

Follow (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] John chapter 21.

If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in the pews that you can use. And if you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you today as a gift from our church to you in our hopes that you'll continue to be reading God's Word.

Would you please stand with me now, though, as we honor the reading of God's Word? Beginning in verse 15.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs.

He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

[1 : 01] Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, Follow me. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper, and he said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? Jesus said to him, If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me.

So the saying spread among the brothers that this disciple was not to die, yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die. But if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?

[2 : 06] This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Now, there are many other things that Jesus did.

Were every one of them to be written, I suppose, that the world itself could not contain the books to be written. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

A couple of weeks ago, I went with our teens to Falls Creek, and many of you are aware of Falls Creek and how each week during the summer, thousands of teenagers pour into that camp.

The week we were there, I believe there was about 4,000 teens that came, and that's actually kind of a low number for Falls Creek. And every night, our group, after we went to Tabernacle or Nackle, right?

Hashtag Nackle. There we go. Inside joke. Volunteer at Falls Creek next year, and you'll know what we're talking about. But every night we returned from Tabernacle, our students would hear a message from Eric, our youth pastor, and then we would break into small groups for discussion and for discipling.

[3 : 19] Well, the cabin right next to ours made that difficult those first few nights that we were at Falls Creek. That cabin was literally rocking, shaking.

The wall behind where Eric was teaching was vibrating from the noise that they were making, which made it hard for us to be able to hear him. And come to find out, that cabin's youth pastor was also a part-time DJ.

And when you looked inside the windows, you saw colored lights, glow sticks, people jumping up and down, pumping their fists in the air. They were having a dance party.

And it was very disruptive. And so the first night, we politely asked them to turn the music down, and they did. Until the next night, when it was cranked back up to full volume again, we talked to some of the staff at Falls Creek and asked them to check on it.

And they did. And they did. But the noise persisted. And then finally, on one of the last nights that we were there, Danny went over there and politely told them that, we can't hear our youth pastor teaching our students.

[4 : 32] Would you please turn the music down? And they did turn it down, but not until the kids booed her on her way from their cabin to ours. I think it was that same night also that I decided to take a walk around the camp just to have a time of prayer, a time of solitude while our students broke out into their small groups.

And if you've been to Falls Creek, you know that Falls Creek is very, very big. And in my 25-minute walk around Falls Creek, most of it, I covered about a third of the ground, I was impressed by a couple of things that I saw.

First of all, I was impressed that the majority of the cabins, the majority of the groups and the churches that I saw were having a devotion time similar to the one that we were having in our cabin every night.

They were huddled into small groups. They had their Bibles open. Some of them were praying. And as I walked around them doing that, you just sensed a weightiness, a meatiness to what they were doing.

The other thing that impressed me was how many churches were there to party just like the one next to our church. And that was heartbreaking. And I couldn't help but walk around and see those things and wonder, is this the impression that we are giving these young people about what it means to follow Christ?

[6 : 10] It's a dance party. And, you know, I know that I'm about to turn 40 in just a couple of months. And so I'm not as spry as I used to be, and I don't enjoy dancing to loud music as much as maybe I did at one point in my life.

But I'm not a party pooper. You know, I like to have fun myself. But when I read Scripture and I hear the words of our Savior about what it means to follow Him, I read an entirely different impression of what that means.

For example, in Luke 14, 25 through 33, it says, Now, great crowds, this is early in Jesus' ministry, great crowds accompanied Him.

And so often we think that's the goal in the church and ministry, right? To have the great crowds. But look at what Jesus does. He turns and He said to them, If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

[7 : 39] Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000?

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Jesus' strategy for making disciples and how he calls others to follow him is far different from many of the strategies that we see people using in the church today.

In many of those situations, there's no talk about the personal cost that comes with following Christ. Instead, he is often presented as some kind of a cosmic genie that if you stroke him just the right way, he'll give you what you want.

Or maybe he's more, they see him as a cosmic DJ who is there to get the party started in your life. But here in Luke 14, Jesus is making it clear that he calls those who follow him to a life that exacts a high price.

[9 : 06] And you see that there's no negotiating with him here. It's devotion to him, he says, above all others, above all other things. A commitment to follow him which he makes clear in his words that may cost you your life.

You may die following him. It's making the commitment to him that says, Lord, I am yours no matter the cost.

So then you would wonder, why would anyone follow him? That's such a high price. Why would anyone follow him?

And for those of us who know the Lord, we say, well, because he's totally worth it. He's totally worth it. Whatever cost is exacted from you in following Christ will be made up a thousandfold at the resurrection.

Remember Jesus' parable in Matthew 13, 44. He says, So again, a man sees and sells everything that he has.

[10:34] Everything that he has. All he has maybe is the clothes that are on his body. Everything else. House, home, car for us. Everything has been sold.

And he sells all those things so that he can have this treasure. In other words, all the so-called costs and all the so-called losses are nothing compared to the gains that are to be had in Jesus, who is the greatest treasure of all.

The cost is total in principle. It's like giving Jesus a blank check with your life. We don't know what exact price he will write in there.

It will be different for each one of us. But in the end, for all of us, it will be totally worth it. Because having Jesus and following Jesus results in the greatest gain of all.

Peace with God through the cost that he was willing to pay to atone for your sins. Faith in him.

Assurance in him that there is more to life than meets the eye.

[11:51] That there is eternal life. That there is victory in him. Because your greatest enemies, sin, death, and Satan have been defeated by him.

Because on the third day, the tomb was empty. Following Jesus is totally worth it. Because his way is the only way that leads to eternal life.

And so, the Bible says, the unwasted life is the life that is lived totally committed to Jesus. That's what we see over and over again in Scripture.

The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3.8, Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things.

And I count them as rubbish. I count them as garbage. In order that I may gain Christ. In order that I may have more of him. And so, the main idea for this sermon, and it's the same as last week, is this.

[12:56] This is the truth that the Lord wants to communicate to you today. He demands total commitment from those who follow him. Jesus Christ demands total commitment from those who follow him.

Again, John chapter 21 is the epilogue of his gospel. Jesus, by this point, has appeared to his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He has reminded them of his call to follow him.

That they are not to return to their fishing nets. That they are to leave those old things behind. They are no longer fishermen. But they will be fishers of men. Then last week, we saw in verses 15 through 19 that Jesus reinstates Peter into the ministry.

Peter had publicly denied Jesus three times before his crucifixion. He had returned to being shaky, shifty Peter. And Jesus reminds him that I've called you to be Peter, which means rock.

I've called you to be the rocky one. To be the rock who will lead my church from this point forward. And so Peter could no longer be focused on his failures.

[14:02] Peter had benched himself from the ministry, but Jesus wasn't finished with him yet. And once again, there we saw in those verses, Jesus demonstrate his great love to Peter by entrusting him with the responsibility to pastor, to shepherd his people.

So in these verses, we see three demands of Christ that he makes to those who follow him.

Last week, we saw that first demand, and we'll cover that again quickly. The first is this. Jesus Christ demands that you love him above all others. Why? Because he's worthy of such love.

Because of his great love, which he has demonstrated to you. He died on the cross for you. He endured God's wrath for your sins for you. So that by faith in him, you receive his righteousness.

You receive his sinlessness. He gives you peace with God and eternal life. In love, he did this for you. And such love demands total devotion and a willingness to follow Christ at any cost, knowing the cost that he paid to purchase you and your salvation.

[15 : 19] Now we move to the second demand that we see here in this text. Jesus Christ demands that you be willing to sacrifice everything for him. This is going to be a hard sermon.

I'll already tell you, I've had my toes stepped on all week as I was preparing this. But listen, this is what the text says. Jesus Christ demands that you be willing to sacrifice everything for him. Jesus continues his conversation with Peter around the charcoal fire that, if you remember, he had prepared for him and six of the other disciples in verse 18.

And what Jesus says to Peter in verse 18 is followed by a parenthetical statement by John in verse 19, which reveals that Peter's devotion, Peter's following Christ would result in his making the ultimate sacrifice for him.

Look again at those verses. Truly, truly, Jesus says to Peter, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you to a place where you do not want to go. So, this he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. Now, this was not the first time that Peter heard Jesus talking about sacrifice.

[16 : 41] The sacrifice that would come in following him that was required. Jesus said in Matthew 10, 38 through 39, And whoever does not take his cross, an instrument of death, and follow me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. And then later in Matthew 16, 24 and 25, Jesus told his disciples, Jesus continues his conversation here in John 21 with Peter by using the phrase, truly, truly.

Now, we've seen that throughout our study of this gospel, that Jesus uses that phrase, truly, truly, to sort of call whomever he's speaking to, to lean into what he is about to share with them.

He's about to say something to them that is very significant, a significant truth that he wants them to hear, to know, and to understand. In this case, Jesus is telling Peter, look, there was a time when you relied upon yourself.

You called your own shots, but as you grow older, a time will come when following me will bring you to a literal cross.

[18 : 10] And like me, they will stretch out your hands, and you will die in service to me. Now, Jesus does not demand that everyone's life end in a martyr's death, but he does call everyone who follows him to live as if that would be the case.

To live sacrificially, to be a living sacrifice. What is a living sacrifice? Well, Paul tells us in Romans 12, 1 through 2, Being a living sacrifice.

Following Christ means being under his control. It involves a willing surrender. It means yielding yourself and your goals and your dreams and your aspirations to him.

It means denying yourself of your sinful desires, and instead desiring to obey what he demands. Living sacrificially means refusing to think that you are the center of the universe. It means acknowledging that Jesus is truly the center.

[19 : 49] Your old self has died when he saved you, and it's your new self that lives and is hidden in him forever. Living sacrificially means seeking the Lord's good and the good of others ahead of your own.

It means understanding that you don't truly own the possessions that you have, that you don't even own your own life.

It means understanding that you are a steward of these things. And as a steward, you are to use the resources and the life that the Lord has blessed you with, that he has given to you, to advance his kingdom, and to spread his gospel.

A follower of Christ is a living sacrifice who willingly sacrifices their time, their energy, their rights, their position, their reputation, their privileges, their comforts, and even their own life, if required, to make much of the name of Jesus Christ, by whom they have been saved from their sins, in whom they have received eternal life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, some of you are familiar with him, was born to a prominent family in Berlin. He was called to ministry at a young age, and as a young man, he showed a lot of promise, as both a preacher, and a teacher, and a theologian.

[21 : 18] And he was there in Germany when Hitler rose to power, and he was able to escape to the United States. But after a couple of years, and it may have been less than that, I don't quite remember, but he was uncomfortable, because he knew that the Lord was calling him to go back to

Germany.

Calling him to go back, and preach the gospel to those people, and to resist Hitler and the Nazi regime. And that's what he did. He went back, and before long, he was imprisoned by the Nazis, and he spent two years in prison.

And while he was in prison, he led worship services every week, in those prison camps. And two weeks before Adolf Hitler committed suicide, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed for following Christ. Following him all the way back into the dangers of being there in Nazi Germany. And this is what he wrote. He said, A follower of Jesus must be prepared and willing to traverse whatever path the Lord has called them to follow.

Confident that in the end, whatever he requires will glorify him, and will be totally worth it. You know, today we look at Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life, and we don't say, What a waste.

[22 : 52] How much more he could have done for the church. No, we honor him, and we celebrate his commitment. Because deep down, we know as followers of Christ, that is what is required.

Biblical scholars point out that it was at least three decades, 30 years from this point, where Peter is meeting with Jesus, before he was crucified by the Roman Emperor Nero.

And so for 30 years, he lived faithfully to the Lord in anticipation, and not knowing that one day, a day would come when he would give up his life for following him.

And so now I want you to imagine that you're Peter. Imagine that you're Peter. You've just been reinstated to ministry after you denied Jesus. You've been reminded through that of the great love that Christ has to forgive you, to restore you, to give you this immense responsibility to lead his church.

But then you've just heard that one day, following him will lead you to a cross upon which you too will stretch out your hands and die.

[24 : 06] Imagine that. And you know, Jesus didn't tell Peter when these things would happen, only that they would happen. How would you receive that news?

I want you to imagine yourself in that situation. Jesus tells you, one day, following me, you will die a martyr's death. How would you receive that news?

Some of you, if you heard that news, would live the rest of your life in fear. Stocking up on supplies, filling your basement with food and whatever you would need so you don't ever have to step out of your home again, locking all your doors and your windows, taking up residence in a safe room or in the corner of your closet, maybe setting booby traps outside of your house.

But that's not how Peter is depicted in the rest of Scripture. In fact, in Acts 4, Peter is brought before the same council of men who orchestrated the death of Jesus Christ.

And instead of surrendering to their demands that he stop preaching the gospel, he boldly tells them, I'm not going to stop. And you can try and stop me, but I'm not going to stop.

[25 : 30] And so Peter doesn't go into hiding. In fact, what we see is Peter becoming more visible in the world. Even amongst Jesus' enemies, he's not afraid.

He's emboldened. Some of you, if you heard that news that Jesus gave to Peter in verse 18, would be tempted to feel inconvenienced by it. But Lord, there's so many more things that I want to do and see in this life.

I don't want to die before I've checked off everything that is on my bucket list. But Peter didn't live his life inconvenienced in receiving this news.

In fact, he went where the Lord sent him. At one point, that meant going to prison. But there he saw the miraculous work of God to deliver him from it.

And wherever the Lord called Peter to go, he went. And great things happened as a result. The gospel was spreading. Some of you, if you heard that news that Jesus gave to Peter, would be disappointed that you wouldn't be able to retire.

[26 : 45] To sit back, to take it easy, to enjoy the fruits of your labor, now listen to me, retirement isn't sinful.

But I think that it can be if it becomes the greatest ambition of your life. You understand what I'm saying? I thank God for the retired members of our church who use their retirement to serve the Lord and his church because they understand that you never retire from following Jesus and serving his church.

But I confess to you that this is me because there are many times where I will daydream about retirement.

especially when I'm at the lake and especially when I'm working on school work for my doctorate and thinking, oh, one day, one day this will all be over.

But what the Lord has shown me and what I've come to understand, if I set that as my ambition, I just want to retire comfortably. You know what I will do from now until then?

[28 : 03] I'll coast. I'll do just enough to be safe, just enough to make sure that I get there instead of giving God my best and being bold with the life that he's given to me and the ministry that he's called me to serve him in.

I don't want to use ministry as an end to achieve my own means and if retirement is my ambition then that's exactly what I'll be doing and that will be sinful. And you could be tempted to do that with your career.

Sacrificing service to Christ on the altar of career advancement. And again, listen, it's not sinful to retire. And it's not sinful to do well in your career.

It's good to work hard. And it's not sinful to reap whatever results from that hard work. but if it comes as a result of your pursuit of surrendering what it means to follow Christ in order to achieve those things, then it becomes sinful.

Instead, the Lord calls us to live our lives with an open hand or open hands. Whatever I have, Lord, is yours.

[29 : 30] And Lord, whatever you want to put in these hands, you may, and I will serve you well with whatever you place here. And so we wonder, again, Peter wasn't looking for any of these things.

None of those thoughts distracted Peter from his life, knowing that it would end in death one day, a martyr's death. So then we wonder, how could Peter live his life that way with this death sentence over his head?

Well, that's where John's parathetical explanation comes in handy because it gives us the answer. What did Peter know? You will die, but what else did he understand?

Your death will glorify God. It would be a sacrifice that glorified God. And you know, if you're willing to die for something, that something must be very important.

And his death would be a testimony that knowing Jesus, being with Jesus, being associated with him in death is an honor.

[30 : 40] And his blood and his life and his sacrifice would not be in vain. In fact, it would advance the gospel and that is what it did. For Peter to die a martyr's death, clinging to the hope of heaven, testifying to the love that he had received from the Lord, the love that he had for the Lord, and his desire to serve him and follow him totally was a testimony to other Christians and to the world.

There's something special and there's something better about Jesus. And that's what we see throughout the rest of his life. And so at the end of verse 19, after saying these things to him, Jesus said to Peter, follow me.

Now again, make no mistake, if Christ has called you to follow him, he's called you to follow him all the way. All the way. Sheep, like in this picture, travel in a herd.

They don't line up single file behind the shepherd. Their feet don't land in the exact same places. But the shepherd leads them all.

And he leads them all to the same destination, which is back home, safe in his fold. Jesus' demand that you be willing to sacrifice everything for him may take you to the foreign mission field.

[32 : 08] It may lead you to a martyr's death, but it may not. It may simply mean that you re-evaluate your priorities and your goals right now.

Maybe his will for you is that you stay right where you're at, but that you reconsider why it is that he has you there where you're at. Work hard.

Disciple your children. Serve others. Reach out to your neighbors. Invest in your friendships. Be a productive member of your community. be generous with your time and your talents and your treasures, but above all, do all of those things with the primary motivation that God, I hope that this glorifies you.

And if you do, you will not have wasted your life. God's love. But now you might hear those things and think, well, I haven't done that.

For so much of my life, my ambitions have not been to glorify God, but to glorify myself. And if you feel like that is you, well, guess what?

[33 : 25] You're still here. Which means there's still time. And it means that the Lord is not finished with you yet. A life lived sacrificially to the Lord is a life that glorifies the Lord.

It is an unwasted life. 1 Corinthians 10 31 encourages us, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

And here's the other thing I want to share about this point too. when the Lord calls a man or a woman to the mission field, when the Lord calls a man to serve as a pastor in his church, let's not scare them to death.

You know what I'm saying? Oh, that's dangerous. Do we not believe that the Lord has called them there and has a purpose for them to go? So let's not do that.

Okay. Number three. Jesus Christ demands that your focus be on him alone. Look again at verses 19 through 20. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?

[34 : 42] When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? Jesus said to him, if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. Now, the identity of that disciple isn't given, but we know that it's John, that John throughout his gospel wants the focus to be on Jesus and not on himself.

And so he gives us clues to indicate that it's him, and so it's John. That's who Peter is talking about. So at some point, Jesus and Peter get up from the charcoal fire and they go for a walk, I think, along the shore.

And you've got to wonder, like, what is John doing behind them? It's like John is, is he trying to eavesdrop or something? And we don't know, but he's kind of following behind a distance.

And Peter turns over, looks over his shoulder, sees John, and he says, what about John? What's going to happen to him? Now, Peter and John were close friends.

And so, I think there's a part of Peter that certainly is very concerned for what's going to happen to his good buddy.

[35 : 53] But I think that there's also something here that sheds light on how we are in this life, what we do in this life, which is that we constantly compare ourselves to others, don't we?

Measuring ourselves up against others, coveting what others have that we don't, and those things become distractions that take our focus off of Jesus.

They become distractions that cause us to see each other as enemies, even in the church, and to feel sorry for ourselves. That's not fair.

They have what I should have. And then, when that happens, we get angry with God for not blessing us or giving to us what somebody else has that we think we deserve.

You know what segment of the body of Christ that I think struggles with this sin of comparison the most? Pastors. Pastors.

[37 : 02] The undershepherds. Why? Well, I think part of it is because pastors and leaders in the church are hit hard with books and articles and conferences, and they all promise them that if they obey whatever is shared, they will have success in ministry.

And often, they are made to feel that their success in ministry is measured by the size of their church and the number of baptisms that they had and the number of new members that they've added each year. And so, they consume all of these materials and focus on them to help grow their church.

You know, here's five steps to double the size of your church in one year. Here's three steps to preach better, evangelize better, improve your youth ministry, and your missions engagement. And you know, sometimes those things can be helpful, but a lot of time, what they do is they fuel an attitude of comparison and competition.

And we think, you know, if only our church building was in that church's building's location, we would be doing so much better. No, if only I had the resources that that church had, we would be doing so much better.

Or personally, if only I had the intellect of someone like R.C. Sproul or Al Mohler or the passion of John Piper or the voice of Adrian Rogers or Alistair Begg or the communication skills of someone like Billy Graham, the charisma of this guy or that guy, I'd be so much better.

[38 : 48] And we do those comparisons instead of being thankful for those others and what the Lord has blessed them with and how he's used them to be a blessing to others in this church.

Instead, we compare and we covet. And when that happens, we lose our focus and we feel sorry for ourselves. And people who feel sorry for themselves do not serve the Lord or his church very well.

Unless we find someone who is less effective than us, right? Then we feel prideful. Oh, I feel good about myself when I see other people struggling or not being as successful as me.

And that can lead into an attitude of thinking, you know what? I'm irreplaceable. I am essential. Remember when we were going through everything with COVID and still are, but when you realized who the essential workers were, and if that was you, maybe you felt prideful, and if not, you're like, okay, that's a little humiliating.

I don't know. Or maybe you're just glad to not have to go into the office. But you know, if a pastor leaves a church and that church falls apart, then you can know that they made it about themselves and not about Jesus.

[40 : 15] Jesus, when your focus is on Christ, you stop comparing. Because you know that he has a work for you to do.

Just for you. Unique and specific to you. It's what he wants you to do. It's what he's desired you to do, and only you has he given that responsibility to do it.

He will not judge you according to your perceived superiority or inferiority to others. He demands that you be focused on him, not on other people. Because the place that he's positioned you, and the work that he's given to you, he's given only to you.

For a purpose and for a reason. And so Peter looked at John, and I think he's maybe thinking about some of this stuff, and he says, well, what about him?

If I have to suffer like this, does that mean he's going to have to suffer the same way as me? If I don't get to live a long life, does he get to live a long life?

[41 : 30] And you know what? I love the Lord's answer to Peter here. You have to love this. This is tough love right here. What does Jesus say to him?

That's not your concern. You know what? In fact, it ain't any of your business. You follow me. That's what you need to be focused on.

Me. Follow me. And follow in the Greek there, that's an imperative. That's a command. And so he's telling Peter, your focus and your concern is to be on me.

My will for your life. Comparison leads to competition. And if we are competing with one another in the church, we lose focus of the Lord.

And you know, if you're competing with a co-worker or if you're competing with a sibling or a teammate or a classmate, then you know what that's going to cause you to do, see them as an enemy instead of someone God has called you to minister to.

[42 : 43] If you compare, you lose focus of what Jesus has for you and where he is leading you. As Luke 9, 62 says, Jesus said to them, no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

And so, you know, if you're struggling with comparison and that's eating at you, you know what I think is very helpful? Pray for that person. Pray for them.

Pray for their good. Pray that God will bless them. And as you do that, God will change you in the ways that you view them. But if you take your focus off Jesus, if you look anywhere else but forward to where he is leading you, the lines behind you, the life behind you will be crooked.

It is impossible to follow Christ with a divided heart. And comparison will take your eyes off where they need to be to serve him well. And so now that John has shared these things with us, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he concludes this wonderful gospel with these words.

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things and we know that his testimony is true. Now there are many things that Jesus did were every one of them to be written.

[44 : 10] I suppose that the world itself would not contain the books to be written. And you know, I don't know if this will be the case in heaven, but I kind of think that it will and I certainly hope that it will, that all these things that weren't recorded are going to be things that we'll get to hear straight from the mouth of our Lord.

And I'm excited about that, aren't you? Imagine to be sitting around him and listening to him tell you all of these things. Maybe the disciples chiming in and, hey, tell him that story about that one thing.

But until then, may we commit our lives to following Christ well. Loving him above all others because of the great love that he has shown us.

Sacrificing our lives to advance his kingdom because of the sacrifice that he made to save us. And focusing our eyes on him because in Jesus we have one who will never, ever forsake us or lead us astray.

So what should we do with all of this? Well, the main point of application, total commitment to Jesus means following him and making him know.

[45 : 45] Maybe his will is to send you someplace else. Maybe his will for you is that you just stay exactly where you're at. And wherever he has you, that's your mission field.

That's your place. Follow him and make him know. Three questions of application for you to consider sometime today or maybe this week.

First of all, have you counted the cost of following Jesus? What have you heard about what it means to follow Jesus? And I encourage you to go back and look over those scriptures that I read, what Jesus says about the cost.

Are you truly committed to following him at any cost? And then number two, are your goals, dreams, and aspirations conformed to God's will for you?

And maybe it is that God is calling you to sacrifice something right now. What is God calling you to sacrifice right now as you follow him? This is going to take some prayer and some thought and some time alone with the Lord.

[46 : 57] And then question number three, who are you comparing yourself to today? Why? Why? That's a good question. Why? Do they have something that you want?

What's going on? And how is that taking your focus off Jesus? I hope you spend some time doing that right now. I'm going to pray and then in a moment we will have communion.

And during our time of invitation before then, I just encourage you to start thinking over those questions now. and commit yourself when we leave this place to following Jesus above anything and everything else.

Let's pray. Lord, this is a hard word for us to hear because we are creatures of comfort. God, you know us so well and you know that so often we set our life's ambitions and our life goal to be successful but for it to not cost anything in order to get there.

And Father, so often we contemplate our futures and what we hope to attain without considering at all whether or not it glorifies you or if it's even something that you want us to spend the life that you've given us pursuing.

[48 : 14] And so Lord, I pray for all of us that we would spend time today grappling with this word that we've heard from scripture and just with the aid of your spirit re-evaluating what it is that we're pursuing, what it is that are our goals and our ambitions.

And Lord, I pray for each of us that we would determine to follow you as you command, that we would keep our eyes forward and focused on you, that we wouldn't look back over our shoulders, that we wouldn't compare, that we would know that following you is better for us and it's the best thing that anyone could ever do because Father, we know that you'll never lead us astray and ultimately you'll lead us home to our true and heavenly home to be with you eternally.

And so Lord, may each of us, I pray today, determine to live our life for you and to make you known that you would be glorified by however this life that you've given us ends on earth.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.