

**LAMPLIGHTER**  
**JANUARY 2010**

**THEME: “Jesus Spoke to Them in Parables – Follow Me!”**

**LUKE 4:10-12**

*“As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ {58} Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ {59} He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’ But the man replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ {60} Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ {61} Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.’ {62} Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’” (Luke 9:57-62 NIV)*

Dear Worshippers of the New Born King,

As we begin another year under God’s grace and mercy, I invite you to explore the question: Who are you going to follow this year? We will hear many invitations and exhortations to follow someone or something other than Jesus throughout the coming days, weeks, and months. What are some of the other “voices” that we are tempted to heed?

In the above text, we read of three different responses to Jesus’ invitation “Follow Me.” In all three of these examples, we can hear the doubt. We can see the hesitation of each one as they say, “Lord, yes, I will follow but maybe not now. Lord I will follow – but my family...” They hesitate. The Lord invites us today to follow Him without hesitation.

**Count the Cost** - The first man comes and promises to “follow you wherever you go.” It is a bold promise. In response Jesus points out that to be one of His followers means joining company with one who has less than even foxes and birds. In the vernacular of today, Jesus indicates you must understand that I can offer you no salary, no benefits package and no retirement plan. I myself do not even own a bed to sleep on, and I cannot promise you one either. What goes for me must go for you as well!

Are we ready to place Jesus first in our lives? Certainly it is at the cross of Calvary that we see how God has placed us first even before the life of his only Son. Peter writes: (1 Pet 1:18 NIV) “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.” (Heb 9:14 NIV) “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

**Conflicting Loyalties** – The second man who was given the invitation to follow Jesus seems willing, if Jesus permits him to fulfill a sacred family obligation: “Let me go and bury my father.” Obviously if his father had died, then why is he here listening to Jesus? Should he not be home meeting those obligations? The second man is actually saying: “Let me go and serve my father while he is alive. After he dies, I will bury him, and then I will come.” Jesus is not ready to give him that permission because to go and proclaim the kingdom of God must have top priority. Do we need to re-prioritize our loyalties?

**Look Ahead – Not Back!** The third man volunteers to follow Jesus. He has just one simple request – to “go back and say good-bye to his family” before falling in behind Jesus. This request on the surface

does not seem unreasonable. After all, Elijah granted that request when Elisha asked the same thing in 1 Kings 19:19-21: “So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. {20} Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. ‘Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye,’ he said, ‘and then I will come with you.’ ‘Go back,’ Elijah replied. ‘What have I done to you?’ {21} So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.” Who would not want to say good-bye to his family?

However there is more than what lies on the surface. The one who wants to greet his family has his heart ties to his family – where the authority of the father is supreme. The man is saying, “I will follow you, Lord, but the authority of my father is higher than your authority. I must have his permission before I venture out!” Everyone listening knows that the father will refuse the son permission to wander off on some questionable enterprise.

No one who looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God. One plowing in the field must always look ahead. The plowman must give his undivided attention to the task at hand lest he destroys a previously plowed area, break the tip of his plow, or expose a seed that has already been planted for the birds to eat.

It’s easy for us to look at these examples and say, “Well, I would never do the same thing.” Yet, as we look at our life we realize there are many times that we say to the Lord, “Well, I will follow but I’ve got other things to do.” You and I know that from time to time, we miss coming to God’s house – and for what reason? Is it because we’re too busy planting or harvesting? Is it because we have too many things to do with our family or we’re off attending some seminar or convention? We too, hesitate. We too, sometimes say, “Lord, I’m too busy for Your invitation.” Yet as this year goes by let us heed his invitation to – “Follow Me.”

**Close with prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #22 “The Old Rugged Cross”**