

WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS?
October 23, 2016 morning service
Luke 9:18-27

Amen. This bunch down here needs hazard pay, I guarantee you. Wow. Great job, guys. That's good. Praise the Lord for Psalm 150. Coming alive in the middle of us. Thank you, Jon, for getting all this crew together today. While they're stepping out, I want you to find your place in Luke's gospel chapter 9 and we'll begin reading in a moment in verse 18. Now let me encourage you. Don't miss next Sunday. We'll begin the service the next Lord's Day around the Lord's Supper table and we'll take the bread and the cup, the Lord's Supper. Following the Lord's Supper, we'll open the word of God and we'll talk about the next ten years, Vision 25, in the life of Olive Baptist Church and what our dream and vision and look is and what we will begin to try to do next week. We'll introduce a brand new staff member to you next week that's going to help us with some of that. So be a part of the gathering of the family next Sunday morning at 9:30 and 11:00 as we have the Lord's Table, baptism, and then we'll talk about our future together as the bride of Christ called Olive in this location.

This morning we are going to look at a question that Jesus asked. For the last three weeks we've been looking at questions that people ask Jesus but today we turn the table and we let Jesus ask the question. He's going to ask the question of you and He's going to ask the question of me. Who do you say that Jesus is? Who is He to you? Now be careful how you answer because if you say that Jesus is God, that's a game changer for your life because if He is God and you're going to follow Him, radical change comes in your life. In Luke's gospel chapter 9 we begin reading in verse 18 where we find the Bible saying:

And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes [all the people that we've been looking at that have been asking questions], and be killed and be raised up on the third day." And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."¹

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Who is Jesus to you? Well in our world if you ask people that question, "Who is Jesus?" you'll find a plethora of answers. Some people say He's crazy, that He's a lunatic, He's nuts, that He was a man from Nazareth who said He was God. No man can be God, therefore Jesus is certifiably, mentally unstable. That is the way some look at Jesus. While others say He's not crazy, they say He's arrogant, the most arrogant man to ever walk the face of the planet. You say, "What do you mean? He washed feet." But He said, "I'm God and there's no way to get to heaven but that you come through Me to get to the Father." What an egotistical, arrogant man to say that He's the only way to get to heaven. Others of our friends would not venture to say He's crazy. They wouldn't even go to arrogance. They would say Jesus is a good teacher and He's one of many. This one would say, "I'm god and I'm god and I'm god and Jesus is one of the top five and that he's one of the great ways that you can know God."

Or you can say with Peter and with the New Testament and the saints of God and you can say with me, "He is the Messiah. He is the promised, anointed one. He is God made flesh. He is God among us. Jesus is Lord of all." Who do you say that Jesus is? Crazy, arrogant, one of many, or Lord of all. If He's Lord, it's a game changer. Now, friends, this is not debated in our church but let me tell you, it is debated in some churches and it certainly is debated in our culture and it's debated in the world.

Our Buddhist friends would tell us, "You can be good without having a god." That's what they would believe. The Mohammedans out of Islam are very popular today because of their geopolitical popularity. They make a difference in the culture and they take a stand that is radical. Their geopolitical thought makes them a popular group. Our Hindu friends are very rich in philosophy. They reverence the very Earth that we live on and therefore they are popular with some who love planet Earth but when we begin to look at Jesus, the people who do more harm to the name of our Lord are those that are church people who give verbal assent that He is Savior, He is God, He is King but do not bow in radical obedience unto Him. Those with words but no works. Those that use their breath to say good things but they are never broken to follow after Him.

In our text today, Jesus asked the question, "Who do men say that I am?" They unravel that, the disciples, did. "Some say You're one of the prophets risen from the dead. Nobody's ever been like you. That you're John the Baptist. You're Elijah. You're going to be a great prophet." But who do you say that Jesus is? Then He says in verse 23 and if you've never memorized any verse in the scriptures, you ought to memorize verse 23. *And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."* Friend, if you've never memorized a verse in your life, jot that down. Draw a ring around verse 23 and memorize it. Jesus said, "If you want to come after Me, you've got to deny yourself, take up your cross every day, and follow Me."

Just say those two words. Follow Me. Say them again. Follow Me. Now I don't mean follow me but this is Jesus and Jesus is saying that you've got to follow Him. You

see, what Jesus does, He calls you to come and die and follow Him. Die to yourself. When you follow Him that means you have one, one, one leader in your life. You give up running your life if you follow Him. You resign as the chairman of the board and you put Jesus in that seat and you follow Him.

There are four key words in this verse. He must deny himself. To follow Jesus, you must deny yourself. He must deny himself. Friend, you cannot follow Jesus and follow yourself. You cannot follow Jesus and follow somebody else. There is but one Lord and one leader and He says you must deny yourself, take up your cross. When? Every day. Not just on Sunday but on Thursday, Friday night, Saturday afternoon and for every preacher, God help us, early on Monday morning. Deny yourself. Take up your cross.

What do you do on a cross? You die on a cross. Let me tell you, friend, this taking up the cross, denying yourself, it's not just for monks and missionaries and ministers. It's for everybody. It's for all the church to follow Him. It is a daily call. When you rise in the morning, you're going to have to decide. I'm either going to follow myself or I'm going to deny myself and follow Him. Tuesday when you get up, you're going to have to make a decision. Am I going to die to myself today? Am I going to follow what I want to do or am I going to do what Jesus says to do. He must deny himself. Four powerful words. Not a suggestion.

You see, the biggest hurdle you've got to get over in following Jesus is you. You've got to get over you. You've got to lay you aside. Take up your cross and follow Him. Now this morning I want to give you four characteristics of one that's following Jesus. They're found in this text and I want you to see them with me today. If you're a Jesus follower these things will be true about you. Number one, if I'm a Jesus follower, I abandon self. I abandon self. Verse 24. "If anyone wishes to come after Me." How many times have I got to say it? I want you to hear this. He must deny himself. Four big words in this text. Abandon self.

Now does that mean I don't have any personal goals? Certainly not. Does that mean I don't take care of myself? Certainly not. Does that mean I sell everything I've got and go live in a monastery? No. You know what I'm talking about. When you come to that fork in the road and it's the Jesus way or it's Ted's way, you've got to say no to Ted's way. You've got to say yes to the Jesus way. I abandon myself. Does that mean I don't ever have any fun? No, no, no. We don't have any joy? No. Jesus is going to tell you in John 15. "My disciples are filled with joy." There's great joy that's there. Does that mean I can't have any habits that I like to do or does that mean I can't go to the deer stand? No it doesn't mean you can't go to the deer stand. It means you can't go every Sunday in the fall. I mean the guilty are not here so don't worry about it.

You've got to decide. I mean if Jesus is God, you've got to decide when you come to that fork, I follow myself or I follow Jesus. If you're following Jesus, you abandon yourself. Sometimes you are embarrassed, sometimes you don't feel like it but you decide you're going to trust your future to Jesus.

I was a freshman in college the first time I believe that this fork in the road ever really came to me. You've heard my testimony about this. I was playing junior college basketball at Northeast State Junior College. I was the captain of my team as a freshman. We had just changed coaches. I was just getting ready for my sophomore year and I got this piece of paper in the mail. Not a suggestion but a requirement to load the bus and come to Montgomery, Alabama for my Army physical. I'd never been in greater shape in all my life. I could run all day and run all night.

So I went down and took my physical. I got back and I was 1A+. I'm just waiting on my draft notice, when to report and where. Dean Pendley called my house. He was the chairman or the dean of students at the state college. He called me to the office. I thought I was fixing to get kicked out of school. He sat me down and he said, "Now, Ted, I want to tell you something." I'm a captain in the National Guard and if you'll sign up for the National Guard I can make sure that you can play ball all next year. You won't miss any school. I can make your schedule where you can be where you need to be. It sounded to me like there was some politics involved in this deal. But he was taking care of me. He was looking after me. I said, "Well thank you, sir." I said, "Can I have 24 hours to pray about it?" He said, "Yes, fine. Come back."

I went home and I don't know that I prayed all night but I prayed a lot of the night and I read the word of God way into the night. I came to the book of Psalms where David said, "As for my time." That word can be seasons. "As for my time, my time, O God, is in your hand." I went back and I laid my Bible on Dean Pendley's desk and I said, "Dean, I can't thank you enough." I thanked him. I said, "You're looking after me but I have decided that rather than trusting you, I'm going to trust Jesus with my life. If I go to Viet Nam and get killed, I just get to go to heaven early. I'm grateful. Hear me say I'm grateful but I just cannot take your offer because the Spirit of God has told me I'm sitting at this divide. I must abandon myself and trust God." And I did. Two weeks later Richard M. Nixon ended the draft. I didn't know that was coming. I never went to the military. That's when they put the numbers on television. Some of ya'll remember that. They were taking one through so many. I was like 26 or something like that. I mean I was in. No turning back.

Some guys went to Vietnam in the will of God and died but that was not God's direction in my life. He set me at a fork and for the first time in my life I had to decide, my way or trust God's way. Let me tell you, friend, if you're going to follow Jesus, you must abandon self. He must deny himself, take up his cross every day. Some of you are sitting at a fork right now. You've got to get alone with God and pray through the night and He'll show you and when He shows you, go there. Follow Him. He'll never let you down. The world needs you to do it. The church needs you to do it. Your family needs you to do it. You need you to do it. I'll abandon myself.

Number one. What marks a man following Jesus? I abandon myself. Secondly, not only do I abandon myself but I imitate Christ. I imitate Christ. It's found in verse 24. "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses life for My sake is the one

who will save it.” That’s what Jesus did. He lost His life and that’s how He saved us. Jesus went to the cross for you. It’s why He died on Calvary for you and He died for me. By dying He really saved His life and the way that we live is that we imitate Christ. Paul said it in I Corinthians 11:1. Imitate me as I imitate Christ. The way I live for Jesus, you watch me and you do the same. Don’t do what I do but do what God tells you to do. Imitate the Lord Jesus. A man following Christ imitates the Lord.

John Calvin said it this way. A Christian lives in union which is a sacred marriage by which we become bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. You imitate Christ. What Jesus does, you do. The way Jesus loved, you love. The way Jesus forgives, you forgive. The way Jesus sacrificed, you sacrifice. The way Jesus is faithful, you be faithful. The way Jesus was longsuffering, you be longsuffering. The way Jesus washed feet, you wash feet. Friend, if you’re going to follow Jesus, you abandon yourself.

Number two. When I follow Jesus, I imitate Jesus Christ. What I see in Him, I live that way. I’d rather just be mean as the devil, hadn’t you? Just rise in you and say Bless God. Do what Jesus did. Friend, if you think Jesus was spineless and weak, you haven’t read the gospels. There were people He stood against and spoke to and stood firm but He always spoke that with deep love within His heart. There’s a difference in speaking harshly and speaking truth with great compassion like Jesus has.

If you’re going to follow Him, you’ve got to abandon self. Secondly, you’ve got to imitate Christ. Number three. If I follow Jesus I am unashamed of Jesus. Oh yes. Look in verse 26. “For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the Holy Angels.” Be unashamed, unashamed of the Lord Christ. Unashamed of the Jesus life. To speak His name unashamed, unashamed, unashamed. Do you ever have things in your life that you’re ashamed of? I am and when I have things in my life I’m ashamed of I cover those up, don’t you? I just kind of hide that. We don’t want to talk about that. You know, that’s not good.

You ever treat Jesus that way? Let me tell you, if you’re ashamed of Him you’re not following Him. You’re denying Him. If you’re denying the Lord Jesus today, you’re not following, and if you want to follow you’re going to have to repent and begin to be unashamed of Jesus. Yes indeed. I mean to stand up and speak out and sometimes to sit down and shut up. It’s just according to what God calls you to do because there’s a time to be quiet and there’s a time to speak up. But deep in your heart, you know when you come to that crossroad and God’s going to give you opportunity, you’re going to speak up.

I shared this with the church not long ago. I’m amazed that ya’ll don’t remember everything I say and so I repeat. Now there are some of you, God love you. You know, when you die, if I do your funeral I always ask to see your Bible. There are some people like a lady I had last week. She was a scorekeeper and every time I preached she had it written out. Like if she was here this morning, she’d write my name out, Dr.

Ted Traylor. That's the way she'd put it in there. She'd draw a line to that verse. These are the people that if you go back and preach on a text a second time they'll walk up to you and say, "You know, pastor, back in 1997 you preached on that right there." You have to understand, there's more than one cup of juice in every verse. Amen. You've just got to crush it a little more but it'll come out. So some people remember. So now when people come to me and they say, "You know, you preached on that already," I say, "Well what's the outline?" Amen. They say, "Well give it to me one more time." I say, "Yeah, that's what I'm doing."

I was invited as many of you knew, I shared this awhile back, down to a gentleman's home that a lot of people from Pensacola, about a hundred people were there. They were kind of a who's who in the town and I got invited because of another deal I'd been involved in. When we got to the end, these people, they were vastly lost. The gentleman came to me or had his guy in charge of the gathering. It was a cocktail party is what it was. I'd never been to a cocktail party before but I went to this one. I met some other people that were there. I got me a Diet Coke and walked around and met some other people. They put down what they were drinking and got them a Diet Coke when I met some of my friends.

When they got to the end, the guy came and he said, "Pastor, our host would like you to close this gathering." I said, "What?" He said, "He'd like you to close the gathering and he'd like you to say anything you want to say and then pray." I said, "You know that I'm a Baptist preacher." He said, "He very well knows who you are and what you do and ya'll have talked many times." I said, "Yes." He said, "Do whatever you want to and then pray." I said, "When's this happening?" He said, "Fifteen minutes." I ran straight to the bathroom. I didn't throw up but I got close. I don't know if any of ya'll ever played sports or not. I'm just telling you, you've never been ready for a big game if you didn't puke before you played. Richard, am I telling the truth? Yes, sir. It doesn't happen every time but I'm telling you, every now and then you just can't help it.

So I went in and locked the door and I had a prayer meeting. I literally went to the throne, I'm telling you. I said, "Dear God, I need help." I'm here to tell you, the God of heaven spoke to me and He told me exactly what to do but now I was going to have to walk in there and talk about Jesus. I had to decide if I was going to be ashamed or unashamed. As best I know, I gave the gospel as Jesus being the only way to heaven and if you'd trust Him, He'd save you. I didn't know there was a videographer there and put it in Facebook and on YouTube. I didn't know all that was going on. All I knew was I had to stand before God. I'm here to tell you, I didn't have butterflies as I shared. I had vultures in my stomach.

Friend, it'll come to you whether it's in front of what you think are important people or whether it's in front of this grade school choir. They're going to ask you to talk about the Lord or it may be at your business that they ask you. It may be at some function they ask you or it may be one on one. You've got to decide if you're following Jesus, it's not about you and what they think about you. You've got to come to the place that you are not ashamed of the One who went to Calvary for you. If you're

following after Him, you're not ashamed because He died for you and you don't want to be ashamed of Him. Why? Because He says right here, "If you're ashamed of Me and my words, I'll be ashamed of you." Lord God, I don't want to bring shame on my momma or my daddy but I sure don't want to bring shame to the name of my King. No shame to His name. Be unashamed. Lift Him up, lift Him up, and lift Him up.

If you're going to follow the Lord, you've got to abandon self. If you're going to be a follower, you've got to imitate Him. If you're going to be a follower, you've got to be unashamed. Number four, if you're going to follow, if I'm going to follow Christ, I must understand the cost, the cost of following Jesus. To follow Jesus, it will cost you all. It's not a decision you make and a card you fill out and water you get baptized in. Let me tell you, following Jesus costs you everything. It costs you all. "If any man wants to come after Me, let him do what? Deny himself, take up his cross every day and follow Me."

It costs you all. This is not for preachers. This is not for missionaries going to Africa or China. This is for you going to work in the morning. I give all. It costs me all. Let a man take up his cross. Friend, they execute people on crosses. That's where it costs you everything. Take up your cross. Follow Him. You come to die.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was in on the plot to try to kill Hitler and he was a preacher. Bonhoeffer, in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer writes these words. "We have gathered like eagles around the carcass of cheap grace and have drunk the poison which has killed the life of following Jesus." Hear me say that one more time. We have gathered like eagles around the carcass of cheap grace. What's he mean by cheap grace? He means by cheap grace just getting up out of a seat, walking down the aisle, joining the church, and saying, "Ok I'm a Jesus follower," and never change your life. That's cheap grace. It's false grace. It's hypocritical grace. It's not Bible grace. He said we gather like a bunch of eagles and we're eating on a carcass of cheap grace and we're drinking the poison which has killed the life of following Jesus. Friend, it'll cost you everything to follow Jesus. It'll cost you all.

If you're in this room today and you're not a Christ follower, let me tell you, it's the greatest call in all the world but it'll cost you your life. It's not a religious decision. It's not just hooking up with a church and showing up two Sundays out of every five and giving three percent of your money if you want to. It'll cost you everything. It'll cost you all.

So verse 23. Let's read it out loud, would you please? And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me." Would you please rise to your feet and read it one more time as we are standing? And he was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me." Now would you read it with real gusto, like you really mean this verse? Read it out loud so the saints in heaven can hear you and the demons of hell would run from you. Say it with me. And

He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me. Follow Me. Follow Me. Follow Me."

I've been in meetings before in a big crowd and I say, "How are we going to get there?" and some gentleman will just say, "Follow me." We've been in a department store with our little grandchildren and we'll say, "Hold onto our fingers" and say, "Follow me now." Let me tell you, you've just got eyes for one person if you're going to follow. In a sea of the world and the humanity and the things and the enticements and the temptation, you've just got eyes. "Jesus, which way do we go?" I'm following You.

To follow Jesus begins with one step. When He's going you've got to say, "Alright, Lord, I'm going with you." You bow on your knees and you say, "I come. I follow You today." When you come – don't miss this – when you come, He forgives all of your sin. He makes you one of His children. He puts a gyroscope in you. It's called the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of God's in you and He will show you the way as you read the manual. He comes with an owner's manual. Just follow Him. When you read the Bible, you don't need any commentaries. You don't need any teachers. Thank God for all those things but you don't have to have them. You just open the word. I'm telling you, God will show you what you are supposed to do and thank God He'll send teachers in your life. He'll put books in your life. He'll put conferences. But all of that just comes alongside because when you get in a quiet place and read the Bible and bow on your knees and say, "God, I'm going to follow you," He shows you and He gives you the strength.

For some of you, you're sitting right here and you're at a crossroads right now. You say, "I'm going to walk out of here and go do my own thing or I'm going to go follow Jesus." Today the first step to follow Jesus is getting out of your seat and walking right here and take my by the hand and say, "Pastor, I'm coming today. I'm coming to follow Jesus." It's your day. It's your time. For you to follow, you've got to come. For some of you, you don't need to come down here but when you go out of here, your life's got to be different because when you come to those forks you've got to begin to follow Him. For some of you, you need to come be a part of Olive Baptist Church. It's a step of obedience. It's where God's leading you. God says, "You've got to come be a part of that church." So you sit at the fork today and you just step out and you come take my hand and say, "Pastor, today I'm following Jesus. I'm coming."

I'll never forget it. He's one of my good friends. If I called his name, 90% of the people in this room would know who it is. We were over in the old building. I'll never forget it. I gave the invitation. He and his wife came forward. She'd been saved and she was going to be baptized. We baptized her, I did, over in old Passmore Hall. I looked up at him and I said, "Why have you come?" He looked me right in the eye and this is what he said. I've never gotten over this. I've told him. He can't even remember he said it. He said, "Pastor, I've come today to put away childish things and become a man after God's own heart." I said, "I've never had a member ask for membership that way before." I've watched him through the years and let me tell you, he's not a perfect man, just like you but he put away childish things to become a man after God's own

heart. God used him. He is using him. Some of you today, God's calling you to put away childish things. Deny yourself, take up your cross today, and follow Him.

I want to pray for you, Jon's going to sing, the Spirit's going to call. Are you coming? Come. Count the cost and follow Jesus.

Lord, thank you for my sweet friends in this room and those watching online and radio and TV. Sweet Spirit, draw us. Lord, forgive me when I don't follow you. Draw people to yourself today and follow Jesus. God, we need a church full of followers. Not following me but imitating you. God, make it so even this day. We give you praise. Jon's singing, you're coming.