

Finders Weepers, Losers Keepers (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, would you, and open them to our text for this morning.

We're still looking at Luke chapter 9, starting with verse 23. We started to look at this passage last week, verses 23 through 27.

And we're going to finish that this morning. And yet I will go ahead and tell you that really the passage and the kind of the flow of the narration here continues on beyond verse 27.

Even though the next event that takes place in Luke's record is the Mount of Transfiguration. What Jesus says here in our passage and how he ends that transitions us on further for what is going to happen in eight days later.

All right, so we're really not finishing a thought here. We're kind of finishing this section of it. And so let me go ahead and read the passage. Chapter 9, verses 23 through 27.

[1 : 15] Then he said to them all. And let me remind you that when he said all, he's talking about all the multitudes, the crowds, not just to the disciples. If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself destroyed or lost?

For whoever is ashamed of me and my words of him, the son of man will be ashamed when he comes in his own glory and in his father's and of the holy angels.

But I tell you the truth. I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God. All right.

Now, in verse 23, just to remind you of where we were last week. In verse 23, we have an invitation.

[2 : 25] We have Jesus' invitation. It's an invitation. This was our focus again last Sunday. And then in verses 24, 25, and 26, we have Jesus' explanation.

It's an explanation of the invitation. And then in verse 27, we have what I want to call an affirmation. An affirmation of what is in store for all those who respond to the invitation.

Respond in the right way, that is, to the invitation. All right. So Jesus begins with the invitation. And it's right there in verse 23. If anyone desires to come after me, that is, anyone desiring to be one of my disciples, let him or her deny himself, deny herself, and take up his cross daily.

Take up her cross daily, just to include all of us here, and follow me. That's the invitation. That's the invitation. It's a clear invitation. Now, it is not an invitation to some higher level of discipleship.

Let me remind you of that again. Because we could confuse this and think that, well, you know, I am a disciple, but he's calling me to the next level, a higher level. That's not what this is.

[3 : 49] And it's not also to a select number of his followers. You know, you might be thinking that he is issuing this invitation strictly to his apostles, and he is calling them to a higher level of discipleship.

So he has selected, in a sense, a certain number within the body of Christ to this higher level. And that's not it either. This is what it means to be a true believer of Christ.

This is what it means to be a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Deny yourself. Die to yourself. Dedicate yourself to follow Jesus no matter what it requires. No matter what the cost. That's not an invitation that we, that really makes us feel all warm and fuzzy inside about.

That's what it is. This is the invitation. And it's, and it is the only invitation. It is an all or nothing invitation. It is a gospel invitation.

[4 : 51] Jesus made it even stronger in Luke 14, 27. When he said, whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

That's pretty strong. That's pretty strong. And is that what you understood when you placed your faith, your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? In fact, Jesus went on in that passage in Luke 14 to say,

For which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost? So, the invitation, and we discussed all of this last week. But we're really not finished with the invitation. Because after the invitation, we have the explanation. We have a further explanation. And so, in the next three verses, Jesus gives us that. It's an explanation. So, after the invitation stated in verse 23, we then have, and it's very clear when you begin to read it, we have a series of explanatory statements. Three of them, as a matter of fact. Each one beginning with a conjunction. Now, that's important to note here. Each of the next three verses, 24, 25, and 26, each one begins with a conjunction. [6 : 14] It's the Greek conjunction *gar*, if you like to write down Greek words. At least write them down in English. And it's the word *for*. And you see that three times, don't you?

And by the way, here's a tip for all of you Bible studiers, and I hope that includes all of you. Pay attention to conjunctions when you're studying the Scripture, the English text even. Because they come out in our English text.

Pay attention to the conjunction. And every time you find one, ask this question. Conjunction, junction, what's your function? Remember that from Sesame Street? I learned that way back when my kids were very little.

What's the function here for this conjunction? And it's important. And it helps us in our Bible study. It helps us in order to connect things that appear in Scripture to other things that are in the context. And so it's important in our understanding and interpretation of the meaning of the passage. And so here in verses 24 to 26, we have the conjunction *for* being used three times.

[7 : 17] Three times. For whoever desires to save his life, that's verse 24. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, that's verse 25. And for whoever is ashamed of me and my words, verse 26.

All right, so the invitation and then the explanation. The invitation followed by three explanatory statements. Now, before we look at the explanation, let's notice something else.

In verse 23, that passage we looked at last week, Jesus gives us three marks of true discipleship. Remember? Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.

Those are three marks of discipleship. Deny, die, and dedicate. Again, that's ground we covered last week. But notice in verses 24, 25, and 26, Jesus gives us three points of explanation.

So we have three points or marks of true discipleship, followed by three points of explanation.

[8 : 29] And I will tell you that the three points of explanation, they correspond directly to the three marks of true discipleship.

And so we can put it this way, and we'll flesh this out in my sermon. Deny yourself, for whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

Die to yourself, for what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself destroyed or lost? Dedicate yourself, follow me, for whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory, his own glory, and of the Father and of the holy angels.

All right, now keep that in mind then. And let's consider the explanation. First of all, to explain what he means by deny yourself, Jesus states in verse 24 a paradox.

That's number one. To explain what it means to deny yourself, Jesus presents this paradox. It's a paradox here in verse 24. And I'm using the word paradox in this sense, a self-contradictory proposition.

[9 : 56] That's a paradox, or at least one definition of one. For example, I could make this statement, the truth is, I always tell lies. You get it?

That's a paradox. It's self-contradictory. So what about here in verse 24? The paradox stated by Jesus is this, for whoever desires to save his life will lose it.

And whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Now just on the face of it, that's a paradox. Put aside what you think he means by it, and no doubt many of you know exactly what he's talking about.

Put that aside for a moment. Just on the face of it, it's a paradox, and it's meant to be. It seems to be self-contradictory. That is, saving your life will lose it.

Losing your life will save it. That's a paradox. That's a paradox. It's self-contradictory. And Jesus loved to do that. In fact, this was one of his favorite, a favorite paradox of Jesus.

[11:02] I say it that way because I can't remember the plural of paradox. Anyway, it's a favorite paradox of Jesus. He used it at least three other times, separate times, than we have right here in our passage.

For example, he used it in Luke chapter 17, verse 33. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will keep it.

That's what he said in Luke 17, 33. So, there's the paradox. Keep, lose. Lose, keep. That's, by the way, why I entitled this series of messages, Finders, Weepers, Losers, Keepers.

But it's a paradox. It's self-contradictory just on the face of it. And then he used it also in Matthew 10, and verse 39, when he said, He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

It's a separate occasion here that he's using the same paradox. Find, lose. Lose, find. It's a paradox. It's self-contradictory.

[12:08] Using a slightly different form of paradox, Jesus said in John 12, and verse 25, He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Now, it's a little different kind of paradox. Love, lose. Hate, keep. Love your life, lose it. Hate your life, keep it.

And it's a paradox in the sense that it conflicts with common truth. It is contradictory to even biblical truth. Loving your life, lose it.

Keeping your life, save it. Or, or lose it. Keeping your life, lose it. Losing your life, keep it. All right, now, having said all that, Jesus never, ever contradicted himself.

Even though he's using what is clearly a paradox. He never contradicted himself. He certainly did not contradict scripture. And so, there must be something deeper here that we must consider.

[13:08] And so, I would say to you that to remove the contradiction, to pull away the paradox, we have to look a little closer. He said, for whoever desires to save his life will lose his life.

And then he said, whoever loses his life for my sake will save his life. That's what he said. Now, notice, of course, it's very obvious that the word save appears twice in the verse.

Doesn't it? As does the word lose. We'll get to lose here in just a minute. But the word save appears twice in the verse. And though it is the same Greek word both times, it's *sozo* in the Greek language.

There are two different meanings. It means something different. The first save, whoever desires to save his life, refers to the refusal to deny oneself.

An out and out rejection, refusal, an ongoing refusal to deny oneself. Like saying, I refuse to give up my life and what I want to follow you, Jesus.

[14:21] That's what it means, to save your life. But the second save in the verse, for my sake will save it, refers to the receiving of eternal life.

It means save in the theological sense, the doctrinal sense of *sozo*. It means salvation, eternal salvation. All right, now, likewise, of course, you have the word lose appearing twice in the passage. And again, it's the same Greek word in both cases. It's the word *apolumi*, and it means to lose. But they have two different meanings. The first lose, in the verse, to save his life, will lose it, refers to the suffering of eternal judgment.

Judgment in hell. The second lose, whoever loses his life for my sake, refers to the denial of oneself.

All right, so it corresponds with the first use of the word save. It refers to the denial of oneself. It's saying, I give up my life and all. I want to follow you, Jesus.

[15:32] That's what it's meant here. Now, when you put all that together, there's no paradox, is there? There's no paradox, no contradiction, when you understand, when you see what Jesus means here.

And so what is Jesus saying? We could put it all together. He's saying that if you refuse to deny your own self-centered, self-directed, self-absorbed life, in the end, you will suffer eternal judgment in hell.

But if you will deny your life for my sake, then you will receive, in exchange, eternal life. Eternal life. Do you get it? There's no contradiction. Do you remember what Jesus said way back there in verse 22? We looked at this a couple of weeks ago. He said, And the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected, and be killed, and then raised on the third day.

Remember that in verse 22. And when we studied that a couple of weeks ago, I also reminded you of a passage in Matthew 16, 22, which is a parallel to this passage.

[16:40] And I remind you of what Peter said to Jesus in response to that. Remember? Peter rebuked him, didn't he? He rebuked him. He said, Far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you.

And so he was saying, What? You're not going to the cross. You're not going to be rejected. You're not going to die. That's not going to happen. That's what Peter said to Jesus in response.

And Jesus said to Peter, What? Get behind me, Satan. He said, You are not setting your mind on the things of God. All right, now I remind you of that because I want you to think about this.

What if Jesus had received Peter's rebuke? What if he had accepted that as a point of wisdom, followed his advice there?

That is, what if Jesus had not denied himself to take up his cross? What would have happened?

[17:41] Well, no salvation. No eternal salvation. And the same principle, by extension, applies to all of his disciples.

That's what Jesus is saying. That same principle applies to you. Certainly in a somewhat different sense, but the same principle exists. See, Jesus is the example. He's our example.

In fact, that's the entire idea of Philippians 2.5, that famous passage. Let me read it to you. Let this mind be in you. What kind of mind?

A self-denial. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

That is, he didn't consider his status as equal, co-equal with God. He didn't consider that as something he had to just hold on to. But made himself of no reputation.

[18:40] He emptied himself. Gave up his full rights, at least while he walked this earth. Taking the form of a bondservant, a slave, and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man.

Now listen to this. He humbled himself. He denied himself. And became obedient to the point of death. And not just any death, but the death of the cross.

That is, he lost his life. He denied himself. Lost his life. And therefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him a name, which is above every name.

He saved his life. Lost his life. Saved his life. Save. Lose. Lose. Save. Jesus shows us that principle and the same thing applies to every one of us if we're going to be true disciples of Christ.

Refuse to deny yourself and lose your life in eternal judgment. Lose your life in self-denial for Jesus Christ and save your life in eternal salvation.

[19:43] Now, don't make a mistake here. I'm not talking about works unto salvation here. I'm talking about what true faith is. What truly believing in Christ means.

That's what Jesus is talking about. The paradox of true discipleship. Now, second, to explain what he means by die to yourself, Jesus states in verse 25, a proverb.

Proverb. So, first, a paradox. And now, a proverb. It's a proverbial kind of statement. Verse 25, For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself destroyed or lost?

It's a proverbial statement. Now, remember, and you have to kind of go back to last week, and I'll remind you a little bit here, to die to yourself means to willingly bear the hard things in this world, the hardships, the heartaches, the losses of any and every kind, knowing that God has ordained them, that indeed, God has prepared them for your eternal benefit.

Now, that's a hard thing to get a hold of, but that's what it means to die to yourself. And are you willing to take up that cross? Are you? I hope so.

[21:19] And not, which means not holding all things in this world so dear that Jesus and his kingdom are somehow of lesser importance, or maybe not important at all.

See, that's a difficult concept for us, for any of us, all of us, but especially, I would say, for those of us living in America.

It's a difficult concept. I mean, most of us have known nothing but abundance in life. And really, no matter where you are financially in America, typically we have more, I've always had, and we're used to having more than we need to live.

We're just used to that. And for most of us, much more than we need to live. And I'm afraid to say that the mindset of most Americans is keep everything I have, get what I do not have, and mourn over anything I lose that I have, any loss of anything that I have.

That's kind of the way Americans are. Keep what I have, get more of what I have, what I don't have, and mourn when I lose anything I have. And so with that kind of thinking, Jesus addresses that kind of thinking this way, die to yourself.

[22 : 37] Die to yourself. And he gives us this proverb here in verse 25 to show us how absurd this kind of thinking is. And not only absurd, but how dangerous it is.

And this is how he does it. He says, what if you could possess the entire world? Now, never mind that that's impossible. And just know that Jesus is not talking about what is possible here.

But rather, Jesus is talking about a way of thinking and a way of living that is incompatible to true discipleship. That's what he's talking about here. But what if you could have everything this world has to offer, what would you then have?

That's how our thinking needs to go. What would you have? Well, someone would say, well, quite a lot actually. I mean, if we had everything in the world, everything this world has to offer, we'd have a lot, right?

Well, you'd be partly right. You would have a whole lot of nothing. That's what you'd have. And what's worse, you would have nothing of a whole lot.

[23 : 55] So you'd have a whole lot of nothing, but at the same time, you'd have nothing of a whole lot. That is, you would have nothing of the only thing that really matters in eternity, and that's eternal life.

And that's what Jesus said. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself lost? Lost. And speaking of what you would have if you gained the whole world, I want you to look at John, 1 John chapter 2, verse 15.

Have your Bible there. Turn to 1 John chapter 2 and verse 15. And let me read that passage too.

You can follow along in your Bible, though it may be a different translation.

1 John 2, 15. The Apostle John says, Do not love the world or the things in the world.

You see that? That's pretty clear, isn't it? Do not love the world or the things in the world. Implication being anything in the world. Do not love it.

[25 : 06] And he says, If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Isn't that what he says? And then John tells us what the world has to offer.

Those who want have a desire for the whole world. I mean, that's their ambition. They have everything they can have in this world. then he tells us what that is. In verse 16, For all that is in the world.

And what does he say is the all in the world? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world.

That's what this world has to offer. What if you could gain the entire world? What would you have? You'd have the lust of the flesh that is sinful passions and cravings because that's all that's in the world.

You would have the lust of the eyes that is covetousness. So you not only have you know, your lusts gratified but also the things of your eyes that covetousness to get more things and things that other people have and you would have the pride of life which is self-honor and self-promotion self-aggrandizement and all of those things.

[26 : 30] That's what's in the world. So what if you could gain the entire world? That's what you'd have. And then he goes on to say and the world is passing away. All those other things that we think this world has to offer that a person would want and love to have and at least let me have part of it.

You know, a few million, okay, I'll just stop with that. All of those things are just passing away. They're all passing away.

What do you end up with? Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. Everything is passing away.

Even the lust of it is passing away. But he who does the will of God abides forever. It's the same concept. Die to yourself.

All that is in the world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. Do you remember what Jesus told a certain, the parable that he told about a certain wealthy farmer in Luke chapter 12 verse 16?

[27 : 35] Certainly you know this parable. Jesus said, Then he spoke a parable to them saying, the ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself saying, What shall I

do since I have no room to store my crops?

I don't have any room to store everything that I possess. And so he said, I will do this. I will pull down my barns and build greater barns. And there I will store all my crops and my goods and I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years.

Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul will be required of you.

then whose will those things be which you have provided? And then he adds this on the end. He says, So it is. So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

Die to yourself. Die to yourself. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself or herself destroyed or lost?

[28 : 55] See, this is Jesus' explanation to the invitation in verse 23. A paradox in verse 24 to explain what he means by deny yourself.

A proverb in verse 25 to explain what he means by die to yourself. And then third, to explain what he means by dedicate yourself.

He states in verse 26 a promise. There's a promise here. And it's a two-fold promise even though Luke only mentions the first part of the two-fold promise.

The second part is implied. Stated elsewhere in Scripture as we shall see. But it's a promise. Verse 26. For whoever is ashamed of me in my words of him the Son of Man that would be Jesus of course will be ashamed when he comes in his own glory and in his Father's and of the Holy Angels. Now you know that Jesus came the first time as a suffering servant, a Savior. But Jesus will come the second time as King and Judge, Judge of the world.

[30 : 09] Jesus came the first time in utter humility. Jesus will come the second time in all of his glory.

In fact, in the full glory of heaven, of God the Father and of all the holy angels, Jesus said. And who will stand on that day?

No one will. Philippians 2.10, Every knee shall bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. But for many, it'll be too late. It'll be too late because in life, they did not bow their knees to Jesus and did not confess Him as Lord with their tongues.

And Jesus will then have to confess on that day, I never knew you. Can you imagine the horror of hearing those words from the lips of Jesus?

[31 : 22] I don't know you. I never knew you. So you see, this is what Jesus promises in verse 26. He says, For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, which is the same as saying whoever denies me, disowns me, whoever refuses to follow me, that's what He's saying.

Of Him, the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory. This is a promise. This is a promise. You can count on this if you have not trusted, obeyed, and followed Jesus.

You can count on it. It's a promise. But there's another promise, of course, implied in the text because the opposite is equally true. That is true for those who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who follow Him in this life.

Matthew 10.32 gives us the other promise, states the promise, though it's implied in Luke. Matthew 10.32, Jesus says, Whoever confesses me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven.

Now what a day that will be. Huh? To hear Jesus say, I know you. I know you. But for many, the promise is quite different because He goes on to say in Matthew 10.33, But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.

[33 : 06] That's a promise. That's a promise. And Jesus never breaks a promise. And we're not talking about denying Him some lapse of faith.

We deny Him in many, many ways every single day. We're talking about here a focus of life, a decision of life, a movement of life, the pattern of your life is.

I deny myself for Christ. Christ. Whatever He wants, I want. Wherever He wants me to go, I will go. Whatever He wants me to do, I will do.

How I think, I want my thinking to be His thinking. I'm not looking out for my self and self-interest and self-promotion, but I am looking out for what Christ wants and the promotion of Christ and the promotion of His kingdom.

That's the explanation of the invitation. Third and finally and very quickly, the affirmation. There's an affirmation given here for all those who respond in the right way to the invitation.

[34 : 23] An affirmation of what that will ultimately be for you if you respond to His invitation. And it comes to us in verse 27 because verse 27 is intended to serve, I think, as a transition to the event recorded that follows in the next few verses and it is the transfiguration.

All three of the Gospels that include this passage about true discipleship follow it up with the transfiguration. And so I believe it's a transition. It's connected to the Mount of Transfiguration. We'll talk about that next week. And so this is connecting us. Verse 27 connects the passage that we've been studying here about true discipleship. It connects it with the awesome revelation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ when He is transfigured before His three apostles, Peter, James, and John, who are allowed to witness this.

Look at verse 27 again. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God. And again, He's speaking, I think, specifically talking about three of those standing there that day, Peter, James, and John.

And in the space of about eight days, these three are going to be invited by Jesus to the top of the mountain to pray with Him. And when they get there, God is going to kind of draw back the veil of heaven just a little bit.

[35 : 53] And He's going to allow these three apostles to see Jesus in all of His glorious splendor as the outshining of His glory is presented to them on the top of this mountain.

They're also going to see Moses and Elijah there as well. We'll study this next week. But the point is, they saw what one day all true disciples will see.

the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the point of this. All true disciples, those who have been, who have denied themselves for Christ, those who have died to themselves for Christ, those who have dedicated themselves to Christ will be rewarded in heaven and we will see our reward.

And some of those standing there that particular day got to see it early before they died as an affirmation, I think, to all of us. Affirmation of what we will all one day see with our own eyes, our glorified eyes.

We will see this one day. And that'll make this all worth it. See, that's the point. That'll make it all worth it. More than worth it. I mean, everything that we have denied ourselves for Christ, everything that we have suffered the loss of for Christ, every step that we have taken in this life bearing our cross for Christ and for His kingdom, it will be all worth it.

[37 : 23] And one day we will see King Jesus with our own eyes and we will see His kingdom. This is an affirmation of that, what these apostles were allowed to experience on that particular day.

Won't that be a great day? See, the invitation may sound hard, even impossible. And apart from the grace of God, it is impossible.

But it may seem hard, it may seem harsh, it may seem to be something that's not worth it. But get your eyes off of this world and focus upon that day when we will see Jesus in all of His glory and all of His splendor.

And everything that we have given up for Christ will seem like nothing. In fact, in comparison to Jesus, the things that we would sacrifice here are nothing.

No. The invitation, the explanation, and the affirmation.