

FOLLOW ME - *What Does It Mean to Follow Jesus?*

INTRODUCTION

Church family, over the last several weeks we've been in our series:

LET JUSTICE ROLL - *From the Altar to the Streets*

And if Amos has done anything, Amos has exposed the difference between outward religion and real discipleship.

Amos confronted worship gatherings that had sound...
but no surrender.

Songs... but no righteousness.

Religious activity... but no transformation.

And what makes Amos so uncomfortable is this:

The people of Israel still believed they were close to God.

They still gathered. Still sacrificed. Still sang. Still practiced religion.

But God says in Amos 5: "Take away from me the noise of your songs..."

Why? Because worship that never reaches your life eventually becomes noise.

That's the tension Amos leaves us with. So the question becomes:

What does authentic Christianity actually look like?

What kind of person carries the heart of God into the world?

What kind of person lives "from the altar to the streets?"

And Jesus answers that question clearly in Luke 9:23–25.

Not with a suggestion. Not with motivational advice. But with a call.

“Follow Me.” Not admire Me. Not occasionally acknowledge Me. Not fit Me into your schedule when it’s convenient. Follow Me.

And family, I think we have to wrestle honestly with this in the modern church.

Because we have created versions of Christianity where someone can:

- attend church regularly,
- know worship songs,
- post Bible verses,
- listen to sermons,
- consume Christian content...

...and still never truly follow Jesus. PAUSE.

BIG IDEA: Jesus never asked for fans—He called disciples.

MAIN TEXT In Luke 9, Jesus says:

- deny yourself,
- take up your cross daily,
- follow Me.

This is the essence of discipleship.

Not partial surrender.

Not selective obedience.

Not emotional moments disconnected from real transformation.

Jesus is calling people into a completely different way of living.

And notice something important:

Jesus says this publicly.

This was not hidden in a private leadership meeting.

Jesus wanted the crowd to understand:
following Him would cost something.

And church, that message still matters today.

Because we live in a culture that wants the benefits of Jesus without the
surrender of discipleship.

But Jesus never separated the two.

POINT 1 — JESUS WILL NOT SHARE THE THRONE

Jesus begins with these words:

“Deny yourself.”

This is one of the most countercultural statements in all of Scripture.

Because the spirit of the age says:

- elevate yourself,
- protect yourself,
- express yourself,
- build your truth,
- pursue yourself.

But Jesus says:

“If you want to follow Me, self cannot remain on the throne.”

At the center of discipleship is surrender.

Not self-help.

Not behavior management.

Surrender.

The Greek language here carries the idea of refusing to make self ultimate.

It is a rejection of self-rule.

And this matters deeply because sin at its core is not merely bad behavior.

Sin is disordered worship.

It is placing self where only God belongs.

That's why holiness is not merely about avoiding certain sins.

Holiness is about full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

This is deeply Wesleyan.

God is not merely trying to make us morally improved people.

He is forming a holy people whose hearts are fully yielded to Him.

That's why Romans 12:1 calls us to become living sacrifices.

Notice the language:

living sacrifice.

In the Old Testament, sacrifices were placed fully on the altar.

Paul says now *our lives* belong on the altar.

Our ambitions.

Our desires.

Our relationships.

Our future.

Our identity.

Everything.

And this is exactly where Amos confronted Israel.

They wanted worship without surrender.

But God has never wanted disconnected worship.

He has always desired hearts fully devoted to Him.

Church, real revival is not louder singing.

Real revival is deeper surrender.

“You cannot enthrone yourself and follow Jesus at the same time.”

And honestly, this is the great battle of discipleship.

Who sits on the throne?

Self? Or Jesus?

Because Jesus is not an addition to your life. He is Lord over it.

POINT 2 — THE CROSS ISN'T SYMBOLIC—IT'S PERSONAL

Jesus continues: “Take up your cross daily.”

Now we have to slow down here because we hear “cross” differently than the first disciples did.

For us, the cross is familiar.

We wear crosses. Put them on buildings. Sing about them. But in the first century, the cross was horrifying.

It was Rome’s instrument of public execution.

So when Jesus says: “Take up your cross,”

He is not talking about inconvenience. He is talking about death.

Death to pride. Death to self-rule. Death to the version of life centered on self.

And notice: Jesus says “daily.”

Not once. Daily. Every day discipleship requires surrender.

Every day we choose:

- obedience over convenience,
- holiness over compromise,
- faithfulness over comfort,
- mission over selfishness.

And this confronts something deeply embedded in Western Christianity.

We have often preached a version of faith that centers comfort more than discipleship.

But Jesus never promised comfortable Christianity.

In fact, in Luke 14:25–33 Jesus explicitly tells people to count the cost.

Why? Because Jesus is not recruiting fans. He is forming disciples.

And family, this is where the church must recover clarity.

Salvation is by grace alone. We do not earn God's love.

But grace does not eliminate surrender. Grace empowers surrender.

Titus 2 teaches that grace trains us to say no to ungodliness.

Real grace transforms us.

That means discipleship changes:

- how we spend money,
- how we treat people,
- how we respond to conflict,
- how we handle sexuality,
- how we pursue justice,
- how we forgive,
- how we live publicly.

The cross is not merely something Jesus carried.

The cross becomes the shape of the disciple's life.

Carry Line

“Everybody wants resurrection power—but nobody wants crucifixion.”

We love crosses on necklaces...

but resist crosses in real life.

But church, the cross is not decoration for the disciple. It becomes the shape of our lives.

POINT 3 — REAL DISCIPLES DON'T STAY COMFORTABLE

Jesus then says:

whoever loses their life for His sake will save it.

This is the upside-down kingdom of God.

The world says:

protect yourself.

Jesus says: pour yourself out.

The world says: build your platform.

Jesus says: serve others.

The world says: live for comfort.

Jesus says: live on mission.

And this brings us right back to Amos.

From the altar to the streets. Because discipleship never stays private. It moves outward. A real disciple cannot encounter Jesus deeply and remain unchanged toward people.

You begin to care about:

- justice,
- mercy,
- compassion,
- holiness,
- evangelism,
- generosity,
- reconciliation.

Why?

Because disciples begin reflecting the heart of the One they follow.

That's why Jesus says in Matthew 5:13–16 that we are salt and light.

Salt affects what it touches. Light changes the environment around it.

Church, we are not called to hide in church buildings waiting for heaven.

We are sent people.

That's why our mission is:

Reach. Teach. Mend. Send.

A disciple reaches people with the Gospel.

A disciple teaches truth faithfully.

A disciple participates in restoration.

A disciple lives sent.

And this is where the church must mature.

Christian maturity is not measured merely by how much Scripture you know.

It is measured by how much your life looks like Jesus.

“Discipleship that never reaches the streets is incomplete.”

If your faith never changes your life,
it may never have changed your heart.

Real disciples do not stay comfortable.

They carry Jesus into the world.

GOSPEL MOMENT

And here is the beauty of the Gospel. None of us have followed Jesus perfectly.

We have all drifted. All resisted surrender. All fallen short. But Jesus carried the cross before He ever asked us to carry ours.

He perfectly obeyed the Father. Perfectly embodied justice and mercy. Perfectly loved. Perfectly surrendered. And at the cross, justice and mercy met together.

Jesus took upon Himself the weight of sin so that through His death and resurrection we could be forgiven, transformed, and made new.

And through the Holy Spirit, discipleship becomes possible.

Not through striving alone.

But through surrender and sanctifying grace.

RESPONSE MOMENT

And today, even though this service is online and pre-recorded, I believe the Holy Spirit is still speaking.

Because God is not limited by a screen.

So I want to ask you honestly: **Are you following Jesus— or merely admiring Him from a distance?**

Maybe today the Holy Spirit is exposing:

- compromise,
- comfort,
- passivity,
- divided allegiance,
- surface-level Christianity.

But hear the invitation of Jesus again: **“Follow Me.”**

Not halfway. Not occasionally. Fully.

And wherever you’re watching from today, I want you to take a genuine moment before God.

Maybe you need to repent.

Maybe you need to surrender something.

Maybe you need to recommit your life fully to Christ.

Maybe you need to stop living as a spectator and become a disciple.

But don’t just consume this message.

Respond to Jesus.

SETTING UP THE NEXT SERIES

And church, this is why over the coming weeks we’re stepping into a new series called:

THE RADICAL DISCIPLE

Because if we’re honest, the modern church has often settled for a version of Christianity that is:

- shallow instead of surrendered,
- informed instead of transformed,
- comfortable instead of costly.

But Jesus never called us to casual Christianity.

He called us to discipleship.

And over these next weeks, we're going to wrestle with questions like:

- What does it mean to truly be different from the world?
- What does it mean to actually become like Jesus?
- What does spiritual maturity look like?
- How do we live free from materialism and comfort?
- What does dependence on God actually look like?
- What does it mean to die to self so we can truly live?

Because family, a radical disciple is not someone who follows Jesus with part of their life.

A radical disciple is someone who follows Jesus with their whole life.

And I believe this next season is going to challenge us...
stretch us...
form us...
and deepen us.

Not just into church attenders.

But into disciples.

And I want to encourage you:
don't just attend this next series.

Engage it.

Join a summer book club.
Read along each week.
Discuss it with others.
Pray through it.
Let God form something deeper in you.

Because this next season is not just about gaining information.

It's about transformation.

CHALLENGE

This week, ask yourself daily:

- What does surrender look like today?
- What cross do I need to carry today?
- How is Jesus calling me to live differently today?
- Does my worship reach the streets?

Because discipleship is not built in a moment. It is formed daily.

CLOSING DECLARATION

Church family, we are not building spectators. We are forming disciples.

People whose worship reaches their lives.

People who carry the heart of God into the world.

People who deny themselves,

take up their cross,

and follow Jesus fully.

And over these next weeks, we're going to learn what radical discipleship actually looks like.

Not halfway.

Not occasionally.

Fully.

So this week— go not merely as people who watched a service... but as disciples.

From the altar... to the streets. And let justice roll!