



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

The Way of Jesus

Lingering Questions Answered by Jesus

Discipleship in Luke

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Introduction

1. Two lessons ago ("God Is: The Greatest Clue of All"), we reviewed the New Testament's amazing claims for Jesus and summarized the case for them. Last time ("The Good News of Jesus"), we looked at how the first believers presented his story and why it was good news. Today, we look more closely at what accepting and following him means.
2. We again turn to Ronald Nash's statement about the importance of Jesus.

Furthermore, consider all the other things we can settle once we know that Jesus is God and that his words are God's words. We then have an authoritative answer to all our most important questions: Is there a personal God who loves us? What is our duty in life? How do we become children of God? Why did Jesus die? Is there life after death?¹
3. Nash reminds us that Jesus's identity is the biggest issue in Christianity. If he was God, then everything is different. If he was not, Paul was right when he said that Christianity is a life of misery and ultimately a waste (1 Corinthians 15:14-19, 30-32).
4. What Nash also does is prompt us to see how belief in Jesus changes everything, including "our duty in life." In fact, Jesus is not just a way to get rid of our sins, get religion, make good friends, find comfort in times of trouble and grief, or guarantee admittance at the pearly gates into a life of ultimate luxury and ease. Belief in Jesus, rightly understood, will change how we live.

Body

- I. Jesus Shows Us the Way.
 - A. Remember what the early church emphasized when they needed motivation for life.
 1. To learn to live ethically and treat others right, they were to recall how they had "learned Christ" (Ephesians 4:20).
 2. When divided and bickering, they were to mimic Jesus' humility (Philippians 2:5-11).
 3. When hounded by enemies, they were to keep "looking to Jesus" (Hebrews 12:1) and follow his example (1 Peter 2:21-24).

¹ Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas*, 154.

4. Simply put, Jesus did not just show what God is like, he showed what people will be like if we are like God; his life, in all respects, tells us what our duty in life is.

B. What kind of life did he lead?

1. He did good and opposed injustice (as Acts 10:38 summarizes).
2. But he was more than a healer and insightful teacher; he showed how to persevere no matter how great the obstacle, violent the response, or obtuse the followers.
 - a) The same gospel (Luke) that records the beautiful stories of the Good Samaritan and prodigal son also shows his sacrificial way to glory.
 - b) Knowing what awaited him, he went resolutely to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51, 53; 13:33-34; 18:31-34).
 - c) He understood what his journey meant and how it would end (Luke 22:39-44, 66-71).
3. "Jesus took his own story seriously. He would himself travel the road he had pointed out to his followers. 'He would turn the other cheek; he would go the second mile; he would take up the cross. He would be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. . . .' He would defeat evil by letting it do its worst to him."²

C. Before we glibly speak of following him, we should look at this complete portrait of his life.

II. Jesus Calls Us to His Way.

A. We must take into account the way Jesus lived when we hear him say, "follow me" (Luke 9:20-27).

1. Having been identified as the Christ, Jesus explained what that meant in terms of the Jerusalem trial and the cross (vv 20-22).
2. Turning to the group, he didn't just say, "come, join my movement to do good and oppose injustice," but defined following him in terms of the cross (v 23).
3. This way of the cross is the way the world called and still calls the way of losers, and indeed, Jesus said that it would be—but only as a way to ultimate victory; he would "lose the battle on Israel's behalf" (Wright, 89) so all might gain the victory (v 24).
4. Verse 26 could not be clearer about what this means for our duty in life: to fail to identify with Jesus' sacrificial life is to lose his approval (v 26).

B. It's in light of this call that we must hear his appeal to "repent,"³ a command that was larger in scope than we often make it.

1. Typically, when we hear "repent and believe," we hear "a summons to give up private sins . . . and to 'get religion' in some shape or form" (Wright, 43).
2. First century Israel would have heard something bigger than that.
 - a) Josephus, the Jewish aristocrat and historian was once given the task of convincing some hot-headed Galileans to stop their rush to revolt against Rome and to trust him and the other Jewish leaders to work out a solution.
 - b) As he reports in his autobiography (*Life* 110), Josephus appealed to the rebel leader to "repent . . . and be faithful to me hereafter."

² N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*, p. 85. The quotation within this quotation is from Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 564f.

³ That appeal is presented as the theme of his ministry in Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15. But, it is actually Luke who develops it more, mentioning "repent" or "repentance" 14 times (ESV) throughout his Gospel (cf. Matthew - 7, Mark - 3, John - 0).

- c) Josephus did not have in mind a religious conversion as we think of it, but an agenda change and pursuit of a new way of behavior.
- 3. When we apply that meaning to Jesus' words, especially in light of his example, it changes how we understand our duty in life in light of his call.
 - a) "He was telling his hearers to give up their agendas and to trust him for his way. . . his kingdom-agenda" (Wright, 44).
 - b) To see how radical this was, understand that he was surrounded by people who thought that the long-awaited relief from Roman oppression was to be gained by political means, either by revolution or political deals.
 - c) "Jesus was offering as a counter-agenda an utterly risky way. . . , the way of turning the other cheek and going the second mile, the way of losing your life to gain it. This was the kingdom-invitation he was issuing" (Wright, 44).
- C. Here is a way of life that is fundamentally different from all other agendas, including those that involve merely having a religion.
 - 1. It looks at the things of the world (even "bread") differently (Luke 4:3-4).
 - 2. It understands that real glory is not found in power and prestige, but in cross-shaped servant living (Luke 4:5-8).
 - 3. It understands that faith does not entail always being protected, happy feelings, close relationships, etc.; those are by-products that may come when we "lose our lives" (Luke 4:9-12).

Conclusion

- 1. In Luke 14, surrounded by "great crowds" who were declaring their commitment to follow him, Jesus repeated his call to bear the cross (14:25-27). He then told two short parables to illustrate the importance of counting the cost before signing on to follow (14:28-32), concluding with the declaration that only those who would renounce everything could be his disciples (14:33).
- 2. There is no record that Jesus ever rescinded that expectation. Once we commit to follow him, our "duty in life" is not to go to church, "be religious," and do some good things in his name; those are instruments for helping us learn Christ where we really find life. Only the way he shows, the way of the cross with all that entails, will see us thrive as a people and offer something to a lot world. Any other course may see us "save our lives" for a time, but ultimately we will lose.
- 3. "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" (Luke 9:23). Will you?

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