# Description of Discipleship

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Date: 26 February 2017

Preacher: Scott Hamilton

[0:00] Thank you, Graham. It really is great to be here this morning. Thank you for your very warm welcome to Brunswick Evangelical. Permit me, just as I was alluding to there, permit me to also say a huge heartfelt thank you for your prayers and your financial partnership with us as Christian unions in Edinburgh. I've seen some wonderful gospel fruit off the back of our week of events that we ran at the end of January, the start of February. I firmly believe that God's mission carries on throughout the whole year. God is at work 52 weeks out of 52 in the lives of these students that I see and that I know. But this specific week of events that we ran at the end of January, start of February, couldn't have happened without the backing of local churches such as yourselves. So thank you very, very much. Okay, Luke chapter 9, we've read and we've prayed. Let's crack on. I remember sitting a few years ago with a girl called Naomi, who I worked alongside at Chalmers for a few years. And we were reminiscing on individual time spent abroad in other countries.

We both studied Spanish. I studied at Glasgow University because I like the look of the degree there. She studied at St. Andrews because she's much smarter than me. And I went on my year abroad to Madrid and then we went to Argentina. And when we worked at Chalmers, we used to speak to one another over lunch and probably other times when we should have been doing work, about cultural mistakes that we made when we were in the countries that we were in for our years abroad. So things that we would do that would look like perfect sense to us, that would make perfect sense. But as locals would watch us, they would say to us, no, that's not how we do things around here. They would have to explain to us that things were done differently in that place.
And so let me give you an example of that. When I was in Spain, I worked in a school as an English teacher. And I remember after my first day of work, getting back to the flat of the host family that I was living with for the year. I ran half past four in the afternoon and I felt fairly peckish, having not really eaten much since breakfast, but I was fairly content to hold off until dinner at 5.30 sharp. Except Spaniards don't have dinner at 5.30 sharp. That would be a late lunch. So imagine the horror when the mother of the family came home from work and explained to me with great enthusiasm that we would be eating early at half past nine. And that was easily one of the longest and the hungriest days I ever spent in Madrid. Another time I remember walking with a teacher to the local primary school where this teacher's seven-year-old daughter was a pupil. And during the break, the children were all outside playing and the two of us walked straight into the playground, he found his daughter, scooped her up, kissed her and put her back down again.
And when I explained afterwards that in this country, in Scotland, in the UK, you'd never be able to wander into a playground and do that, he smiled, he shrugged and he said to me, it's not like that here. Things are different.
And if I was going to live there in Spain, then I had to rewrite my understanding of how I did things based on the culture of the country I was in. And if that's true of a Scotsman in Spain for nine months, it's certainly true of those that follow Jesus and follow his teaching. Anyone who wants to believe in Christ to live in his kingdom needs to rewrite their understanding of how we do things based on the culture of the kingdom that we now belong to, Christ's kingdom.
[3:35] And you see Jesus doing throughout the whole of chapter nine, something which rewrites the disciples' understanding of what the kingdom values and principles are.

Dr. Luke is recording for us what Christ's rule will be like. And there's much that initially looks great in the eyes of those that follow Jesus. It's clear from the first six verses of chapter nine that Jesus' healing kingship will be free from sickness, free from demonic spirits.
It's clear from the feeding of the 5,000 that Jesus' abundant kingship will be free from hunger. And it's clear from the transfiguration that Jesus' powerful kingship will be one for his true glory is

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revealed. And it would even appear that the disciples are starting to partially understand who Jesus is. Peter says in verse 22, you, Jesus, are God's Messiah.
But what's obvious from what we read earlier on is that the disciples still have a very this world view. They run the risk of interpreting everything as a we experience glory now understanding of Jesus' kingdom. And you can see why they might think that after witnessing everything that Jesus did and everything that Jesus said, what could possibly go wrong?
He comes as a king with an authority, with a glory unlike anything ever seen before. However, Jesus makes it very clear that he comes as a suffering king.
[5:16] His kingdom, by contrast to the expectations of the disciples, has vastly different values and operates in a very, very different way. He mentions his death in verse 22. He mentions a life of self-denial from 23 to 26. Jesus is rewriting his disciples' understanding, of what it means to be a part of his kingdom. You want to follow me in my kingdom, chaps?

Well, you'll have to undergo a serious readjustment of your expectations. You think we experience glory now? Well, it's not like that here. Things are different.
That's not how we do things around here. And for us sitting here 2,000 years later, it's no different. Jesus is speaking to people who would seek to follow him. Everyday men and women from all walks of life, just like us sitting here.
And it's very easy for us that genuinely follow Jesus to still allow the principles of this world, of this day and age, to sneak into our lives and to twist our understanding of how Jesus' kingdom operates.
It's very easy and it's very dangerous. And Jesus will not allow it to happen. Perhaps you're here and you're looking into Christianity for yourself.
[6:40] Here it is. Here's what it looks like to follow Jesus. He has a terrible PR campaign. He wants everyone who would follow him to know that it's a difficult journey that does not lead to earthly glory and success, but does lead to eternal glory and eternal success.

And so last week we were encouraged to stop, look and listen to Jesus. And this week, under the heading of a detailed description of discipleship, we're encouraged to do just exactly the same. God says to Jesus' followers in verse 35, listen, listen to him.
And so the first thing to listen to, from verses 43 to 50, is the caution from the king who devotes his life. The caution from the king who devotes his life.
After what they've seen, everyone is amazed at the greatness of God. Everyone is marvelling at all that Jesus did. And in the middle of what looks like a crescendo, a high point in Jesus' ministry, he delivers the most hard-hitting and devastating news.
He turns to his disciples and says, verse 44, listen carefully to what I'm about to tell you. The son of man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. At the moment when Jesus looks at his most invincible, he says, I'm going to die.
[8:05] At the moment when Jesus looks at his most popular, he says, I'm going to be delivered into the hands of men. These same crowds that are marvelling will soon shout, crucify him.

And this news was so far outside of the disciples' field of expectation that they just can't fathom that it'll happen. They just cannot wrap their heads around it.
But we're also told by Luke in verse 45 that it was hidden from them. They were starting to see who Jesus was as he opened their eyes, but only very, very gradually.
Jesus still has much to teach them. And the full extent of Jesus' glory is seen when Jesus devotes his very own life for the sake of the salvation of others.
Jesus' caution is that the Savior must suffer, so if the disciples are to follow him, then his way must also be their way.
[9:07] It's a hard truth for the disciples that desperately needs to sink into their heads and sink into their hearts. And that's why Jesus has some strong words to say about what follows.

The disciples are arguing about who is the greatest. You can imagine the conversation, can't you? Well, when Jesus rescues his people, we'll be the ones in the inner circle. I'll probably be the greatest because I was one of the first disciples picked.
I was even up in the mountain with Jesus just there. You were down here struggling to drive an evil spirit out of a little boy. No, some disciple you are. Jesus has just been talking sacrifice.
And they're talking self-exaltation. Rivalry rears its ugly head. And so in the process of rewriting their understanding of how Jesus' kingdom is to operate, he has to issue another severe caution.

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The disciples want personal status. They want personal grandeur. And Jesus takes a little boy and says, whoever welcomes this child, whoever receives this child in my name, receives me.
[10:15] And whoever receives me, receives him who sent me. This is the sort of company the disciples are to entertain. Those that follow Jesus, regardless of status or grandeur.

The child who is following Jesus, perhaps with his parents, perhaps on his own, he would look like the least in any kingdom. No reputation. No standing in society. But if this child follows Jesus, then whoever welcomes this child in Jesus' name, welcomes Jesus himself.
No self-promotion. Instead, sacrificial welcome. And you see how it's a picture of what Jesus is doing. He welcomes the lowest.
This child cannot offer Jesus anything. And yet, Jesus takes the boy and puts him by his side, knowing that he will devote his life to forgive the sins of this young boy.
And as he does that, he says to the disciples in verse 48, it is the one who is least among you who is the greatest. It is the least among you who is the greatest.
[11:21] Who's that? Well, it will be Jesus himself, won't it? As he hangs on the cross. He will be the one who will become loathed, despised, delivered into the hands of men.

He will become the least. But Jesus knows that the path to true greatness and glory takes him via the cross. And he wants his disciples to follow accordingly.
Jesus models and will model the selflessness and sacrificial love he wants his followers to have, because that is what true glory looks like in Christ's kingdom.
And just in case we were starting to wonder if the disciples were beginning to comprehend, John very helpfully clears it up for us. His response to all this is to say, Oh, Master, we saw someone driving at demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because, you know, he's not one of us.
And after everything that Jesus has just been explaining, my initial response to John is, John, you idiot. And yet I know exactly what it is to be in John's position. I was helping out last week at a CU events week down in Coventry.
[12:36] It's the middle of nowhere, honestly. And on Friday morning, we were feeding back as to how the Thursday night event had gone. And the guy sitting opposite me, who was also helping out with the week, explained to us all that God had used him to lead two students to repentance and faith in Jesus.

And I'd love to tell you that my instinctive reaction was, That's such good news. But it wasn't. My instinctive reaction was, Why couldn't that have been me?
I had to sit with someone who believed in Buddhism, couldn't even tell me what type of Buddhism they believed in, had no interest in Jesus, and it was a really frustrating conversation for 40 minutes.
How come this other guy managed to enjoy success and I didn't? But if Jesus' path is one where he devotes his life for the sake of his people, then Jesus' caution to me, to all of us, to his disciples, is that there can be no spiritual snobbery, or spiritual elitism, or spiritual jealousy.
There will always be those that are doing fruitful gospel work, when things just aren't going well for us. Maybe they're in a different part of the city. Maybe they aren't just quite like us.
[13:54] And yes, we have to be discerning. Yes, we have to ask whether it's genuine gospel work or not. But it's too easy to allow that to lapse into tribalism, because they're not one of us. Elitism, snobbery, is the ugliest thing in our church today.

And I feel the tug towards it in my own heart. The Christian unions in Edinburgh are really healthy, as I said earlier on. It's very easy for me to think that other CUs across Scotland just don't quite have it right.
Not like we do. I don't want people to become Christians somewhere else. I want them to become Christians here. How ugly is that? And you guys will know where risks appearing in your own hearts and in the life of the church here.
But what will put a stop to it is listening to the caution that comes from the king that devotes his life. If people are going to follow a selfless and sacrificial King Jesus to true glory in his kingdom, how can we take any self-promotion on the way?
It's a real message for all who are called to be disciples. Let there be no self-promotion, rivalry, triumphalism.
[15:09] Rejoice. Rejoice when others are doing the work of Christ's kingdom. Rejoice when others are doing the work of Christ's kingdom.

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Not according to Luke. The destination of the journey, according to Luke in verse 51, is Jesus being taken up to heaven. And so his journey through immense suffering leads ultimately to eternal glory and it exemplifies the journey anyone takes who trusts in Jesus from the temporary kingdom of this creation to his kingdom of the new creation.
And the road of discipleship will look like self-sacrifice. And here we see clearly in these verses it will look like facing real rejection and open opposition.
Jesus is going through this territory for the first time in Luke's gospel. He is decidedly and obviously and purposefully extending his kingdom to the foreigners.
All are invited. The Samaritans would have been seen as second-class citizens in the eyes of the Jews. But true to Jesus' character, true to Jesus' kingdom, the gospel comes to them on the same terms.
[16:46] He has come for the insider and the outcast, for the privileged and the poor. But all must welcome the saviour.

It's not enough just to hear about Jesus or to meet him. And tragically in this case, the Samaritans don't want anything to do with him because, verse 53, he was heading for Jerusalem.
They seem to understand where Jesus is going and Samaritans reject the idea that Jerusalem is the place where God should be worshipped. So maybe it was pure sectarian hatred on the part of the Samaritans.
Regardless of the reasons, when people will not welcome Jesus, when they say, we don't want you, we don't want your message, Jesus listens.
He doesn't try and alter his teaching to be welcomed. Verse 56, he and his disciples went to another village. Well, how are the disciples going to respond to this?
[17:54] Well, once again, just in case we're starting to wonder that the disciples were beginning to comprehend, James and John clear things up for us. They asked Jesus, verse 54, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?

They want justice and vengeance on their own terms. And once more, Jesus has to rewrite the principles of his kingdom on their hearts. He rebukes James and John.
Let's be clear here. Jesus doesn't rebuke them because there are no consequences to rejecting Jesus. No, no. Jesus makes it very, very clear that there are severe and serious consequences to rejecting him.
However, Jesus' correction here to James and John comes from the king that instead demonstrates his grace. Wonderfully, if you read on in Luke's second book of the Bible, Acts, you'll see in chapter 8 that Peter and John, of all people, place their hands on many Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit who have heard the gospel and are new Christians.
I reckon John, when he was there in Samaria in Acts chapter 8, probably kept pretty quiet about what he'd said here in Luke chapter 9. But to see the Samaritans who had rejected Jesus now welcome Jesus instead is a wonderful display of the grace that the king extends towards his enemies.
[19:16] Jesus makes it very clear that whilst it won't happen to everyone, there are definitely those that first resist the message of the gospel who latterly welcome Christ into their lives.

I'm sure we'll know of people like that. Again, very easy for me to think how awful of James and John to suggest such a thing as fire from heaven when Jesus had very, very clearly spoken about welcoming the outsider.
However, I've had some fairly choice thoughts about those that have rejected the gospel and have mocked the king that I follow. Perhaps, even in my darkest moments, I've thought, I cannot wait until that person stands before God and realises they've been wrong all along.
It'll feel so good when that person kneels before God and feels the weight of every word they've said against him. Have you ever thought that? Is that such a different attitude to the one that James and John display here?
I don't think it is. Let's understand the reality of all this. To be on the path to glory with Jesus will always mean hostility from all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons.
[20:34] Let's not be surprised by that. Yet, Jesus is patient and his judgment is withheld for the moment. and knowing that the king we follow demonstrates his grace to his enemies means that we too are to extend grace to those that oppose him.

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And friends, it's incredibly hard, isn't it? It can often come at real personal cost. cost. And yet, it was exactly at a real personal cost that Jesus extended his grace to us before we were his friends. Realistically, can we seek any sort of earthly retribution for those that have opposed Jesus when we have done exactly the same thing and yet Jesus has demonstrated his grace towards us? Wonderfully, thankfully, vengeance does not belong to us.
It belongs to the Lord. So in turn, we extend grace to others. See again here how Jesus' way ends up being the way of the disciple too. So the caution from the king who devotes his life, the correction from the king who demonstrates his grace, and now finally as we close, the call from the king who demands our all.
The call from the king who demands our all. Very quickly, three short incidents between Jesus and those that would follow him. That word is all over our last section this morning, follow.
[22:02] And Jesus is clarifying the nature of the call to follow him. The first man that he speaks to wants to leap into a commitment to follow Jesus without first understanding the cost of it all.

Jesus warns him clearly in verse 58 that whilst foxes have dens, birds have nests, the son of man has no place to lay his head.
Jesus' path he walks is one of homelessness in this world. It's a world that he created. Even the animals have somewhere they can call home. And yet he's not putting down any roots in this world because he is heading towards the cross and he is heading towards the new creation to come.
He is an outcast in this world and for any disciple seeking to follow Jesus we cannot permanently invest in the things of this age.
We cannot put unhealthy roots down in this world as our home. Not when we weigh up with the new creation to come. And Jesus is seriously reconfiguring how his followers view things in this world.
[23:14] It doesn't mean we can't enjoy things. Please don't mishear me. Friends, family, romance, holidays, sport, food, these are good gifts to us from God.

But the son of man, the creator, didn't think to take a home for himself in this world when he was here in the flesh sharing the good news of the kingdom to come. He had every right to but he didn't. He knew where he was headed. And his demand on this first man is that he will follow a saviour who did not find his home here. That's the warning.
His people can expect a life of exile, not comfort, in this creation, awaiting the wonderful new creation to come. The second person Jesus calls to follow him gives what initially seems like a perfectly reasonable reaction in verse 59.
Lord, first let me go and bury my father. Surely that's only reasonable. But let's understand that the whole burial process for a Jew would have taken roughly a year from start to finish.
[24:26] It's not even explicitly clear that this man's father has died yet. He might still have a few years to go first. But regardless of all that, this man has not grasped the urgency of Christ's call.

Nothing is more important, not even our earthly families. The Bible has some very positive things to say about family life. We're told to honour our parents. We're told to raise our children to know and to love Jesus.
However, when the time comes and it will often come, Jesus' call is firstly to him and to his kingdom over our earthly relationships with family.
I've spoken to young men and women who have given their lives to Jesus at university through various events weeks and these students have parents that are now desperately upset and desperately angry that their child goes to church every week.
I've spoken to students who are thinking of perhaps spending a year volunteering with UCCF, working for a church or another Christian movement. They're expected to fundraise for the year and often these young men and women come under tremendous pressure from their parents.
[25:39] Some of these parents are Christians and they say things like, how are you going to afford that? I think you should be getting a job, a good job. We've paid for you to go through three, four years of university.

What a waste it would be if you were to give it all up and work for a church. Leave that for other people. And the tug of feeling like your first allegiance is to your parents at the expense of honouring Jesus is very, very real and it's very, very hard.
Jesus' call as king is to demand all of this man's life and it's the same call he places on any follower. It's a deliberately sore example here.

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It's a deliberately sore example because it's meant to show us just how difficult it is. As I said, no small print. Even the best of reasons and excuses cannot delay, cannot derail us.
And the last interaction is similar. A man says, I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family. Surely, again, a fairly reasonable excuse.
[26:52] But the man is betrayed by his own words. I will follow you, but first. These are words that are spoken all too often.

I know a girl who I started university with who told me that she was going to, and I quote, give up God for university before picking him back up again after she graduated. I will follow you, but first. And it's no surprise that she's no longer anywhere near following Jesus. And Jesus says that this man and anyone else with this attitude is similar to a man who plows, looking away over his shoulder, only to see the plow veer off track.
We've seen it happen ourselves. Jesus has to be our sole focus before anything else. There's no room for Jesus plus. The first man is too quick, hasn't weighed up the cost.
The second is too slow, hasn't grasped the urgency. The third is too busy trying to juggle Jesus alongside all these other commitments. And Jesus' call is to demand everything, not because he wants to ruin our fun, not because he needs our everything as a narcissist, but Jesus knows that true joy, true discipleship, means following him wholeheartedly.
[28:16] He knows the dangers of allowing the principles, the values, the priorities of this world to creep into our walk with him. And he does not want us to fall away from him.

So he says to his disciples, that's not how we do things around here. The caution from the king who devotes his life is to say no to self-promotion, no to spiritual snobbery, no to rivalry.
The correction from the king who demonstrates his grace is that we will face opposition, but we respond not with our own flavor of vengeance, but with grace and patience in the same way that he did.
And the call from the king who demands our all is that true discipleship means that he is the number one priority in our lives. It's uncomfortable, it's urgent, it's uncompromising, but it's everything that Jesus embodied when he was on earth.
Jesus doesn't make demands that he did not live out himself in his own life. Do you see that? When we experience all of these struggles, when we try and soldier on to live the life of a disciple, we can turn to Jesus and say, this is really difficult.
[29:31] And he turns back to us and responds with, I know. Trust me. I know. And so the take home from today isn't moralism.

It's not be more modest, be more gracious, be more committed. That's not what I'm saying. That's not Luke chapter nine. The take home is follow Jesus.
See how he models that which his disciples are to follow. See the cross. See the way that he reconciles us to God and pays the debt of our sins.
See the destination at the end. His kingdom for all eternity for the believer. Let Jesus be what motivates you to live in such a way that points away from ourselves, away from this world, to him and to his kingdom.
let me pray for us as we close. Lord Jesus, we thank you for the honesty and the realism that the Bible has towards those who follow you.
[30:36] Father, in many ways, the personal cost is great, but we can look at Jesus and we can see the way that he models all of these things for us to follow.

Father, we know this morning that an eternity with you, an eternity with Christ is so worth the pain, the suffering of this day and age.
Father, help us by your Holy Spirit to have our eyes fixed upon Christ. Help us by your Holy Spirit to lean upon you not to mingle kingdom priorities and principles with the principles and priorities of this world.
Help us, Father, by your Spirit to stay distinct. Help us to live the life of a disciple that genuinely loves you increasingly as the days go on, that knows you better and understands the love that you have for us better.
Father, we thank you that for those of us that this morning have not been doing this, we know that there is forgiveness because of the cross. We're so thankful, Father, that we can turn back to you, look at what Jesus did and say, forgive me and know that that forgiveness is ours.

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[31:51] And so, Father, would you forgive me? Would you forgive all of us sitting here that have allowed other things to sneak in and distort the principles of the kingdom in our lives? Give us everything we need, Father, to live a life that glorifies you in the same way that Jesus did.

In whose name we pray. Amen. Let's do it. Lup search■■■- By the way, Abraham, Jesus,

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