

For Such a Time as This:
No Reserves. No Retreats. No Regrets.
(Luke 9:18-26)

Hello, Newsong!

My name is JoMaris, and I am the Next Steps director here at Newsong Church.

We are in the middle of an awesome series called “For Such a Time as This” – where some of the young voices of the church are answering the question: what is one thing you would say to your generation? To Any generation?

Our Series verse Esther 4:14: ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

This is a man named Mordecai speaking to Queen Esther about the impending destruction of the Jewish people. He is telling her you have a chance to stop this. As a Jewish woman, her life is in jeopardy as well. But he tells her maybe you were put into the position of Queen so you could save your people.

And it makes me think maybe you and I are in difficult circumstances, but God has allowed us to be there so He could position us for something great.

Not what the world calls great, which is temporary, but what God says is great, which makes a mark in eternity.

I believe you and I were born for such a time as this. We are alive in 2025 for this time, not by chance, accident or mistake, but on purpose, for purpose.

No matter your background, no matter your race, no matter your gender, no matter the body or the ability you have or do not have, no matter your intellect or individualities, you are not disadvantaged, disowned, or disqualified when you belong to the kingdom of God.

I want to share a story.

A few years ago, I made an appointment with a fancy dermatologist in midtown Manhattan. They let you do everything online. Check in, medical history, credit card, every signature you need.

As I'm approaching the day of the appointment, I realize I'm going to be busy. I won't be able to make it. Finally, it's the day of the appointment and I have to call.

So, I call, and I'm on the line with the receptionist. I say, I'm so sorry, I can't make it to my appointment today. I'm sorry this is so last minute.

And the lady says, "no problem, we don't even have you in the system."

She said it's a good thing we don't have you, because if you don't cancel your appointment within 24 hours, you have to pay a fee of \$350.

Once I hung up, I went into their system and deleted my credit card from my profile. And I started reading the fine print on all these forms to figure out where does it say \$350 charge.

Needless to say, I did not go back there, but that whole experience makes me think. I wonder how many of us have signed up for something, but when the time came, we never showed up? We committed to something, we put down our name, but we didn't follow through?

There is always a cost to commitment. There is a cost that is required of you when you follow Christ. But what you gain in Christ is so much greater than anything you leave behind.

The question I would ask my generation is: are you all in for Jesus?

When I think about Christianity in this nation, I think about those surveys where they ask for your religion. The majority of America would checkmark "Christian." Maybe you would, too.

But even if I take my pen and I check the box "Christian", that doesn't mean that the way I speak, the way I act, how I think and how I live reflects Christ.

And yet you go through the Bible and there are so many stories about these people who encounter God and everything changes.

We ask ourselves how does someone who persecuted Christians like Saul, become the famous apostle Paul who helped launch the early church? How does someone who was sold into slavery by his own brothers become the second-highest leader in Egypt?

How does a Jewish girl like Esther, taken from her home forced to serve this king, become a queen who stands up for God and saves her people?

With God, our stories can change. The thing you came in with doesn't have to be the thing you walk out with. The title "Christian" doesn't have to be a superficial checkmark. It can be a relationship with Christ that transforms every aspect of your being.

Not because we follow God perfectly, but because we are committed to Him completely.

As we continue in scripture, I want you to keep in mind this quote that is attributed to a missionary named William Borden, and that I see as the overall title/theme for this message: No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.

Starting in Luke chapter 9, verse 18

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

¹⁹ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

²⁰ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

Jesus asks two important questions in this text: who do the crowds say I am, and who do *you* say I am.

Jesus and his disciples are in the region of Caesarea Philippi, a city that is located right by the headwaters of the Jordan River.

He asks his 12 disciples about these crowds because in the verses prior, he just demonstrated a miracle of feeding 5000+ people by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish.

So the disciples say some people say you're John the Baptist. John was a bold preacher—he was Jesus' cousin—and he had been executed by King Herod. Herod even believed Jesus was John come back to life.

Others thought Jesus might be Elijah, a prophet from 900 years earlier. This idea came from a prophecy in Malachi 4 that said Elijah (or an Elijah-like figure) would return before the Lord came. Elijah had performed miracles, Jesus performed miracles.

You have these crowds who recognize that there's something different about Jesus. And they're trying to put the pieces together – and maybe that's some of you right now, trying to figure out who is Jesus, really.

Some people say he was a moral man. Some people say he was a prophet, but not God.

I know someone who says, *"I pray to Jesus, I pray to my ancestors, and I pray to the universe"* - in other words, Jesus is one option out of many, and if it sticks, it sticks.

But look at how Simon Peter answers this question: He says you are God's Messiah. In Matthew's account, he says the Son of the living God.

Point 1: Being "all in" begins with a revelation of who Jesus is

There were two different groups here – there was the crowd and there were the disciples. And the crowd did not recognize him.

They heard him and they saw his works, but they did not understand who he truly was. And church, we are in jeopardy if we do not know who Jesus is. If we don't see him as Lord and Savior, we're doing this life on our own.

You can try to steer the ship of your own life, but some day we will fall under the weight of our own inadequacies.

We don't have the power to heal people, we don't have the ability to make the sun rise or set, to raise the dead. Sometimes, we can't even forgive people. Sometimes we do things we don't even want to do.

We are limited on our own.

Have you ever asked yourself what do I do? What's the path I should take, what way do I go in? What's true and what's not? What is the purpose of this life I live?

But if you can understand who Jesus is, then you don't have to carry the weight of those questions, because Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, and Jesus is the life.

John 8:12 (NIV)

12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The first chapter of Ephesians says that before he even made the world, God loved us. He desires a close relationship with you.

The crowd had opinions, but Peter had a revelation. If you also walk closely with Jesus, we seek him in scripture, seek him in prayer, then he is willing and able to reveal more of himself to us.

Jesus Predicts His Death (Luke 9:21)

²¹ Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²² And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

Some of the people in the crowd were looking for a King to reign, but Jesus said I will suffer and be rejected. Not just by anyone. But by the elders, the teachers of the laws, the chief priests – the most religious, most esteemed, most educated group of elite leaders.

The kind of people who had memorized the scripture front and back, who looked clean and polished. You might know someone like this.

Yet Jesus, their Messiah, said he would be rejected by them. Jesus – God in the flesh. How is it that the very God they claimed to serve they could not even recognize? So what God were they actually serving?

You might make a claim to Jesus, but do you recognize Him in your own life?

Verse 23:

²³ Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

There were two questions, and now there are two options. Save your life, and lose it. Or lose your life for me and save it.

What does it mean to deny yourself? Not deny things for yourself, but to actually deny your own self. To deny your own self-interests, to deny your own self-ambition.

In myself, I want success. I want wealth. I want fame. I want approval. Maybe you do, too. We think once I get that, I’ll be happy, I’ll be set. Yet Jesus says, you can gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self.

Why? Sometimes I play video games with my husband, Jacob, but he usually plays them by himself or with his friends. He plays a lot of fighting games. And I can always tell if he won or lost by his reactions.

But the funny thing is, whether he wins or loses, he says, I need to play one more game. And he might go back and forth between happy and sad.

Jacob doesn't rest his identity on whether he wins or loses these games, but if we are honest, aren't we tempted to place our identity on our wins and losses in life?

I was able to get that raise, I'm successful. I'm in this relationship, I'm attractive, I'm good. I messed up – now I *have* to win the next one.

If this is your mindset, you will find yourself in an endless pursuit of approval and praise. And nothing satisfies it. We won't find contentment; we just get greedier for the next win.

The truth is that we experience victories and defeats every single day. Pastor Erwin McManus says if we put our identity in those things, we are always going to be swinging on a pendulum from hope to hopelessness. Win to loss.

That's not a meaningful life to me. That's a life defined by my circumstances and limited to what I can only do for myself. And what you can do is itself limited.

Jesus said that's one path to life you can take. Here is the other: life is too big for you and me, so place your identity in something that is larger than life.

Place your identity in something that is eternal, that is constant, that outshines every victory and defeat, that isn't dependent on what you can produce or create, that says you're loved even when you lose. Place your life in Jesus.

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.

He's inviting us to surrender the race of trying to prove ourselves, and commit to the life he offers us.

But here is the truth: There is always a cost to our commitment.

Point 2: Being "all in" requires a commitment to the cross

Jesus said *whoever* wants to be my disciple, they must pick up their cross, and follow me.

To the disciples, the cross was a curse. It was a symbol of death and humiliation, and used extensively by the Roman Empire. And shortly after this conversation, Jesus would begin his trek to Jerusalem for his crucifixion, where he would lay down his life for the forgiveness of our sins.

Now Jesus calls us to take up our own cross.

I don't know what your impression of Christianity is. Some people think it should be easy. When you come to Jesus, everything will be safe. He loves us, he wants good things for us, so it's going to be chill.

But that's not the whole story. Because when Jesus tells us follow me, this demands we put everything else down.

When he says take up your cross, he means put to death the things that separate you from God.

Put to death your desire for recognition. Put to death that need to control. Put to death fear. Putting to death that addiction. Put to death that relationship. Put to death that career path he asked you not to take.

And I realize that sounds scary. It's not easy. Following Jesus will demand of you all your courage.

It will require that you take risks. But it will be worth it.

Because if you know anything about Jesus's death, then you know that there will be a resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Romans 8 reminds us that there is no condemnation for those who belong in Christ. The things you put to death will open up a new life for you. A new future. A new hope. A new mindset. As if you have become a new person.

So we walked toward death, but we didn't die. Because of Christ, we walk into eternal life.

Let's go to the last verse, Luke 9:26:

Luke 9, continued

²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Matthew 16:27 adds to this by saying and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Jesus asked two questions - who does the crowd say I am, who do you say I am?

He showed two paths to life – one where you will lose it, one where you will save it.

Now he ends with two promises:

1. I am coming back in glory
2. I will reward each person according to what he, or she, has done

The next time Jesus comes, he will come not as a suffering servant, but as a King in all his glory. And he will judge.

There are two major judgements in the Bible. One is for those who have rejected Christ. Those who reject him in this life, he will reject in the next. And those accept and follow him in this life, he will accept and invite to be with him in the next.

But there is also another judgement strictly for the believer. It's not a judgement of condemnation – you are saved.

But you as a believer will give an account to the Lord of your life and you will receive rewards, or experience a loss of rewards, based on what you did on Earth.

Now Ephesians 2 reminds us that we have been saved by grace through our faith, not our actions. But the verse continues on to say we *were* created in Christ to *do* good works.

You cannot separate your faith from your actions. God has given you a work to do.

This work is not just for pastors, missionaries, or anyone you see up on a stage. But if you are a teacher, teach in such a way that points to Jesus. If you have a book you are supposed to write, write it.

If you're supposed to open a business, open it. If you're supposed to sing, or perform surgeries, or talk to that one person that you keep seeing, do it.

God has given *you* this work to do, that scripture says he prepared in advance for you.

Have you ever wanted to do something noble, and good, that leaves an impact? Then do what he designed you for, because no one else can do it like you. And God will see you.

Live in such a way that demands faith. Make it active in your life.

And people will see the change. Some people will draw closer to God because of you, and some people will think you're crazy.

But that stuff is temporary and what God offers you is eternal.

Do the thing that He has called you to do, and it won't matter if your name isn't famous on Earth. You can be famous in Heaven.

Point 3: Being "all in" results in eternal impact.

This is the life of faith for which you were called. Faith is not just a belief system, it is an action. Faith is the nerve to actually try.

There might be some points in your life that you look back on, and you regret. I should have done that thing. I should have went for it.

But faith doesn't ask that you look back at what you could have been. It invites you to look forward to who you are becoming.

Every second you have breath in your lungs, is an opportunity to say yes, God.

Every day is a day that you can live out your faith and try. Not so that you will succeed, but so that you can say I followed the call on my life and did what I was created to do.

And what greater life is there? Not a life measured by success or money, but a life designed with eternity in mind.

You have no idea what souls can be saved because of the conversations you had. You have no idea what legacy God can create because you said yes to that thing. And you have no idea the joy you may feel when you go before the Lord and He says well done, my good and faithful servant.

Live a life with eternity in mind, and you will have eternal impact. And the book of Colossians says that one day, when Christ comes, you will also appear with him in glory.

Can you imagine how your life will change when you go all in for Jesus?

No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.

We always end our time asking "what is the Holy Spirit saying to you?"

It is the Holy Spirit who does the work in us. It's okay if you feel you are weak. It's okay if in your trying you don't always get it right. Pastor John Bevere says it like this: The church is the place where failures come to hang out and get restored by scripture and sent out for future ministry.

And Jesus says it like this - My power is made perfect in your weakness. My grace is sufficient for you.

This is my prayer for you and for every generation – that you would go all in for Jesus by knowing Him, by following him, and by doing what He has called you to do.

Because you are alive for such a time as this.

