Kill the Cow, Burn the Plow

Message Companion

1 Kings 19:19-21

Pastor Ron Laney

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This is a Message Companion to Pastor Ron's sermon entitled,

Elijah - Part 9 - Burn the Plow

Read: 1 Kings 19:19-21

Take some time to go to our podcast "Good News from The Grove" and listen to this teaching. You can also go the Teachings page on our website www.PleasantGrove.info to access message. This is Part 9 of the series, Elijah: Someone Like Me

Message Companion includes:

- Main Scripture
- Message Recap
- Devotions
- Questions for Thought
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Grace & Peace!

Main Scripture

1 Kings 19:19-21 (NKJV)

19 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

Message Recap

Message Recap

Text: 1 Kings 19:19-21

Kill the Cow, Burn the Plow

Responding to the Call

Have you ever felt a stirring in your heart, a call to something greater? Perhaps you've sensed God nudging you towards a new direction, but hesitated because of the comfort of your current life. This message explores the idea of responding to God's call with your whole heart.

The story of Elijah and Elisha at the end 1 Kings 19 provides a great illustration of what it means to answer God's call. When Elijah finds Elisha, the young man is plowing his field. Elijah throws his mantle onto Elisha and invites him into a new life of service to God. Elisha's response is both immediate and profound. He asks only to say good-bye to his parents before committing to follow Elijah. But what happens next is remarkable. Elisha doesn't just leave his old life behind - he burns the bridges to it. He slaughters the oxen and uses the wooden plow to cook the meat. This act of “burning the plow” represents a complete break from his past life and a total commitment to his new calling.

This dramatic gesture echoes Jesus' own teachings about the cost of discipleship. In Matthew 8, when would-be followers express a desire to first attend to family matters, Jesus responds with challenging words: “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” While this may sound harsh, it underscores the urgency and supremacy of God's call on our lives.

The call of God always involves these key elements: faith, sacrifice and surrender. From the moment we receive salvation to the ongoing journey of fulfilling our purpose, we're continually asked to step out in faith and surrender our own plans and comforts. This isn't always easy, but it's deeply fulfilling. In fact, many people are searching for something meaningful enough to sacrifice for - and there's nothing more worthy than following Jesus and doing what He says.

The Apostle Paul captures this idea in Philippians 3:13-14: **'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.'** This forward-focused mindset is essential for anyone serious about following God's call. We see this same commitment in the live of Peter, Andrew, Matthew and others.

Of course, not everyone responds this way. The rich young ruler in Luke 18 couldn't bring himself to let go of his wealth when Jesus invited him to sell everything and follow. His story serves as a cautionary tale about allowing our attachments to this world to hinder our response to God's call.

Here are some thoughts about “burning the plow”and what it can look like for us:

1. Letting go of old mindsets and habits that don't align with God's will and purposes.

2. Reorienting our relationships to put God first and surround ourselves with people who encourage our faith.

3. Being willing to step out of our comfort zones and take risks for the sake of the Gospel.

4. Continually surrendering our plans and desires to God's will.

Jesus often used parables to illustrate spiritual truths, and His parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46) captures the essence of what it means to follow Him wholeheartedly. In this story, a merchant sells everything he has to obtain one pearl of great value. This is the attitude of someone who truly understands the value of life in Christ - they're willing to give up everything else to gain it.

As we reflect on these examples and teachings, we're faced with a challenging question: **How seriously are we taking God's call on our lives?** Are we holding onto backup plans, hedging our bets, or are we willing to “kill the cow and burn the plow” - to go all in with Jesus?

Remember, God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called. He's looking for willing hearts, not perfect people. Whether you're sensing a call to ministry, missions, or simply to live out your faith more boldly in your current circumstances, the principle remains the same: Respond to the call of God with wholehearted commitment. The reward will be worth the sacrifice!

Grace & Peace!
Pastor Ron

Devotions

Devo #1

Responding to God's Call

1 Kings 19:20-21

20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah and became his servant.

Elisha's response to God's call through Elijah was immediate and decisive. When Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha, it symbolized a Divine invitation. Elisha's reaction: Killed his cow and burned his plow. This showed his total commitment to the call of God.

Reflect on how God is calling you at this time in your life. Are there “plows” in your life that need to be burned? Consider what it means to fully surrender to God's purpose for your life. True discipleship requires leaving behind the familiar and comfortable. Pray for the courage to respond to God's call with the wholehearted dedication and devotion. You'll be glad you did!

Devo #2

Embrace Your New Life in Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Paul's words about becoming a “new creation” in Christ speak of the transformative nature of following Jesus. Elisha left behind his old life and we are called to do the same. Embrace your new life in Christ. As you step into your new life, you leave behind sinful behaviors. You adopt a new perspective on life based upon the Word of God. You step into a brand new purpose that you live out from day to day.

Consider what “old things” in your life need to pass away. What new aspects of your identity in Christ are you struggling to fully embrace? Pray for God to help you let go of the old and fully embrace the new life Jesus offers to all who follow Him.

Devo #3

Pressing Ahead

Philippians 3:13-14

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul's picture of pressing toward the prize beautifully captures the ongoing nature of our spiritual journey. Like Elisha following Elijah, or the disciples leaving their nets, we are called to continually move forward in our walk with Jesus. This involves “forgetting” what lies behind and actively '**reaching**' forward and '**pressing**' ahead for the big prize.

Think about what past failures, hurts, or even successes you need to “forget” in order to move forward. What does “pressing ahead” look like in your current season of life? Pray for God to give you a clear vision of His call for this season. What is your next step? What challenges must you overcome?

Devo #4

The Pearl of Great Price

Jesus, Matthew 13:45-46

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a pearl of great value, worth selling everything to obtain. This parallels Elisha's willingness to sacrifice his livelihood and Levi's readiness to leave his tax collector's booth. Have you truly grasped the immeasurable worth of life in God's Kingdom? Have you discovered the unmatched value of a close relationship with Jesus?

Spend time meditating on the riches we have in Christ - forgiveness, eternal life, peace, purpose, joy and God's presence. Ask God to deepen your appreciation of these treasures and to give you the wisdom to value them above all earthly things. Consider what you might need to "sell" or **'surrender'** to God so you can more fully embrace the Kingdom of God in your life. It'll be the best thing you've ever done! The reward will far outweigh the sacrifice!

Questions for Thought

Questions for Thought

- Pastor Ron emphasized the importance of considering future generations in our spiritual journey. How can we actively invest in and empower the next generation of believers?
- Elisha's response to his calling involved 'killing the cow and burning the plow.' What might this look like in our modern context, and what are the challenges in fully committing to God's call?
- How does Jesus' approach to calling disciples, often highlighting sacrifice, compare to how we present the gospel today? Are we doing a disservice by softening the call to discipleship?
- The concept of being a 'new creation' in Christ is discussed. What are some 'old things' in your life that you struggle to let go of, and what 'new things' are you discovering in your walk with Christ?
- God often calls people who are busy and at work. How does this challenge our perceptions about readiness for God's call, and what does it suggest about the relationship between faithfulness in daily work and spiritual calling?
- How do you interpret Jesus' seemingly harsh response to the man who wanted to bury his father before following Him? What does this teach us about the urgency and priority of following Christ?
- The rich young ruler couldn't let go of his wealth to follow Jesus. What are the 'riches' in our lives that might be hindering our full commitment to Christ?
- The parable of the Pearl of Great Price illustrates the value we should put on following Jesus. Why should we value Jesus Christ more than anything else in our lives?
- The call to have 'no plan B' in following Jesus is a challenging one. How can believers cultivate this level of commitment while navigating the practical realities of life?

Additional Scriptures

For Further Study

Additional Scriptures

Here are some Scripture references covered in the sermon:

1. 1 Kings 19:19-21 - main passage
2. Matthew 8:19-22 - let the dead bury the dead
3. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - new creation
4. Philippians 3:13-14 - this one thing I do
5. Matthew 4:19-20 - "left their nets"
6. Luke 5:27-28 - Levi (Matthew)
7. Luke 18:22-23 - Rich Young Ruler
8. Matthew 13:45-46 - Pearl of Great Price

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