



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Follow Me

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Part Two – Our Cost

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In just a moment, we're going to get into God's Word together. I do want to just piggyback on what Koby said. We just got done proclaiming that there is no one higher, greater, or more able than our God, and that's really what got most of us out of bed this morning on this Sunday morning. This Friday night, we're going to just focus our attention on the greatness of our God. We're going to share in Communion together. I really do hope many of you will make it back this Friday night at 7:00.

I also wanted to make sure you caught this before it runs past you. Our School of Discipleship classes are getting ready to start in the next week or two. We want to make sure you don't miss this opportunity. Some really good classes are going on.

There's a class on financial peace. If you just need to figure out how to get the finances in order and get them under control and in line with how God says to deal with that, boy, don't miss that class. There's a class on sharing Jesus without fear, how to talk to others about Jesus without being afraid. If you can benefit from that, please sign up for that also.

There's a class called Starting Point, a really good class. It may be that this is just the beginning of a new year, but more than that, maybe you're turning over a new leaf. It's a resolution to start growing again in your faith. That class is a perfect place at which to start that growth, just getting reacquainted with all the basics of what we believe to be true. I hope you'll take a look at those classes. You register for all of those online. Don't miss out on that.

If you are visiting with us today or you're new, it's a great Sunday to be here. We just started a message series last Sunday to begin the year. We're taking a little pause or a little break from what we usually do on Sundays. We've been in a verse-by-verse study through the gospel of Mark. We're just going to put that on hold for a little bit and we're going to take a look at what it means to follow Jesus.

Now, the premise or motivation for this series really comes from the fact that there is a growing confusion and frustration among Christians today. There is such a deconstruction of what biblical

Christianity really is in our culture that we have Christians running around confused as to what we actually are and what God requires of us.

The consequences of this deconstruction of Christianity as we're watching it before our very eyes have been very severe. Many churches and Christians no longer hold to the inerrancy or the authority of Scripture for their lives and faith. Some have even gone to the point of denying the need for individual conversion.

The cross is being reduced to some kind of a spiritual symbolism and it's no longer God's exclusive means for our forgiveness and salvation. I think the result of all that craziness today is that the difference between a true follower of Jesus and the person who merely admires Jesus from a distance is no longer distinguishable.

I think it's becoming dangerously vague in our day and age to know what the difference is between those who love Jesus and those who don't. That's why I think we need to go back to the Bible and figure out, once and for all, what we say we believe and what Jesus calls us to.

Last week, we did affirm in the Scriptures that becoming a follower of Jesus does require a supernatural change of course. We call that a *conversion*, a complete change of heart regarding Jesus and regarding my sin. That's what a conversion is. That change of heart is initiated by hearing and believing the good news about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and for our salvation.

Once we hear and believe, we repent. The result is our repentance for forgiveness and the removal of our sin. That repentance is confirmed by my baptism. Here's the exciting news. Last Sunday, we shared this message from the Bible about what it really requires to be a follower of Jesus and 30 people responded to the altar call to put their faith in Jesus and to be baptized. I think that's worthy of praise, don't you?

Here's what that tells us. That tells us normal people just want to know the truth. I think there's a lot of people left in our world who say, "What does it say? Just tell me what it says and what it means and let me decide!" I think so many churches today are trying to water it down, deconstruct it, and make it so acceptable in our world that nobody out in the world knows what in the world you and I believe in. So, we just say what it says and we believe what it says.

Today, we're going to talk about the cost of being a disciple, the cost of following Jesus. You see, while God's grace and forgiveness is free through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, it does not come cheap. Our conversion is not the end of the Christian road. It's the beginning of the Christian life.

This series is really a map. It's a road map of what discipleship looks like. So, I'm going to ask you to open your Bibles, if you haven't already, to Luke, chapter 9. Now, the context wrapped around Luke, chapter 9, is this. The crowds following Jesus are getting larger and larger. They're getting bigger and bigger and more and more unruly. More and more people want to get close to Jesus.

Yet what we know up to this point in Luke 9 is that they're not completely sure who he really is yet, but they love what he does and they love most of what he says. Then, Jesus says what we're going to read right now in the gospel of Luke, chapter 9, starting in verse 23. Let's stand for the reading of God's Word. Jesus is right now in the midst of a huge crowd.

"And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." Would you bow your heads with me just for a minute?

Dear God, we just remember today that you are merciful and gracious. God, you are slow to anger. You're abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Yet God, we also remember that your mercy and love are only toward those who fear you and that you will by no means clear the guilty. So, we thank you that in Jesus, you do not deal with us according to our sins, God. In Jesus, you promise that you remove our sins and you declare us righteous in your sight. For that, O God, we bless you. Our souls rejoice!

God, if there is anyone here today who feels far from you, who is tired, who is confused, trying to figure out how to live this life and be a Christian, I pray that you would open the eyes of those who need your grace, mercy, and hope. Open their spiritual ears and eyes to the truth about your love for them in Jesus. It's in his name we gather today. Amen.

What we have here in these few words of Jesus in Luke, chapter 9, are what I would just call the terms of engagement for true discipleship. He is saying, "This is what is required. These are the terms if you want to follow me." I think if I were to sum up the words Jesus just said, I think I would say it like this: *Jesus is not looking for fans; he's looking for followers.*

If you had to just wrap a sentence around what we just read, I think this is what it's saying. Jesus is not looking for admirers. He's looking for people to surrender to him. He's not looking for people to fit him into their lives. He's looking to take over our lives, and for good reason.

If you look at verse 23, Jesus starts out by saying, **"If anyone would come after me..."** In a more literal translation of that, if you were to go with the exact tense and voice of those words from the Greek, Jesus is saying, "If you are coming after me right now, if you want to be my disciple now, right now..."

The implication is that those to whom he is saying this, the crowds and even the Twelve, are not true disciples quite yet. They may be admirers. They may be fans, but they're not really followers. So, in other words, Jesus says, "Here's what's required. Let's be clear. If you want to

be my disciple, if you want to follow me, then this is what has to happen. You need to deny yourself and take up your cross daily."

Now, this is a command, church. This is not a suggestion. This is not a recommendation. This isn't Jesus saying, "You know, I'd really like to you consider..." This is absolutely in command form. He says here, "Hey, this is what has to happen if you're to call yourself my follower."

Now, I'm going to suggest to you that those two things, denying ourselves and taking up our cross, are synonymous. One explains the other. The other pictures the other. It's the same thing in two different ways. "I want you to deny yourself. I want you to take up your cross every day." You see, Jesus doesn't have a literal cross in mind. He's not saying to us, "I want you to go build a cross and carry it around. Put it in your car and take it to work and school." He's not saying that in a literal sense. I'll explain that more in a minute.

Yet there's a second command to these terms of engagement here. If you look at the end of verse 23, he says, "I want you to deny yourself. I want you to take up your cross every day and *follow me*. That, as well, is in command form, but it includes the future. It has a future tense to it. The implication to this command to follow involves a continuous action without stops and starts. It's to continue without stopping.

So, if we were to take all of this meaning and pack it into what Jesus said, here's what he's saying. He's saying, "If you are truly my disciple now, if you've repented of your sin and you've been baptized, then I command you to deny yourself, pick up your cross, start following me, and keep following me all the way into my eternal kingdom." That's what he's saying. "If you are my disciple, this is what it means. This is what it requires."

What does it look like to deny self? What does a daily cross-carrying disciple look like? Well, the good news is we don't have to look very far to find some real-time explanations of this. In fact, right in the very chapter we're in, in chapter 9 of Luke, I just want you to look toward the end of the chapter at verse 57, because now we're going to see what Jesus meant by this.

In verse 57, it says, "**As they were going along...**" They were kind of walking away from the crowd and moving along the road now. "**...someone said to [Jesus], 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'**"

This person appears to be all-in, doesn't he? He's saying, "Jesus, I want to be with you and I'll go wherever you go. Yet based on Jesus' response, it's obvious that this would-be follower has more country club in mind than he does a cross. In essence, with that response, Jesus is saying, "Following me will not be easy. It is not easy to be my follower. I have no home here. This is not my final destination."

He looks at the guy, and in essence he's saying, "You see all the big crowds right now. You see all the popularity right now, but this is temporary. It will end. It won't last." So, Jesus knows this

man has the wrong expectations. I think he represents, maybe, a couple of different people in the church today.

He represents the person who goes to church but who still arranges their calendar and all of their resources of their life around their personal preferences, personal pleasures, and conveniences. "I'll follow Jesus as long as he doesn't kind of get in the way too much." That's one person I think this guy represents.

He can very well represent another type of Christian in the church today. He may represent the Christian who goes to work or school every day in a not-so-Jesus-friendly place. So, this person leaves Jesus, his Bible, and his Christianity at home. When he goes to work, school, or somewhere else, on his team he plays on, or whatever, he tries to remain undetected. Then, when he comes home or goes to church, he picks up his Bible, his Jesus, and his Christianity and then he has it again.

I think neither one of these types of Christians are prepared to live the life of a faithful disciple. Look at verse 24 out of that little passage we just read. In verse 24, Jesus says, "**For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.**" I think Jesus means right there is that following him is...

1. *A radical call to suffer and endure.* That's how he's describing discipleship. Jesus says here, "If you want to save your life, if your main purpose is to achieve your life's ambitions and goals with the least amount of inconvenience, with the least amount of pain and sacrifice, fine. You can do that, but you can't be my disciple and live that way. You'll never be able to follow me and live that way as well." He's telling us that true followers are self-denying, cross-carrying followers.

That means this place is not our home. This is not our final destination when we're following Jesus. You see, the cross, when we pick it up every day, represents the promise that Jesus died for us, paid for our sins with his own blood, rose from the dead, and guaranteed us an eternal inheritance of eternal life with him forever. Yes, that's what the cross represents, but it also represents our own death. Not just the death of Jesus but our own death.

I think the apostle Paul captures the meaning of Jesus' words best when he describes this mindset of being a disciple. Paul says, "**I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...**" Paul is saying that when Jesus died, we died with him, Christian.

Jesus chose the radical tactic of self-sacrifice to reveal that he is the leader we can trust. So, by surrendering our sovereignty, by laying down our lives and picking up his cross, our lives are not lost. They are saved. That's what Jesus is saying.

Jesus warns, though, in John 15, "**Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.**" Later on, he

says, in Matthew 10, "**...and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**"

Don't you find it interesting that in the context of being a disciple, Jesus uses three words: *persecuted*, *hated*, and *endurance*. When was the last time in the modern day you've heard an invitation to follow Christ with those three words?

"Hey, I have good news. Jesus has died for you. He has taken the punishment for your sin. He has paid the price for your forgiveness. Repent and follow him. By the way, expect that persecution is coming. Expect that a lot of the people whom you thought were your friends are going to hate you. Expect that you're going to have to endure a lot of stuff if you're going to follow Jesus to the end." When was the last time you heard it said like that? Yet that's exactly how Jesus says it.

You see, at the heart of the Christian gospel is Jesus' offer to be the leader we can trust, but he also insists that we become the followers he can trust. Jesus is saying, "If you're going to follow me, you need to decide that you're going to deny yourself and pick up your cross every day, because that cross will remind you of what I have done for you and of what you've walked away from." Wow.

There's another example of what it means to deny self and carry a cross. If you go back to verse 59 of the same chapter, it says, "**To another [Jesus] said, 'Follow me.'**" I don't know how he did it. I don't know if he pointed him out. I don't know if he came up and put his arm around him and said, "Hey, I want you to follow me." I don't know how that took place.

He says, "**'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' And Jesus said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'**" What in the world does that mean? This appears to be a good person, a good man, but apparently his dad must have been getting older. Perhaps this man's inheritance is at stake. It's in play. For this guy, if Dad didn't approve of him just uprooting, leaving, and going to follow Jesus, he stood to lose everything, possibly.

I think that's what Jesus' answer exposes about this man's heart. He's saying to this guy, "Listen. Your dad has nothing of value to add to your life. He's spiritually dead. He has no fear of God. If you truly want to follow me, if you want abundant and everlasting life, you have to deny that and take up your cross every day because I'm calling my followers to proclaim God's kingdom and the immeasurable riches of his grace, not the riches of this world."

Once again, I think this guy represents Christians who are in churches who say, "Yes, I have brought all my sins to Jesus. I have repented and been baptized and I believe Jesus died for me on the cross, but I really don't have time right now to pick up a cross. I don't have time to pick up my cross. That'll have to wait until I finish school. I have a lot of stuff going on. I'm working. I'm going to school. I don't have time until my career path is a little bit more advanced and stable."

Or, "I don't have time to pick up my cross right now because I'm working on getting out of debt. I am in debt up to here. I have student loans up to here," or whatever the case. "I need to get some money in the bank. I'll pick up my cross when I figure that out. Listen, Jesus. I'll deny myself. I'll pick up my cross when my investments or my business is on a little bit firmer ground and I can free up more time."

Look what Jesus says in relation to that. Go back to the passage we read, verse 25. **"For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"** I think following Jesus, according to those words, is...

2. *A radical commitment to treasure Jesus above every and all worldly treasures.* That's what Jesus is saying in that verse, and that's what he is communicating back to the man who wants to go back and bury his father. Jesus is saying, "Following me means I am your most valuable treasure."

When we take up our cross every day, we're reminded that God has taken care of and provided for our greatest need and he paid for it with the blood of his very own Son. When we hold that cross, we're saying, "He has taken care of our greatest need. How will he not take care of our basic needs?" That's what the cross means when we take it up every day.

Jesus said, in Matthew 13, **"...the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."** Interesting. Jesus is using an example of a man or person who's hunting for pearls. That's his search.

All of a sudden, he's on some land and he finds this massive, beautiful pearl of great worth and value, and he says, "I have to have it. Nothing else matters." He goes and gives up everything he has to get that one pearl. That's what he means when he says, "Who cares if you gain every amazing pearl in the world but you forfeit your very soul?"

In Matthew 6, Jesus said it a little clearer. He says, **"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."** Again, Paul captures the meaning of these words, what it means to pick up our cross daily, perfectly when he says, in 1 Timothy 6, to not set your **"...hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy."**

I think the message has to be this: If the overriding ruling demands on your life, your calendar, and your schedule revolve around your financial security, financial goals, or financial concerns, then Jesus is saying, "You're not following me. You cannot be my disciple and have that ruling your life. You have to surrender control to me and trust me to take care of you. You have to live for me." Those are the terms.

Just when you think that's clear enough, another person walks up to Jesus. Look at verse 61. **"Yet another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my**

home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" Now, you look at this man (I think it's a man) and he says, "Jesus, I'm ready to go. I want to follow you. Let me run home really quick. Let me say goodbye to my family and my friends."

Then Jesus starts talking about plowing. Practically speaking, they got it immediately, because in agriculture, if you're going to plow, especially back in the day when you were walking behind one with two horses or a mule pulling the plow, it would be imperative to focus your view forward or the furrows in the ground will be crooked, making it difficult, if not impossible, to harvest that crop. They got it immediately.

So, I think we can say that this person who wants to follow Jesus represents all those Christians who have brought their sins to the cross and believe his shed blood paid the price for their forgiveness and salvation... This person has been baptized, potentially, as a celebration of what Christ has done for them on the cross, but here's where this guy comes into view. He represents the people who really struggle to leave behind the old life. That's who he is.

See, Jesus isn't asking him to abandon his family. He's not asking him to abandon his friends, not at all, but Jesus knows following him may include being abandoned by our family and friends. In his divine wisdom, Jesus knows this guy's heart. He represents the people who want Jesus but can't or won't cut ties with the sinful past. That's who he is.

Even though they may be a constant source of temptation to sin, this person will not let go of relationships and the activities connected to those relationships for fear that they might lose their friendship or respect. This person says, "I don't want those people to think I'm judging them. I don't want them to think I'm self-righteous. I don't want them to drop me as their friend, so before I can pick up my cross, I just have to make sure I stay in touch with the sinful past."

Jesus isn't saying, "Walk away from every person you've ever known before." What he's insinuating about this guy is that this guy wanted to go back and make sure they were going to still like him and call him their friend or family member if he followed Jesus. Look at verse 26. Go back to the passage we read. **"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory..."** Being an unashamed follower of Jesus requires...

3. *A radical transfer of our loyalty to Jesus.* The cross is a daily reminder, you guys, of who loves us most as well as who we say we love the most. Jesus must be our most important intimate relationship commitment on this earth, and every other relationship must take second place. It's radical.

Listen to Jesus in Matthew 10. **"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."** That is pretty radical, wouldn't you say? See, when we deny ourselves and take up that cross every day, we're reminded every day that there's nothing we can do to make God love us more and there's nothing we can do to make him love us less. His love is unconditional. His love is unending.

Yet it's also a reminder to ourselves of who we love the most, that we're not ashamed. We're not going to park that cross over in the corner so some past friends or family members are still okay with us. No. You see, I think these words of Jesus in Luke 9 are meant to be really good news. They're meant to be good news for those who are just tired of working to control every detail of their lives and still wanting to try and figure out how to surrender every detail to Jesus. This is really good news.

This is Jesus saying, "Listen. The Christian life was not meant for you to try to live on two different roads. There's only one road. It's the road I'm on. Now come to me. Deny yourself. Pick up your cross and walk with me." I think Jesus is saying truly following him does not happen on a head level. It has to happen on a heart level. That's what he's talking about here. He's saying, "It's not about the fact that you agree with everything I've said or you agree with the Bible or you agree with the cross. It's about you living your life that includes the cross.

He's saying, "I'm the leader your heart has been longing for. I'm the leader you can trust with your life." In a room with this many people, some of you have laid down your sin at the foot of the cross, you have asked Jesus to forgive you, you trust in his death and resurrection, but you haven't picked up your cross.

Others of you, you did pick up your cross. There was a time when you got this, when you know your life was surrendered to his control, and somewhere along the line, you laid it down. The concerns, struggles, and suffering of this life have caused you to lay it down. You're not even sure where it is anymore. You're the very one Jesus says these words to. He says, "Come to me now. Deny yourself again. Take up my cross and keep following me."

In just a minute, we're going to have an altar call today. It's going to be an invitation to pick up your cross, to rededicate your life. Some of you in this room... You're a believer, but it's time for you to say, "I'm starting over." It may mean that for you, you have to cut some ties with the past. It may mean that's what you have to decide right now. "All right. It's not that I don't care about them. It's not that I don't love them, but I have to cut ties with the sinful past once and for all."

For others, it may mean that today you have to reestablish that Jesus is truly your greatest treasure, your most valuable treasure. Everything about your pursuits, your calendar, and everything is going to come in line with his priorities for your life, not the world's priorities for your life.

For someone else in this room, it could be that it's time that you have to commit to be willing to suffer if God should call you to suffer. You have to commit to endure. You can't be a different person at work, at church, at school, in your neighborhood, when you go to the in-laws', or whatever. You have to take your cross with you to all those places.

For some of you today, you know exactly what I'm talking about. It's time for you to deny yourself and take up your cross every day. For some of you, it's time to be baptized. Others of you have already been baptized. Today, you just need to pick up your cross.

Now, before I invite you to rededicate your life and to be baptized, I want to share with you an invitation to be a true disciple of Jesus that my father-in-law wrote several years ago. It perfectly captures what Jesus is saying here. He simply titled it, "So You Want to Be a Disciple?"

"So you want to be a disciple of Jesus? You want to cast your lot with him? You want to be identified as one of his? I bid you count the cost. Appraise the sacrifice. Contemplate long and hard before you leap. So you want to be a disciple? Then expect hardship, rejection, discrimination, ill treatment, no-thank-yous, and misunderstandings.

Do you want to be a disciple? Then get ready for action, for tiredness, for deprivation and loneliness. So you want to be a disciple? Be ready to pay any price, go any distance, penetrate any barrier, climb any mountain, swim any river, descend to any depth, or work any length as a servant of Jesus Christ, but be prepared to spend or be spent, to go or stay, walk or lie down, to speak or be silent, to go forward or backward.

So you want to be a disciple? Be ready to walk with Jesus when he walks through fields of unpopularity and streets of hostility and roads of rejection. Be prepared to follow even when his steps take you through suffering, persecution, humiliation, and yes, maybe even death. Be ready for living or dying, nothing or everything, giving or receiving, coming or going, rest or work, peace or war. That's the price, and it never goes on sale."

I'm going to ask you to bow your heads right now and just sit very still. Be respectful of those around you, please. With your heads bowed, I believe I know that for some of you, you are relieved right now. You are finally feeling the pressure begin to lift. You're realizing now why it has been such a heavy walk, why it has been such a Christian life that just has been so frustrating, trying to figure out how to fit Jesus into this crazy life this world requires you to live. You're tired. You're exhausted of that.

Jesus is inviting you today. He's saying to you, "That's not how I intended you to live. Come to me. Give up the control of your life and pick up your cross." In just a minute, we're going to stand together and sing. If you want to be a disciple, a true follower of Jesus, the minute we start singing, I'm going to invite you to walk forward down one of these aisles. I'm going to invite you to once and for all pick up your cross, never to put it down again.

Father in heaven, I pray that you would do the miracle of faith in this room, that you would just pour into the hearts of those who know this is what they've been needing to hear. Pour into their hearts a peace, a courage, a joy, and a hope that they haven't had in a long time, that today is a new beginning of a closer walk with you. God, may you do impossible things in our hearts right now. In Christ's name, amen.

In just a second, we're going to stand, and as soon as we start singing, church, no shenanigans. No emotionalism. No manipulation. As soon as we start singing, all you need to do if you want to be a disciple, if you are ready to take up your cross, is just turn to the side. The people next to you will step back and let you out. We're just going to gather right here and I'm going to pray for

you. Let's get to our feet right now and let's begin to worship. As soon as we begin to sing, you come. You come.

[Song]

Christ is my reward
And all of my devotion
Now there's nothing in this world
That could ever satisfy

Through every trial
My soul will sing
No turning back
I've been set free

Christ is enough for me
Christ is enough for me
Everything I need is in You
Everything I need

[End of song]

I'm so grateful for those of you who are already here. For some of you, I know your heart is racing. A lot of us have been where you are right now when we realized this isn't the Christian life Jesus called me to live. I know it. People around me know it. The most frightening thing you have right now is to let go of that seat back in front of you that you're white-knuckling and to literally say, "When I let go, I let Jesus."

I want to give you one more chance to take up your cross once and for all. We're going to sing that verse one more time, and so I want to invite you. Come. Don't leave here with regrets. I want you to come right now and take up your cross forever. Let's sing it and you come. Come on.

[Song]

Christ is my reward
And all of my devotion
Now there's nothing in this world
That could ever satisfy

Through every trial
My soul will sing
No turning back
I've been set free

Christ is enough for me
Christ is enough for me
Everything I need is in You
Everything I need

[End of song]

I'm going to ask all those of you who are up front right now if you'll turn and face me. I think sometimes in those few steps from the seat to this stage, something miraculous happens in our heart because we realize we have nothing to offer him except our hearts. You don't have anything God needs. He has everything you need, and he calls you today to trust him in that.

For some of you, there are going to be some big decisions you have to make, even today and this week, but you've made the first decision. "Jesus, I'm picking up my cross and I'm not putting it down." I just want to pray for you now as you've come, and I'm going to ask you to bow your heads.

Father in heaven, you knew a million years ago that these people would be sitting in this service to hear this message. You knew, God, that today was the day where they turned their hearts and faces completely toward you. So, God, I pray that you will fill them with a peace, a joy, and a hope that comes from knowing that the more they surrender, the more you lead and control.

God, I pray now that this altar call would be a time of remembrance for the rest of their lives. No more trying to live sitting on the throne that you only are meant to occupy, so today may be the day. Lord, we love you and we praise your holy name, amen.

For every one of you who came forward, we just want to get something from you. We want to know you're here today. We want to potentially help you take those next steps of what it means to take up your cross every day. We're not going to take you to a dark room in the back of the building.

There's not going to be any shenanigans. You're just going to move about 25 feet to your right, and there are some people over here who just want to get your name. We want to be praying for you this week. We want to help you take those next steps, so I'm going to ask you all, kind of all at once, to just turn that way. There's Pastor Steve. Steve, lead them over there to that side of the room. It'll be about 45 seconds and you'll be done.

Church, can we praise God today? Can we thank God for what he has done? "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free." I ask that you would be praying all week for these next few messages, because we believe God wants us to know the truth, so pray that God would show up and do very much like what he has done today and last Sunday.

I can't wait to see you back here next week. God bless you.