

Text of a message delivered by Caleb Finlayson at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026.  
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## Unconditional Discipleship

### Luke 9:51-62

Kia Ora everyone, my name is Caleb and welcome back to **King & Kingdom Come** series, the Gospel According to Luke. If you are new, or missed out on last year, we started our three-year journey through the gospel of Luke. It has been a powerful journey as we have navigated the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry. We have been focusing on some key themes that Luke draws us into, the focus on the poor and the marginalized, his redemptive mission to the lost, an upside-down kingdom and much more.

As a church we love to resource you in your faith journey. All sermon notes, recordings and questions are available. A new initiative we are starting is a podcast called **Beyond the Message** to further unpack the message from Sunday. We also would love to hear your questions, so as you listen or read alone today, any questions you have about this passage, feel free to send them through and we will do our best to address in our upcoming podcast.

Today we are reading from Luke 9:51. As we start the second part of our series, **The Journey**, we are met with a pivotal and profound piece of scripture which sends us forth into what is to come and helps us to understand the character of Jesus, his love for humanity and the redemptive act of the life death and resurrection of Jesus. This is the journey of Jesus.

Join with me as we read today:

***As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to***

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*get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village.*

*As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”*

*He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”*

*Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:51-62)*

### **The resolute Jesus**

Why is this such a pivotal piece of scripture? Let's read verse 51 again: ***As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.***

Why is this where we chose to start part 2 of our series? Is there something of significance to look out for? This truly is powerful. It is widely accepted that this is the moment where Jesus is journeying toward the Jerusalem, the beginning of the end, to his ultimate rejection, to fulfil the purpose of his incarnation, his fleshly time on earth, through the redemptive act of his life, death and resurrection into what is to come. There was destiny in His destinations. Jesus is on His way to heaven, but much is to be done before then, and before we are to join Him there. For this to take place He must ***“resolutely”*** journey on.

There is destiny in your destinations too. Where God is taking you and what God is doing in you is not a waste.

Why is the word resolutely important here? **Resolute** means to set fast, to determine, to

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focus in a certain direction, with intent and unbroken.

Jesus is focused on why He has come. His beginnings have shifted from establishment to resolute intent. With unbroken determination He is bringing about his redemptive mission. He has moved into a new gear. The journey ahead would not be easy, would not be simple, it would be filled with rejection and pain, to know this as your sole purpose and in His humanity drive toward the goal, you cannot have anything but a resolute focus and determination.

When I was training for my Ironman I had to enter a resolute focus. The daunting task ahead, time pressure, training load. When days would come that I didn't want to train, I would have to do it anyway. Arriving home from youth on a Wednesday and having to hop on an indoor cycle and ride until midnight. Waking up 4am to go for a bike ride for 5hours or jumping into the freezing water to swim for hours on end. That was just the training, on the day I actually had to do the task. People would often ask, what is the hardest part? The mental battle, 100%.

Now that was simply a triathlon that hard, but I was doing for fun, and that required a massive amount of resolute focus. Jesus is bringing about redemption to the entire world and part of that process is torture ending in death! The journey from Luke 9:51, to his death on the cross was not a short one. Scholars suggest it is approximately 6 months to just over 1 year.

What I am wanting to paint here is the significance of this moment. Jesus knows that the journey will not be easy. He also knows what awaits Him in Jerusalem. However He knows that Jerusalem is not the end. This very journey and the character of Jesus shows the cost to Him is worth the price. That we, humanity, are worth the price.

Do we really understand the cost? The price he paid? Does the way we live, does our discipleship to Jesus cost us something?

The path of Jesus was not simple, it was not linear, it is not part time.

What was your first part time job? A paper route? Working at a supermarket? I remember

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when I first left school, I began as a volunteer youth worker in the local school. I could come and go as I pleased. If I wanted to do 3 hours or 1 hour, it did not matter, I could work to my own schedule and do what I pleased. Then I became a paid youth worker and everything had to shift. The expectation was different. The time commitment, the desired outcomes were stronger. I was expected to show up and deliver. For many of this I'm sure this will ring true.

Jesus' pursuit of the journey ahead was not part time. He was all in. He gave his all. His expectation was high. The kingdom of God was at stake, this is no casual matter, this is no time to sit back and relax. I wonder how you would describe your faith coming into 2026. Are you like that of the part time paper boy? Or are you all in? How would somebody else describe your faith? Would they say *"wow, they are all in. their faith must really come at a cost!"*

One of the themes that we see in today's passage is rejection. Rejection is one of the prices we may have to pay as followers of Jesus.

Jesus was rejected by the village. Jesus was rejected by his own people, Jesus was rejected to the point of death on a cross. Jesus knew that He would be rejected. Luke is wanting to illustrate this point of rejection by starting this journey to Jerusalem with the three separate interactions. In these interactions Luke is intentionally highlighting the character and heart of Jesus.

### **Interaction 1:**

***As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (v57-58)***

Jesus is approached. ***"I will follow you wherever you go"*** – rather a naive statement. Does he really know what he is saying? Jesus is wanting to make clear the expectations. As we read though the other gospels, Jesus says to James and John ***"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" (Matthew 20:22)*** referring to his suffering on the cross or like the imperative language of revelation to not be "Luke-warm." Nobody can join Jesus on the

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cross, for that is certain.

Jesus is making clear who He is, the “Son of Man” – His identity as Lord. He is describing the realities of what is ahead. And interestingly we don’t know if this man (or any of the interactions for that matter) is willing to take up the challenge of living out the words he declares. Maybe he does, maybe he does. What we are certain of here is who Jesus is, the son of man, and the unthinkable challenge that is ahead.

### **Interaction 2:**

***He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” (v59-60)***

This time Jesus does the approaching. He brings an invitation to somebody else. But is met with what seems like a valid response. To go bury a father. Jesus could actually seem unreasonable here. Scholars debate the man’s response. Has his father died already and is need of burial, or is saying let me wait till my father dies, let me receive my inheritance and then I will join you. Regardless of what is intended here Jesus again is being clear, a life following Jesus is all about proclaiming the kingdom of God. That means going against the kingdom of this world. Jesus is resolute, he is steadfast in his mission and expects us to do the same.

In Jewish culture, not burying a parent would leave you with a stigma for the rest of your life, a rejection from your community. Jesus is saying, the way of the world does not matter in comparison to his redemptive mission. He is inviting this follower to embrace the same rejection that Jesus would face.

### **Interaction 3:**

***Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” (v61-62)***

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Here Jesus is approached by another. A zealous promise offered by the individual, “I will” followed by a condition. *Jesus is not looking for conditional discipleship.* He offers **unconditional** and expects **unconditional** reliance on Him. Again Jesus is inviting the individual into the kingdom work, but at a cost.

Nobody can plough a field by looking backwards. Farmers would keep their eye fixed, resolutely to the horizon in order to stay straight and true. A ploughman who turns to lookback, would lose control and ruin the field. This is also a reference back to the call of Elisha. He left his plough, killed his oxen and burned his plough to follow Elijah and the call of God. This was a radical abandonment of his old life in pursuit of God.

That is exactly what this passage is inviting us into. A radical abandonment of our lives, to the Son of Man, Jesus. In order to bring about the kingdom of God. We will no doubt face rejection because of Jesus. But if we first reject ourselves, or lose ourselves, none of that will matter. In the kingdom of God all are welcome, whether by invitation or by seeking him out.

My ultimate questions is **will you resolutely follow Jesus?**

There is a cost to discipleship, it will cost you everything. But, in the journey, I pray you would come too realised that it is worth the price!

Jesus says only a few verse before this, in verse 23:

***Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? (Luke 9:23-25)***

As we conclude today, what is the thing that is getting in the way of your faith? In our passage today we see Jesus resolutely pursuing his journey. And we also see the repetition of the conditional faith language of “I will follow... But first.” What are the “but first” things in

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your life?

### **I will follow you but first:**

- let me be financially secure. (**Self-reliance**)
- let me not look “too religious” in front of others (**Reputation**)
- let me sort out this relationship (**Connection**)
- let me keep this part of my life secret (**Comfort in Sin**)
- let me feel ready (**Timing**)
- let me understand the whole picture (**Control**)

For me it's the desire to be financially secure, even though he is my provider, even though I can't take it with me why I die, financial security does not give me worth and like the flowers of the field it can be here today and burnt in the fire tomorrow. The truth is my identity and security first comes from Him alone.

The other for me is control. Maybe I'm ok with not seeing the whole picture, but boy do I want to be the one behind the wheel. Doesn't matter if it's in my work, as a father or personally. Giving up control in certain aspect of my life is like giving up part of myself.

The danger we face, is not so much that we refuse Jesus outright, but actually that we follow Him conditionally. Most of us don't say “No Jesus” we say “Not yet!”

In an exercise of reflection I would love for us to pause now and take time think to write down, where is it that you are saying “I will follow, but first...” or “I will follow, just not yet?”

And I would love for you to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you, to reveal what those blockages are? What do you need to lay down?

The challenge and the beauty of it all, is that he doesn't require us to do it in our own strength. He is leading guiding and carrying us through, but we first must lay down our conditions and simply follow him.

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Would we instead have a heart like those who started “Take 7” did and as they shared last year a powerful prayer, “the answer is ‘Yes Lord,’ just tell me what the question is.”  
Let us pray.



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**Reflecting on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026:** Last week Grant talked about the legacy we leave. How has thinking about legacy affected the way you have lived this week?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

1. **Personal:** What is one way that you can practically overcome your “but first” conditions? Who can hold you accountable and how?
2. **Kingdom:** How does Jesus’s resolute journey toward Jerusalem impact the way you might live out/put your faith into action?
3. **Cost:** What is a way that your faith is already costing you? How might this be a testimony to inspire others?
4. **Carry on:** How might knowing the fact that Jesus is both the one who ‘calls’ and ‘carries’ we change the way we respond to Him?

If you’d like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at [care@windsorpark.org.nz](mailto:care@windsorpark.org.nz); **we’re better together and no perfect people are allowed.**

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email [info@windsorpark.org.nz](mailto:info@windsorpark.org.nz) and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. Last week we launched a **Podcast** to dive **Beyond the Message** each week. Give it a listen as Aidan and I reflect on this message and answer any questions you have on it! We're excited to continue the conversation!  
<https://www.windsorpark.org.nz/podcasts>
2. A great book to read that further illustrates the price to pay in pursuit of Jesus is ***The Cost of Discipleship*** by **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**.  
<https://www.fishpond.co.nz/c/Books/q/cost+of+discipleship?rid=1771377019>