

Following Jesus Christ By Faith (Luke 18:31-34)

I. Jesus Led The Way To Jerusalem

The present scene shows the entourage that normally followed Jesus which included the curious, believers, doubters, and disciples. **Mark 10:32** tells us that the closer they came to Jerusalem, the more afraid the disciples became. They were more than aware of the perils that lay ahead in the capital of Israel. They had not faced much persecution in Galilee, because the power of the Pharisees and scribes was weaker. However, now they were heading into the lion's den: the headquarters of Judaism, which was Jerusalem.

Sometimes when we follow Jesus, we become afraid at the potential danger ahead. However, though we fear, the most vital action we can perform is that of drawing closer to Jesus. The disciples may have been afraid, but Jesus was not. He was not, because Jesus Christ was God in the flesh and knew what would befall him in Jerusalem. We can imagine the scene in this passage where Jesus recognizes His disciples' fear and huddles them together to encourage them. God is not some uncaring being that wound the earth up to leave it to spin on its own. He cares about His creation and wants us to be at ease (**John 14:27**)!

Jesus did not mince words with the twelve. He explained that the Pharisees and scribes were not after them, but Him. He prophesied that they would take, try, torture, and then kill Him. However, He did not stop there. Jesus knew of His resurrection and told His disciples that He was not going to stay dead, but would rise again on the third day! What is so important about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? It proves to us that He is who He said He was!

The Bible tells us that Jesus became sin for us (**II Corinthians 5:21**) and paid our sin debt on the Cross (**Romans 3:23-25**). It also states that the payment for sin is death (**Romans 6:23**). Jesus did die, but He did not stay dead. Why not? He did not stay dead, because He paid our sin debt in full, satisfying the demands of a holy God completely! If Jesus did not pay for one sin on Calvary, He would still be dead. Many religious leaders have died in the past and we can find their graves today. However, if one goes to the tomb of Jesus, He is not there; He is risen (**Matthew 28:6**)! If Jesus did not rise from the grave we would be of all men most miserable (**I Corinthians 15:1-22**). Can you imagine a group of people going around promising eternal life while their leader is dead? They would be liars and fakes! Their preachers should go get real jobs and the group should disband! However, if their leader has overcome death and Hell, the message of that group should be believed wholly. This is something all men must consider.

II. The Disciples Followed By Faith

Going back to the disciples, we read that they did not understand what Jesus told them, but believed Him anyway. This is faith at its purest. Faith is trusting in God to keep His promises and, in this case, the disciples trusted the Son of God to keep His (**Hebrews 12:2**).

Many have different ideas concerning faith, which is why we must always run to the Word of God for answers. Some believe they must have all the information before following Christ Jesus, but these twelve disciples followed on the information they had. Faith does not always understand! Sometimes we are given part of the picture and sometimes all. The important thing is that we must realize that we have a trustworthy God that will always take care of us when we follow Him (**Psalm 23**). Consider Noah who built the ark by faith; being told that it would rain, but never having seen rain (**Genesis 6:11-22**).

Some also feel that they need to feel courageous in order to follow God. This is not true either. The disciples were afraid, but followed Jesus by faith. Faith is not based upon feelings, but our willingness to obey God's truth (**Luke 17:6**). We do not have to feel like we have faith; we just need to take our journey with God step by step. Consider Gideon that did great things for God. The Lord found this "**mighty man of valor**" hiding in a winepress from the Midianites (**Judges 6:12**). Gideon did not feel courageous, but the more he walked with God, the more courageous he became.

How is your faith? Are you walking with Jesus day by day in His Word and prayer? Are you building your faith God's way through a local assembly of believers that will encourage and build you up in grace? We cannot fight this battle alone; we all need help. This is what a local church is for. If you desire to follow Christ, learn of Him in the Bible, and influence your community with the things that matter for eternity, I encourage you to give Heritage Park Baptist a try. We meet at 11am Sunday Morning, 6pm Sunday Evening, and 7pm Wednesday Evening at the St. John's UCC building.

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