

Message #1027
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"THE GOSPEL OF CONVENIENCE"
{Matthew 8: 18-22 and Luke 14:25-35}

Trinity Presbyterian Church
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INTRODUCTION

Thirty-five years ago there was a best selling book entitled, "ARE YOU RUNNING WITH ME, JESUS?"

...the basic idea behind this book that we are too busy to stop everything and pray

...too busy to have a quality devotional life

...life is centered around us and what we are doing rather than upon God

Therefore, rather than slow down and make time for God, we pick-up the pace and ask Jesus to join us as we race through another hectic day!

...instead of being still and knowing that God is God

...we race along as if there is no God

...instead of being His disciple and follower

...if God wants to communicate with us He must run along side...or behind us...keep up with us!

...that's a very distorted view of discipleship

...it's far from the lifestyle Jesus called us to follow

I came across this the other day...

"Too Busy for God? He's Not Too Busy for You"

As you got up this morning, I watched you and hoped you would talk to Me, even if it was just a few words, asking My opinion or thanking Me for something good that happened in your life yesterday--but I noticed you were too busy trying to find the right outfit to put on and wear to work.

I waited again.

When you ran around the house getting ready I knew there would be a few minutes for you to stop and say hello, but you were too busy.

At one point you had to wait fifteen minutes with nothing to do except sit in a chair.

Then I saw you spring to your feet. I thought you wanted to talk to Me but you ran to the phone and called a friend to get the latest gossip.

I watched as you went to work and I waited patiently all day long. With all your activities I guess you were too busy to say anything to Me.

I noticed that before lunch you looked around, maybe you felt embarrassed to talk to Me, that is why you didn't bow your head. You glanced three or four tables over and you noticed some of your friends talking to Me briefly before they ate, but you didn't. That's okay. There is still more time left, and I have hope that you will talk to Me yet; you went home and it seems as if you had lots of things to do.

After a few of them were done you turned on the TV, I don't know if you like TV or not, just about anything goes there and you spend a lot of time each day in front of it, not thinking about anything--just enjoying the show.

I waited patiently again as you watched the TV and ate your meal but again you didn't talk to Me. At bedtime I guess you felt too tired.

After you said goodnight to your family you plopped into bed and fell asleep in no time.

That's okay because you may not realize that I am always there for you.

I've got patience more than you will ever know. I even want to teach you how to be

patient with others as well. I love you so much that I wait everyday for a nod, prayer or thought or a thankful part of your heart.

It is hard to have a one-sided conversation.

Well you are getting up again and once again I will wait with nothing but love for you hoping that today you will give Me some time. Have a nice day!

Your friend,

GOD

Well, that kinda hits home, doesn't it?

...too busy for God

...are you running with me, Jesus?

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

And, then there's this worship event...but, who has time to sit down and worship God for an hour every Sunday? And, if we're one of the faithful, may God forbid that worship never lasts for more than an hour.

..."Let the Holy Spirit lead," we say!

...but, remember, it must be in 60 minutes...or less!

We're so busy...there's so much to do...

...there's football

...hockey

...the baseball play-off's begin this week...

...then it's the world series

...then, there's the lawn to mow

...shopping to do

...bills to pay

...the garage to clean

...whatever happened to "The Lord's Day?"

I received so many nice cards and notes when we celebrated our Silver Anniversary together several weeks ago. Elaine and Paul Waterman sent one that had an unusual message on the back side of the card written by Jeanette Doyle Parr

"Not long ago the members of the Lutheran Church of Peace in Rochester, New York, received word that there was to be a 'no excuse' Sunday. On this special day there would be cots for those who needed rest, blankets for those who thought the church was too cold, fans for those who felt the church was too hot, hypocrite scorecards for those who claimed there

were too many hypocrites at worship, aspirin for those who had headaches, poinsettias on the altar for those who only worship at Christmas, and lilies for those who only worship at Easter. The pastor said attendance went up 50% from the previous Sunday.

"I laughed when I heard about this 'way out' way of emphasizing a point, but I stopped smiling as I began to think of all the excuses I had for not worshipping God--not just on Sunday--but in my daily life as well.

My favorite excuse: 'too busy!' followed by 'too tired,' etc.

"Come to think of it, I need to have a 'no excuse' worship service at least once a day!"

The simple truth is that most Americans are too busy to serve God. We have grown complacent and comfortable in God's blessings and have forgotten the first commandment. In the meantime, immorality and cults have grown to alarming

proportions because their advocates are more zealous in their support. Since God asks for obedience, rather than demanding it, many Christians simply ignore the very reason for their existence: to glorify God!

...we display a form of Godliness

...but there's no power

...God has gone from being the pilot of our life to the copilot

So, just what does it mean to be... "A CHRIST FOLLOWER...?"

Jesus made demands of those who followed Him. Make no demands...and that's exactly what you'll receive...!

In an effort to grow in numbers, churches have backed off on sharing what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

...Jesus promised a "cross" to those who followed Him

...He called on people to leave their "nets" {their old lives} and follow where He would lead

...He demanded to be first...not second...third...or when it's convenient

...and those words make us uncomfortable!

...they speak of commitment--and that's a dirty word in our culture..."commitment!"

...they're narrow...don't allow much lea-way

One of the saddest stories in the New Testament is found in Matthew 18.

A rich young man came to Jesus asking what he might do to obtain "eternal life!"

Jesus really liked this young guy...He told him to keep the commandments; and, after being asked which ones specifically by the young man, Jesus listed six commandments.

The young man told Jesus he had kept all of them...

...he had not murdered

...he had not committed adultery

...he had not stolen

...he did not give false testimony

...he respected/honored his parents

...he loved his neighbor as himself

He was one of the good guys; yet, he knew something was missing and wanted to "DO" something about it!

So, Jesus made a demand and offered an invitation: "Go, see your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come, follow Me!"

...that guy went away sad

...he wanted the benefits without making a commitment

...his possessions were more meaningful than eternal life!

That's a good portrayal of 21st century Christianity in America!

In our text of the morning from Matthew 8: 18-22, Jesus makes two specific points concerning discipleship...

1. One must be willing to COUNT THE COST!

2. One must be willing to PAY THE PRICE!

COUNTING THE COST

The eager teacher of the law abruptly announces: "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go!"

...commendable

...yet, he was unaware of what he was committing himself to do

Jesus' response was amazing...

...He told him that He was homeless
...He had no place that he could call "home"
...Many a night was spent without a roof over His head
...To follow Jesus meant to leave all the luxuries of life behind and put Him first!
Have you considered the cost of true discipleship?
...He demands a radical change in life...lifestyle!
...not popular in 21st century America!
...He calls for repentance from sin
...leaving it behind
...forsaking it
...following Him

PAYING THE PRICE

Then a disciple of Jesus has something to do first...once he's taken care of that, he would follow Jesus.

...I cannot tell you the number of times I've had people give me one excuse or another of why they would delay following Jesus
...They would follow...when it was convenient!
Too frequently today people want to "bury the dead" {take care of some personal affairs} before they made the transition to follow Jesus.
Before following Jesus, count the cost...and ask yourself if you're willing to pay the price!

CONCLUSION

We make so many excuses when it comes to following Jesus.

Calvin of the CALVIN AND HOBBS comic strip is asked by his teacher:

"Did you ever read the history chapter I assigned?"

Calvin responded: "I tried, Miss Wormwood, but the book published didn't use the proper print fixative. Needless to say, when I picked up the book, all the letters slid off the pages and fell on the floor in a heap of gibberish!"

As Calvin approaches the Principal's office, he says, "I think my excuses need to be less extemporaneous!"

Today there are so many excuses for not giving Jesus number one priority in our lives.

Some of you may be asking the question: "I know that Christ demands full commitment, but why? Can't there be some compromise?"

Jesus said...

"No one can serve two masters. Either they will hate the one and love the other, or they will be devoted to the one and despise the other." {Matthew 6:24}

...we try to walk the tight rope between of giving Jesus a portion of our lives

...His response: "Mission impossible...I want to be your full-time Lord!"

...a choice must be made...whom will you serve?

Why? Satisfaction in Christ comes from full commitment--He will NEVER fail you!

...He gives a REASON for living

...He offers a PURPOSE in life

The second question...is...how?

...you give your life to Him without reservation

...and you become a Jesus' follower

...wherever that leads!

Joshua challenged us to put God first when he said: "Choose you this day whom you

will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord...put away the strange gods that are among you..."

This calls for...

1. A DELIBERATE DECISION - "...choose you this day..."
- 2 - A SOLID DETERMINATION - "...but as for me...and my house..."
- 3 - A CLEAR DIRECTION - "...we will serve the Lord..."
4. DETACHMENT FROM THE PAST - "...put away..the strange gods which are among you..."

"My Commitment as a Christian"

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power.

The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made.

I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talk, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, prayed up, paid up, preached up, for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus.

I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problems recognizing me - my banner will be clear!

{There was an young African pastor who was caught in the struggle between an Islamic rebel force and the existing government of his nation. When his village was overwhelmed by rebels, they demanded that he renounce his faith. He refused. The night before they took his life, he wrote the preceding lines on a scrap of paper.}