

Close But No Cigars- The Cross-Taking Life

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Luke 9:57-62

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Please turn to Luke chapter 9, verses 57 through 62 is where we're going to be today. We were in Luke chapter 9 at an earlier portion of that last week and we're going to continue in the series on The Cross-Taking Life. Now, I'm sure you've heard this statement before, or this phrase, this little saying that we have in our culture. Maybe you've even said it before, but the phrase is, Close, But No Cigar or Close, But No Cigars. Now it's one of those phrase I think we know what it means and we can kind of derive, it's kind of taken on its own form, but where did that term come from? These little phrases sometimes that we say have a history to them and it's kind of interesting to look them up. Well, in the late 1800s and early 1900s fairs and carnivals had those impossible-to-win carnival games much like today. If you won though, you were most likely not going to get a stuffed animal. They had more adult prizes and one of the top prizes was a cigar. Some of you'd be very disappointed if you got that, others of you would be glad to receive that.

Now, it was first recorded as this phrase, so to speak, in the Long Island Daily Press. There was a man by the name of Hugo Straub who was running for president and he came in second place in two elections, two Presidential races in 1929 and the headline in that newspaper said the next day, Close, But No Cigar. Later, it was immortalized in the movie, Annie Oakley in 1935. And of course the meaning and we've come to figure it out, is to fall short of a successful outcome. Maybe a close call, if you will or an almost. Kind of like getting a B plus in a class. So close. Or some of us in relationships have heard from the opposite sex that you were interested in, we want to be just friends and that one hurts sometimes. To fall short of a successful outcome.

Well, in part three in this Cross-Taking Life, we've been looking at the essential nature of what it means to take up one's cross, and of course, taking up one's cross is essential to who we are as Christians and what Christ has called us to. In this passage that we're going to look at today, Christ encountered three would-be disciples. They hesitated. They came up with excuses as to why they couldn't fully follow him. They were Close, But No Cigar. In reality too, it's obvious that what cost them was more than a cigar in the process.

So why are we going through a series like The Cross-Taking Life? Well, Jesus has made it crystal clear what it means to follow him, to be a true follower of him, and we want to be helpful in removing any obstacles, any misunderstandings, any hindrances to truly following him because the end goal is to give you assurance. The fact that we can have an assurance of our faith is an absolute gift of the gospel of Jesus Christ and most religions today do not offer an assurance but a maybe, a well let's hope. We have more than that in Jesus Christ. In particular, Jesus tells us in Matthew 7, and I alluded to this passage last week, that there are, and he describes the Christian life or life in general as having two roads. There's the narrow way that

leads to life. That's the way of Jesus. That's the way of Christ. There's the wide road that leads unfortunately to destruction. It's an easy road. It's wide. There are many on it, most are on it and it leads to hell. It is so wide Jesus tells us in Matthew 7, that there are those on that road who think they are serving the Lord but when they face him at the end, they hear the scariest of words in the New Testament from Jesus when he says, "I never knew you." Now, we want to prevent this and in fact, the scriptures are clear to help us from being among those in that situation that face Jesus at the end of it all and hear those words because Jesus has made it crystal clear for us in his word. As we look at this passage today, it's one of those passages that help us to have that assurance and to know. The main point for the passage today is this that there must be no hindrance, no hesitation, no negotiation if one is to truly follow Jesus. No hindrance, no hesitation, no negotiation. And what that leaves us with is the ability to evaluate for yourself today if your faith is real or merely an almost.

We're in the same chapter as we were last week. Last week, we heard Jesus say these words, "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'" That essential to our identity aspect of who we are in following Jesus. To take up our cross daily, not just a one-time thing, but as believers, we take up our cross on a regular basis. Now between that passage and where we are at the end of this chapter, a lot has happened. I alluded to this as well. The transfiguration took place right after those words, He said that. Where He pulled back the veil of His humanity and revealed His true glory to Peter, James and John. After that, He healed a boy with an unclean spirit. And after that, He foretold His death once again to His disciples and told them that He would suffer and die. An argument broke out between the disciples as to who was the greatest. And then Jesus assured them that if there's someone that is not against them, he is for them. So take heart in that. Then James and John wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village for rejecting their teaching. Seeing that tension between Jews and Samaritans that Pastor Jon has been talking about in John chapter 4. And that's where we find ourselves now in verse 57 of this amazing chapter of Luke. Would you stand as we read this chapter today? Will you stand if you're able to? If you're not, you may stay seated. We stand to honor God's word because God is going to be speaking to us through His word right here now as we read this passage, so listen closely, listen to these words.

"As they were going along the road, someone said to him, '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.' To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me 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.' Yet another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' And Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

These are amazing words. You may be seated. What Peter's reminding us, especially in that first verse as they were going along the road, that Jesus is on a journey and His followers are on a journey following Him. It is both literal; they are going to Jerusalem and what Jesus is doing is

facing His face towards Jerusalem to face His cross and there are those who are along for the ride. Luke records how God has sovereignly placed these three individuals here, these would-be followers, along this path to help us evaluate our own journey, our own following. You see, the early church was called The Way. That was even before they were called Christians. They were called The Way because they were on the path of Christ. They were following Him who called himself The Way. In this particular encounter, Jesus is going to unmask three hindrances in following him. Three common roadblocks that people choose in truly following Him.

In fact, it's pretty shocking as we see here that in their allegiance to Jesus or in their proclamation that they will follow Him, He doesn't just automatically accept them but rather He pulls back the mask of something that we can't see that's behind these words that is hindering them from truly following. And the first one is this, **Creature Comforts**. This first guy that out of the blue, just as they're going along, he blurts out, "I'm going to follow you everywhere you go." Now in the similar story of this in Matthew 8:19, this man is called a scribe and he calls Jesus teacher or rabbi. A scribe in the Jewish religious system was an interpreter of the law. He had a high position alongside of the priest and was very respected and he was seeking to show his following of this great teacher, this unique teacher. But what unfolds here is, what we see is Jesus desires more than just students. We're certainly students of the master, but we are called to be more than that. He is to be considered more than just a teacher, even a good teacher and that's where some relegate Jesus, right? They don't want to follow Him completely, but they'll acknowledge, well, he was a good teacher. He's so much more than that and this is one of those passages that gets to the heart of that. But Luke omits these titles. It's just a man talking to Jesus. I think he does that intentionally to remind us that it's not about some sort of hierarchy in religion, but rather Jesus is for the people. It's not a secret code or you needed a decoder ring to get in, but rather come to Him and He's not going to turn you away, and that's what we find here. And this guy, "I will follow you wherever you go." Well that's certainly a good intention. That's what we want, right? However, we also know another statement. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. We can get caught up in emotions when we're in the darkest of valleys or on the highest of hills. Jesus, if you get me out of this jam, I'll go to Africa, I'll go to India, I'll go wherever. Jesus gets us out of the jam and then we kind of reconsider. Well, maybe, you know, I can't really go there. I didn't really mean that, but thank you. Or we come back from camp, some of our students came back from camp. It's awesome to do, and I saw that years of youth ministry, come back from camp. Whoo, I'm ready to take on the world. I want to change the world. I want to go everywhere and share the gospel and then Monday morning comes and it's hard to get out of bed. It's really real, right? Our emotions can vacillate. Jesus is getting at something more that's going on here because He doesn't say, yeah, great, you're in. Glad you're going to follow me, Whoo hoo. Instead, He throws a proverb his way because there's something more going on inside this guy that only Jesus can see. And He says this, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Now that term "Son of Man," we talked a little bit last week about that. Luke in his gospel and his account of Jesus' life and the story of the gospel, he uses that term 24 times. It is a self-description that Jesus uses that comes from the Old

Testament. The Son of Man is in reference to the Messiah, one of his roles as Messiah. He has a mission of suffering. The Messiah is to suffer. He knows what we go through because He's gone through it and then some. So this title would invoke, especially to this man as a scribe, an understanding that this right here, if you want to follow me, I'm the Son of Man. Which means, if you follow the Son of Man, it's not a rosy road. So much so that in this proverb he relates that animals are better off than him.

Now stop for a second and think about this. This is remarkable because we know from John 1:1, we know throughout the scriptures, that Jesus is the God-man, the second person of the Trinity who has come down and wrapped himself in human flesh. He is the Creator. John 1:1, the Word became flesh. The Word was God. The Word is God and was with God. He was there at the beginning. So here's the Creator. I like how John MacArthur cleverly says this. He says, "the Creator had fewer creature comforts than the creatures He created." Now say that 10 times fast. He's right. Here's the Creator saying that the animals were better off than Him.

Another commentator, James Edward says it this way. "Animals can adapt to nature, but the Son of Man has not been sent into the world to adapt to it. The Word made flesh is forever a stranger and an alien in this world." We're reminded here that sometimes being a part of another kingdom, that we are as Christians a part of God's kingdom, that this world is now not our home. We can get a little cozy here and Jesus is addressing the coziness of this man. Maybe even more than creature comforts what Jesus was saying here was that rejection was at stake, which is a specific type of uncomfortable. As an itinerant preacher, Jesus relied on the hospitality of others. He didn't have an Airbnb to go to when he'd go from town to town or a Motel 6 even or a Best Western. In their culture, He would rely on the hospitality of others and what do we know about His own people is that they rejected Him, most of them. Following Jesus makes you undesirable to a world that does not align with God and His ways. Are you feeling that a little more these days? Maybe you felt it in your family and your friends and your workplace. And in this sense, that's what Jesus is saying to this man who has this eager idea but He's saying, are you ready for this, this kind of rejection, this kind of loss of creature comforts? Maybe for you that initial excitement that you had when you came to Jesus. Whoo. We see that in the Psalms, right? Return me to the joy of my salvation. Because we can get stuck in the ruts, right? Maybe that initial excitement of following has started to give way to the tension of the things that you've had to give up, the creature comforts sometimes.

Jesus addresses this a little bit, actually not a little bit, a lot in Matthew 13 when he talks about the parable of the soils and the seed. Maybe you're familiar with this. The seed is the gospel that goes out and the soil is the representation of the heart. And that first soil is the hard soil. The seed goes out and it falls on hard soil. We know people like that. We share the gospel with them, they don't want anything to do with it. They may even be nice about it. They may be belligerent about it. We don't want Jesus. The second soil is the rocky soil where it goes, little growth comes up, but what happens? Trouble and persecution arise and they go, wait a minute, I didn't sign up for this. I like the Jesus of Christmas, but the Jesus of the cross, no thank you. That's a little too

hard for me, a little too intense. I wanted the Jesus that just makes all my dreams come true. Well, he does that and more. And then the third one is the soil where the weeds come up and the weeds Jesus describes are the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches. It's exciting to follow Jesus, but then there's some other things that just kind of muddy up life. Jesus is just one of many good things that you do. Those two soils, though they have an appearance of growth, are not good soils either. There's only one good soil and that's where the seed falls into soft soil and it grows without hindrance. The scribe didn't respond, we'll talk about that in a little bit. But the next two men did respond when Jesus talked to them about following as well. So that's the first one, Creature Comforts. We see this man confronted with some of the creature comforts that he may lose.

The second hindrance is Self-righteous Reasoning. Now what we see here is this man, think about this situation where this one man just out of the blue, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus has this discussion with him. And then he turns to the crowd, to another man, maybe points to him and says, "Follow me." How does he respond? Well, he had something in his back pocket to say didn't he? Well, okay, he says, "but Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Well, that's sad isn't it? This poor man has lost his dad and that's a reasonable request isn't it? But then Jesus says in verse 60, what does he say? He "said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'" Jesus hadn't gotten to seminary and taking the pastoral care class where that's not how you respond in a situation where this poor man has lost his dad. There's something more going on here, because Jesus is the good shepherd isn't he? Something going on behind the scenes because at first glance it seems that this would-be disciple wanted to honor his dad by burying him, and this was a huge deal. The burial of the dead and the religious duty was a high priority in that process. It would be scandalous for a Jew not to honor his father this way, to take care of a loved one this way. So there's some debate among scholars and most would say what's going on here is that this dad wasn't dead yet. He was only near death, maybe of a certain age, and so this man is kind of thinking ahead. Now, why would we think this? Well, here's some of the proof.

Numbers 19:11 and 12 we get some of the laws that the Jews were to obey. If you touch the dead body, there's a seven-day period of uncleanness. And so even if he's gone through the ceremonial cleaning, it's unlikely that he would be out and about if he'd just died. Also, Jews didn't embalm, they buried immediately. And so if he was dead already, culturally, there would be no delay in the funeral. So the deduction then is this man's father is probably not even dead yet. Also, there was a lot more involved because they didn't embalm, after a 12-month period after putting them in the grave, they would dig up the bones and put it in ossuary or in a bone box. So we're talking about a lengthy process to take care of the dead.

So really then, what this man is most likely saying is, I'll follow, but later. Us parents, what do we tell our children? Delayed obedience is disobedience. Oh good, you've been through that course. Good. That's what's taking place here most likely. This would-be disciple tried to use honor and obedience to the law as an excuse not to follow the law giver. It's amazing. Lord, I'll

follow, but I've kind of got a busy workload. Right? We know answers like, if He had pointed to this guy and said follow me and he says, I don't really want to, that wouldn't have gone over well would it? Or yeah, I don't really have, it's not my thing. That wouldn't have gone over well. So what we do is we kind of get sophisticated about our excuses. I got a lot of work to do. I've got a heavy workload. I don't have time right now. It's not my gift. Following is not a gift. It's a thing that we do with Jesus. That's the word disciple.

I remember a lady in church who was kind of put to a choice. She wanted to enroll her daughters in a ballet class that lasted six months. But this particular ballet class met on Sunday mornings and that was the only time we had church service. So conveniently, she talked to God and God told her it's okay to skip church for the next six months for ballet. Interesting, right, how God always affirms the things we want to do whether they're right or wrong. In fact, wow, God gave her an excuse and an escape clause that He hasn't given the rest of us. Instead, in Hebrews 10 it says, "Do not stop meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but rather come together." Why? "To stir each other up towards love and good deeds." Jesus is better than ballet and there's six and a half other days for ballet but we don't want that. Lord, I'll follow you when my homework is done, when I'm out of school, but oh, maybe I'll follow you then when I'm married because that'll be better. We could do it as a team. Oh, we'll follow you when we have kids. Wait. We'll follow you when the kids are a little bit older. We'll follow you when the kids are grown. I'll follow you when I'm retired, then I'll have a lot of time to do that, right? We keep putting it off. I'm in a season of self-care. I don't really have the time. I'm busy with and fill in the blank.

But Jesus has already made this clear in Matthew 10:37. Remember this? He takes the greatest of love, "whoever loves father and mother more than me or loves child more than me is not worthy of me." Are we supposed to love our parents? Are we supposed to love our children? Yes, but not more than Jesus. These things are all good. Burying your father is fine. Even that term though, let the dead bury their own dead. In one sense he's saying, those who are dead literally in their spirit, let them take care of the dead who are dead in the flesh. But you, there's an urgency here. There's no time to delay. proclaim my gospel, proclaim my truth, become my follower and preach my word. This is a call to all of us. There's no delaying that. In fact, in the next chapter in verses 1 through 17, Jesus commissioned 72 to go out and to proclaim, 72 men to do just that. It's not 73 though. We have no reference to this man being a part of that group. Jesus was making it clear. There's no greater commitment than following Him. Jesus does not call us to blow off the responsibilities He's given us for sure. But to take a moral high ground above the moral giver is ridiculous. This isn't about simply busying your life with fillers, but seeking and loving Jesus without hindrance. That's the second hindrance, Self-righteous Reasoning.

That leads to **a third, A Divided Devotion**. We have a third guy, who like the first guy just offers himself up, "I will follow you Lord," out of the blue. And then without waiting for a response from Jesus, then gives this statement. "Let me first say farewell to those at my home." And then Jesus again says to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit

for the kingdom of God." Wow. This third would-be disciple says something that seems to be reasonable. I just want to say goodbye. I want to tell mom where I'm going, give her a kiss and head out. In fact, there's a biblical example of this. In 1st Kings 19. Turn there. 1st Kings 19, we see a biblical example of this that maybe this guy has in mind as a good Jew. There's Elijah and Elisha. I know it gets a little confusing because their names are similar. Elijah was a prophet and he calls Elisha to follow, and we see this situation here in 1st Kings 19 starting in verse 19 to the end of the chapter. He says, "So he, Elijah, departed from there and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him." That was a cultural symbol of follow me. "And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, 'Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.' And Elijah said to him, 'Go back again, for what have I done to you?' And he returned," Elisha "returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him." See, that's all I'm asking. I just want the same deal, right? And Jesus' response gets at what's going on beyond the surface in his heart. Well, you think you're better than Elijah? Yes. This is the big leagues. The one greater than Elijah is before you. We have that.

Just prior in this story we have the transfiguration where Jesus again, unveils Himself, Peter, James and John saw His glory in His fullness and what happened? Who was there too? Moses and Elijah. Now Peter being Peter, didn't get the whole situation that was going on here and he's scrambling trying to figure out what to do. He says, how about I build you guys a tabernacle? Because in a sense he's saying, Hey, that's cool. Jesus is right there with Moses and Elijah. He missed the point. Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah and in a sense that's what's taking place here saying, Look, I know there's a precedence in the Old Testament, but this is bigger than that. You follow me now. And what he's getting at here is what's going on inside of this man's heart and reveals this. No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. There's grammar in here that says that there's something ongoing. We're going to be plowing. Here's another illustration that Jesus uses. You can't look behind while you plow because it won't be a straight line. You won't have a good crop. Very similar to what He said in 9:23 when He says you need to be self-denied, denying self, taking up your cross daily and following. That's an ongoing thing. That's not a one-time thing. Same thing here. It's not a one-time thing to plow. This is an ongoing task of the believer. You can't continually look back and go forward. I figured this out as a teenager in a very hard way.

Second day of my new car that I had. It wasn't new. It was new to me. I was excited driving home and there's a Del Taco a block from my house. I went, I can go through the drive through now. Aren't I cool. I'm going to go through the drive through. So I go through the drive through, make my order. As I'm rounding around the building, I realize I'm cutting it a little close to the corner. I think my back bumper might scrape it. So I'm looking, driving forward, turning the wheel, going around the ... Bam. I hit the side of Del Taco because I was looking back while driving forward. You don't do that. The girl that was doing the drive-through popped her head

out the window and of course she's in one of my classes in high school so there's that. No cool going on at all here. And then I'm thinking, Oh, dad's going to kill me, I just bought this car yesterday and the front bumper's all crunched. Well, thankfully I got home, no crunch on the bumper, the cars were built a little differently back then, that's how old I am. But there was a black mark on the side of Del Taco for about a decade that I could point to and go, "That was me." Lesson learned. If you want to plow a straight line, you look forward not back. What's going on here is a little bit more than just looking back, but looking back with a lingering nostalgia of I miss what's behind.

Remember Lot's wife, looked back to Sodom and Gomorrah to the good old days, and turned to a pillar of salt. That's what Jesus is getting at here because He says, you're not fit. You're not fit. Meaning you're not well suited. You're not usable if you're going to look back while moving forward. This isn't looking back and being grateful for what God has done. You can look back nostalgically. This is looking back with a Hmm, maybe I should go back. This guy would've gone home, got sidetracked and never followed, most likely. Now, that idea of being well suited and usable, Paul says this of Timothy in 2nd Timothy 2:20 and 21 where he says you need to be a workman approved. You are moving forward. You are doing the work necessary to follow and that's what he's saying here. None of us are perfect. We trip and fall along the way, but we need to be headed in the right direction. That's why we're fit. That's how we're fit.

Half-hearted can only fake it for so long. Maybe you, maybe your parents drag you to church. They're good parents, but you need to believe in Jesus yourself and follow Him yourself. Now is the time. Maybe it's your spouse. They're a good spouse. They drag you. Maybe you come along to be a good sport and to support them in their thing. It's time for it to be your thing to follow Jesus and to place your faith in Him. Maybe it's your kids that get you to church. Yeah, it's really good for them. We want them to be in Awana, and we want them to be in Sunday school but what about you? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Maybe you're already a Christian, but there's something that you're holding onto. You don't want to get too close. I'm not going to join a small group because they might find out about it, that thing. Maybe it's a sin that you like holding onto.

I kind of joke that when I became a Christian, I gave up smoking. I didn't smoke. It's really easy to give up the things that aren't a problem for us. But the things that we want to hold onto, that's a little bit harder. It's a lot harder, right? You see the series is meant to make it clear to you to evaluate where you are at. We want to be careful of easy believism that you just, oh you said you're a Christian. That's great. Boom. Check the box. You're in. It's as simple as that. It's as easy as that in one sense. It's as simple as that, but it's hard to take up your cross and follow Jesus. But if you do, we want to do more than just stuff our chairs with people. We want you to make sure that when you put your head on your pillow at night, that you have the full assurance of knowing that you are Jesus' and Jesus is yours and it is clear here that by faith, His grace has given you the gift of salvation and it has truly come a part of your life if you have given all to Him. What is it that may be dividing your devotion to Jesus today? Maybe you're a nonbeliever and it's some

philosophical reason, some scientific reason that's really just an excuse because you want to sin. And maybe for you, Christian, there's something else that you're holding onto that's just a lot harder to give up but that's what church is for, that we can come alongside of you, help you with whatever that is so that you may walk in fullness of life in Christ.

Now maybe you're sitting here reading this and I alluded to this earlier, as you look at this story, maybe you're wondering, did they jump right into chapter 10? What happened to these guys? What did they do? What was their choice? You're not going to tell us what happened? Well, I believe Luke has left this open-ended so that you answer for yourself. Is it creature comforts that's got you? What are you going to do? Is it some type of self-righteous reasoning, some moral high ground that keeps you from following? What are you going to do? Maybe it's a divided devotion. What are you going to do? It's open-ended because you need to answer it for yourself.

The great hymn writer, Isaac Watts, you may know him from songs like When I Survey the Wondrous Cross or even more popular, Joy to the World. He wrote those. He wrote this one. It's not as popular. It's called the Almost Christian. Listen to these words. "Broad is the road that leads to death and thousands walk together there, but wisdom shows a narrow path with here and there a traveler. Deny thyself and take thy cross as the Redeemer's great command, nature must count her gold but dross, if she would gain that heavenly land." Listen to this verse. "The fearful soul that tires and faints and walks the ways of God no more, is but esteemed almost a saint and makes his own destruction sure. Lord, let not all my hopes be vain. Create my heart entirely new, which hypocrites could never attain, which false apostates never knew." Are you on the road or is something cutting in on you in your race. Maybe you're afraid. You don't want to be uncool and be one of those fanatics or weirdos or freaks. But Jesus is calling you to follow. More than creature comforts. Don't let some weird reasoning keeping you from it and don't let your devotion be divided. Jesus is greater and worth more than all of these combined.

Let this world grow to dim. You can be Close, But No Cigars. As pastor Brundage says quite clearly, "He who is almost persuaded is almost saved and to be almost saved is to be entirely lost." Here's Jesus on the road to the cross, extending an invitation to follow Him. This invitation is on His terms, for His purposes, for His glory and the right response is to trust Him completely with your life. Your life is in no better hands than Jesus, knowing that He is worthy and capable with every part of your life. If you must, He must, it must, be all of you for all of Him. There is no one else that can save you. If you are His, you are in the best hands wherever those hands may take you. It reminds me of John chapter 6, when Jesus has fed the 5,000 and they like a free meal, they like the wow, they like the miracles and He begins to do some hard teaching with them. Now they don't like it. The crowd left. There's only the 12 remaining. What does Jesus say to them? You want to leave too? And they said it right. They said it clearly. "Where else would we go? You have the words of life." Be reminded of that today, where else would you go? There is no one else who can save. So Christian, follow Jesus unhindered and if you're not a Christian today, put your faith in Him. There's no better road to be on. It's a narrow way, but it leads to life. Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for your grace and the grace of your words though they are firm, they are blunt, they have meaning and they make it clear to us to understand what is at stake in following you. It's life and death. So it doesn't matter how narrow that road gets because it's the road to life. We can place ourselves and are naturally born to the wide road and it's easy and there's even people who are pretty nice on that road, but it leads to destruction. Lord, I pray for those who are not on the right road today, that you would call them to yourself. Grant them repentance that they might believe in you with all their hearts. I pray for those Christians who are struggling today and who've been convicted by this and reminded that there are some things that they're clinging to. I pray that today by your grace and your mercy, they would cling to you and cling to your cross because that's where salvation is and that you would help them to grow more and more like you as they let those things go and as they trust fully in who you are. Only by your grace can this happen and we pray this in your name. Amen.