross does not mean some burden you must bear, or some trial you might experience on this earth, e.g., a natural disaster, terminal illness, rebellious children, or unfaithful spouse; none of these experiences are “crosses” to bear; your cross is the willful sacrifice of everything you have, for the sake of believing and honoring Christ; it is the persecution brought upon you by the godless world because of your love for God’s Son, who is both Savior and Lord, when you willfully give up, for the sake of Christ, what the world offers.

The natural, carnal, sinful, rebellious, unredeemed self of every person born since Adam and Eve gave birth to their first son Cain, must be convinced that there is nothing in our flesh worthy of salvation!

**Romans 3:10-12**, “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”

**Romans 3:23-24**, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

**Romans 6:23**, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Romans 7:18-19**, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.” **24-25**, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

**Romans 8:1-2**, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

**Galatians 2:20**, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Jesus is our example of how we should live. He lived in submission to the Father, we live in submission to Him, to God’s glory.

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**1John 2:4-6**, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

The world hated and killed Jesus. His Disciples were martyred because they believed in and followed Him. Obedient Christians today will be in conflict with the godless beliefs and behaviors that are all around them.

Living as a Christian is tough! Paul wrote (**2Timothy 3:12**), "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Whoever lives only to gratify his earthly, physical desires, seeking acceptance from the world system, thinking he is good enough, will forfeit his own soul and the opportunity to have eternal life.

**1John 2:15-17**, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

**John 6:28-29**, The crowd said to Jesus, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. **40**, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

**John 8:24**, "I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." **John 10:30**, "**I and the Father are one.**"

**John 14:6-7**, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

In **John 16:8-9**, Jesus declared that when the Holy Spirit "comes, [He] will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ...because they do not believe in Me."

Have you made the decision in your heart to believe in Jesus, or do you still reject Him? You either believe or you reject! There is no third option!

**Romans 10:9-10**, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." **13** for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (full sermon notes)

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**John 3:18**, “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” **36**, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, [for] the wrath of God [remains] on him.”

God's Word declares and God's Spirit convicts us that Jesus is God the Son, Creator, Sustainer, Judge and Ruler over All, He is Lord and Savior; the only Way to, the only Truth of, and the only Life with God, comes through Him.

Do you believe this in your heart? Do you must confess it with your mouth. Are you a true believer and follower of Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, and coming again to take all who believe in Him to heaven, forever!

Do not walk away from here today without knowing for sure that you belong to God the Father, through God the Son, confirmed by God the Holy Spirit living in you, as God's Word declares (**Ephesians 1:13-14**), “In Him, you also, *after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

**1John 5:11-13**, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, *so that you may know that you have eternal life.*”

*Pastor Mike*  
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