

## FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE VALLEY OF DESPAIR

[jkroberts\\_us@yahoo.com](mailto:jkroberts_us@yahoo.com)  
[www.pacolethillsbaptist.org](http://www.pacolethillsbaptist.org)

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Mark 9:9-29

1. Our focus last week was the Transfiguration.
2. Today we are going to look at the events that immediately followed Jesus' time on the mountain with three of His disciples.
3. We need to understand that following Jesus involves a lot more than just walking down and isle, being baptized, joining a church, and attending services.
4. Following Jesus involves yielding to His Lordship, learning what it means to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, leaning on Him in every situation, and being His instrument in this world and in the lives of others.
5. This world is not a happy place, but it is the place where Jesus wants to manifest His presence and power and have His message proclaimed and His Kingdom advanced.
6. If we are going to effectively follow Jesus in this valley of despair there are some things we need to understand.

### **I. We need time alone with Jesus on the mountain.**

A. As we saw last week Jesus took Peter, James and John to a mountain top where they witnessed His transfiguration and His conversation with Moses and Elijah.

B. Luke tells us that they talked about Jesus' departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Luke 9:31

NOTE: There has never been a greater accomplishment than that which Jesus accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection.

C. The disciples told Jesus, "It is good for us to be here, let's stay."

D. There on the mountain the disciples heard the voice of God exalting the Lord Jesus Christ and telling them what they were to do: "This is My Beloved Son, listen to Him!"

NOTE: Does listening to Jesus define your life?

E. God makes it clear in His Word that we need time alone with Him if we are going to make a difference in the world.

NOTE: Our public life is the outgrowth of the time we spend in private with God.

1. Time alone in prayer. Matthew 6:5-6

"When (not if) you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

2. Time alone in the Word of God. 2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

NOTE: This requires both private study and being faithfully involved in the ongoing preaching and teaching ministry of the church God wants you to be a part of.

3. Time away from the world in worship with other believers.

a. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16

b. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:23-25

## **II. We need to walk with Jesus in the valley because that is where He wants to use us.**

A. There are many so-called followers of Jesus Christ who love it on the mountain of what is today called worship but who are of little use to Jesus in the valley.

**NOTE: God original intent for the corporate gathering of a local church was to equip and prepare its members to represent Him in their world.**

B. When Jesus was ready to descend the mountain the three disciples followed Him. John 12:26

"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

C. Following Jesus meant leaving the glory of the mountain to descend into the valley of despair filled with disputing scribes, a distraught father, a demon possessed boy, and sadly, defeated disciples.

D. Jesus promptly took charge and silenced the scribes, comforted the father, healed the boy, and instructed His disciples.

E. Jesus is still seeking to carry out His mandate through His church.

1. Luke 4:16-19

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

2. John 20:21

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

F. We are not going to carry out that mandate within the four walls of some building or by staying in our comfort zone.

G. We are going to have to be willing to mix and mingle with those in whose lives Jesus wants to work.

## **III. We need to learn on our feet.**

A. As Jesus and His disciples descended the mountain Jesus taught the disciples and the disciples asked questions. John 14:21

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

NOTE: Ongoing obedience leads to intimacy and insight. Why should God reveal anything to someone who has no intention of listening to or obeying Him?

B. Notice that, in response to their failure, the nine disciples asked, "Why could we not drive it (the demon) out?"

C. Jesus pointed out that their ability to do was dependent on the quality of their prayer life. (Which at times should include fasting, or self-denial to focus on prayer.)

- D. I play golf and tennis as a way to get exercise and to meet people.
- E. But I also play golf and tennis because they are challenging and I enjoy the challenge.
  - 1. When I have time I watch both sports on TV and try to learn what I can from watching people who are really good.
  - 2. But I do not get better by watching others; I get better by actually trying to play both games, identifying my weaknesses, and working to improve.
- F. As followers of Jesus Christ we need to actually follow Him by living out what He is doing in our lives; it is as we go that we really grow.

### **APPLICATION**

- 1. Are God's priorities your priorities?
- 2. If they are not spiritual progress and usefulness will elude you.
- 3. It is clear in the Bible that God wants us to:
  - a. Be actively involved in the life of a local church.
  - b. Set aside specific times for prayer, Bible study, and personal worship.
  - c. Live for, and to represent Him, in whatever culture or place we find ourselves.
- 4. The world, the flesh and the Devil will work against us if we allow them to.
- 5. However, in spite of the obstacles, those who truly know and love Jesus will live lives characterized by obedience, growth, and usefulness.