

Title: Is He worth it?  
Text: Luke 9.28-36  
Theme: Surrendering your life to Christ  
Series: Luke  
Prop Stmtnt: You are dying for something. Only Christ is worth it.

A gauntlet is a piece of body armor that covers the hand and the forearm. It protected the soldier's hand and arm in hand-to-hand sword fighting. At some point, hundreds of years ago, it became a custom of sorts, that if one soldier wanted to challenge another soldier, he would remove one of his gauntlets and would throw it on the ground. If his opponent accepted the challenge, he would pick it up. From that time on, throwing down a gauntlet became a phrase associated with issuing a challenge.

How do you know if following Jesus is worth it? Just because someone makes ultimate demands on you, does not mean they are worth following. There are plenty of people who have demanded the ultimate sacrifice from their followers who are frauds. They promise but cannot deliver. They deceive, manipulate, control, intimidate and destroy. They suck life out from their followers instead of giving life. (Charles Manson – CA – late 60's early 70's; Jim Jones – San Francisco/Guyana – 1978; David Koresh – Waco, TX – 1993; Shoko Asahara – Japan, 1995; Marshall Applewhite – California – 1997;) Jesus has thrown down the gauntlet to his disciples. He has issued a challenge to them. If you are going to follow me, you need to be prepared to die. Is it worth it? Is Jesus worth it?

Read Text:

Our text opens with these words, *“Now about eight days after these sayings...”* We are supposed to understand that what happens here is related to what Jesus said in the previous verses where he sets forth the terms of what it means to follow him. The terms of discipleship are clear. Jesus calls for your life. But Jesus also promises it all.

Go back and read v.26 with me. *“For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*

The Son of Man (Jesus) is going to come in his glory and in the glory of the Father (he shares in it) and of the holy angels. This means that what the disciples see now, is not what they will see then. The true glory of Jesus is veiled but it will be unveiled. And when Christ comes in glory, it will be worth it for everyone who gives it up for him, and will be regrettably devastating for all who don't. Now, look at v.27. *“But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”* 8 days later this event takes place. Do you see the connection? Jesus has just made the ultimate demand on his disciples and along with that he makes the ultimate promise. Jesus knows this is a big ask. So, he gives an immediate promise. *“Some standing here, who are going to see the kingdom of God.”* Who are the “some who are standing here”? Peter James and John. What is the kingdom of God? It is the

coronation of Christ by the Father as the King of it all followed by the reign of Christ over it all. The kingdom of God is the end game of creation. This is the very point of it all. Some of the disciples are going to get a preview of this. Before they taste death, they are going to get a taste of the kingdom that is coming. This way, when they are faced with death, they will know that it will be worth it. This event is answering 2 ultimate questions. 1) Who is Jesus and 2) Is He worth dying for.

### 1. What are you living for?

When I say living for, I mean what are you investing your life in? The truth is, what we are living for is what we are dying for. What are you giving your life for? What do you pursue for your meaning, satisfaction, happiness and security? Everyone is pursuing something. Everyone is seeking to find meaning from something. There are many things that promise you fulfillment. Can they deliver? Where do you put your happiness? Is it safe there?

As children we are told to work hard, get good grades, try our best in sports or other activities and be nice. Why? So people will like you. So you can learn skills and get a good job, or go to a good school, get a good education and get a good job. If you get a good job, you can have a career, a life, a place to live, things to enjoy and afford a family. Then you have children and you tell them to work hard, get good grades, try their best in sports and activities, etc. On and on it goes. Is this it? This is what Solomon asked about in Ecclesiastes. What's the point if all we do is live to die so that others live to die, etc. Have you ever examined your life and asked yourself to be honest with the question, what exactly are you living for? We laugh and think it's sort of cute for those football fans who live for one Super Bowl win before they die. Don't you think there is more? There is.

8 days after setting the terms of following him Jesus, once again took just Peter, James and John with him. In the previous chapter (8.51) he took just them with him into the home of Jairus when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter back to life. Now, these three men were about to be entrusted with an experience that would be a bedrock event for them because of the questions that it would answer. Together they go follow Jesus up a mountain where after getting to the top, Jesus prays. The disciples were apparently very tired and they fall asleep.

As Jesus was praying, his deity that was hidden began to be revealed. The appearance of his face was altered. His clothes became dazzling white and two men were talking with him who are identified as Moses and Elijah. These two men "appeared in glory." Stop and think about the implications of this for a minute. Jesus is way more than what he initially seemed to be. Moses and Elijah are very much alive. They are talking. Moses wrote the Pentateuch. The first five books of the OT are summarized as the law. The law and the prophets is a term that summarizes the entire OT and Elijah is the representative for that. Here you have the OT standing in front of you and you have the very One that the entire OT points to. This is the revelation of God. And they are discussing the imminent departure (death) of Jesus. Moses and Elijah are apparently realizing some of the significance of their own writings and experiences. What exactly were they saying? Did Jesus explain to Moses the significance of the Passover, the day of atonement, the

offering up of the sin offerings, the holy of holies, the striking of the rock, and the raising of the serpent? I think so. The word translated departure is the word, exodus. The exodus of the people of God from Egypt was their salvation from bondage. It was a preview of a greater exodus that Jesus was now accomplishing for us, from sin. Did Jesus explain to Elijah how he was the preview for John the Baptist who was the forerunner for Christ? Did he assure him that all the rejection that Elijah endured for speaking God's Word is worth it and now coming to fruition? Maybe they did. What we do know is that they are also appearing with Jesus in a glorious form. So not only is Jesus way more than what Peter, James and John had seen to this point, but Moses and Elijah are way more than what they could have imagined as well. What's more, the Scriptures that these men helped write, are clearly worth believing. This is truly incredible. So, if you are wondering whether or not it is worth it to follow Jesus, if that means that you may die for him, well then, this certainly helps answer that, doesn't it? There is a lot more going on in this life and in the life to come than what we initially see.

The scene now shifts to Peter, somewhat unfortunately. Look at how v.32 begins. *"Now Peter and those who were with him..."* Luke focuses upon Peter because it is Peter who regrettably talks when he should just be listening. We can certainly empathize. Peter, James and John are waking up and are trying figure out what planet they are on. Jesus is standing there in his blazing glory, which is overwhelming, talking with Moses and Elijah, which is clearly like an out of body experience. And when it becomes apparent that the conversation was coming to an end and that Moses and Elijah were about to leave, Peter clearly does not want this end. So, he says to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here." I take that to mean, This is awesome! Then, "Let us make three tents, one for you, and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Luke throws in the parenthetical comment that Peter really didn't know what he was saying. That is like the understatement of the year.

Immediately, this brings a response. As Peter *"was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud."* The glory of God is often displayed by means of a cloud. It is this cloud that is featured so powerfully and predominantly in Exodus not only in leaving Egypt, but along the way. In Exodus 19, Moses is called up Mt. Sinai to receive the law, where there was a "thick cloud on the mountain." (19.16) At the end of that book, which details the construction of the Tabernacle, we read, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." When the cloud moved, the nation followed. When the cloud stopped, they settled. Isaiah's vision of God in chapter 6 describes the throne room of God that is filled with smoke. Jesus ascends into the clouds (Acts 1.9 and will return with the clouds (Revelation 1.7). Jesus referred to this in Luke 21.27 when he said, *"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* So, this cloud that overwhelms Peter, James and John is not a mere fog descending on the elevation. No mortal can stand before the unveiled, undimmed glory of God. He is too holy, too pure, too white-hot just and righteous. The cloud is a display of the Shekinah glory of God, and at the same time, necessarily serves as a buffer, a dimmer switch, a protection of sorts. This cloud is a mercy of God, even as it would cause one to become completely undone.

Then the Father speaks. He speaks out of the cloud in response to Peter. Luke describes this in terms of how God speaks and what God says. He speaks out of the cloud. The cloud has surrounded Peter, James and John. This voice is the ultimate surround sound. It is everywhere at once. It completely overtakes Peter, James and John. This deafening, overwhelming, all-consuming voice speaks powerfully and succinctly. In two brief statements, God corrects Peter and answers the two major questions.

## 2. Who is this?

This is not Elijah, as some of the crowds thought (Luke 9.19). This is the Messiah, as Peter confessed, but he is not on the same level of Moses and Elijah. The idea that Peter proposed that they make 3 tents, revealed that Peter thought that Jesus was equal to Moses and Elijah. Not only that, but we should just stay here. This is incredible. The Father was emphatically informing Peter that he did not yet know who he was dealing with. "This is my Son, my Chosen One." Who is this? MY SON! Yes, he is the Messiah and way more than you realize. He is God, the very God, my Son. He is not on the same level as Moses and Elijah. And now, this is not the time for tents and camping. There is a mission that has to be accomplished. But at the same time, Peter is saying something profound and as the text says, he doesn't know what he is saying. Just as Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt in order that they would live in the presence of God which was made evident in the construction of the Tabernacle where God lived in and among them, Jesus had come to lead us out of our bondage to sin and death and is going to lead us into his kingdom where he dwell with us forever and ever. He tabernacled amongst us in his life here as a fulfillment of OT promises and a preview of the ultimate one to come. Jesus is the new and better Moses, new and better Passover, new and better prophet, new and better tabernacle and the new and better King. He is crowned by the Father. Then, God the Father says, "listen to him!" That leads us to answer this next question.

## 3. Is he worth it?

Is he worth dying for? Is he worth living for? Is he worth denying yourself, taking up your cross every day and following him? Is he worth losing your life for? Is he worth being rejected, betrayed and losing your job for? Is he worth it? There are a lot of voices in this world who will tell you that you are crazy, out of step with history, and narrow-minded. Beloved, there is only one voice that matters. One little word will fell them. That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them abideth, the spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth. Let goods and kindreds go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill, God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever. God said clearly, emphatically and authoritatively, "This is my Son, my Chosen One, listen to him." Listen to him. He won't lie to you. He won't break his promise. He won't be defeated. He will tell you what you need to hear. Listen to him. When he tells you to deny yourself and take up your cross daily, he is telling you truth. He is giving you life.

The truth is, whatever you live for, will take your life. If you live for your job, your business, your career, your pleasures, your video games, your trips, your shows, your sports, your clothes, your homes, your cars, trucks, your kids' sports, your kids' stuff etc. They will take your life and keep

taking and taking and taking. And after they have taken everything from you, they will move on to take from others. Jesus takes your life too, but here is the difference. He gives it back and gives it back better and forever. He takes your sin and credits you with his righteousness. He takes your insecurity and gives you a standing in him. He takes your loneliness and gives you his Spirit and presence. He takes your brokenness and emptiness and internal wars and gives you wholeness, a family and his peace. He takes your hell and gives you heaven. He takes your death and gives you life.

You can now see how this event is answering the question of the text and the first point. What are you living for? What are you trying to accomplish? Is your primary passion to display the glory of God? If so, your life is worth that. In fact, that is why you have life. Everything else is a waste.

Luke concludes this event by telling us that after the voice spoke that the disciples looked and saw that Jesus was there now, alone. The disciples were told (Matthew's account) by Jesus not to speak about this until after his resurrection. Years later, Peter wrote about this in a letter that he sent to believers who were refugees, driven from their homes because of the gospel. He is writing them to remind them that following Jesus is worth it, no matter what it may cost you now. Look at what he says in 2 Peter 1.16-21.

- This stuff is for real.

We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. We (me, James and John) saw him receive honor and glory from God the Father. We heard God the Father say, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this very voice, we were with him, right there, on that holy mountain. This stuff about life after death, the kingdom of God, the coronation of Jesus, the eternal reign of Christ, the rewards for faithfulness are all for real. I heard the voice of the Father. I saw the glory and majesty of Jesus. I listened to Moses and Elijah talking. It is for real.

- And we have something even better

Then to those of us who read this and think, how much stronger would our faith be, if we had an experience like that, Peter then says this. (v.19) And we have something even better than that. We have something that is even more certain. We have the word of God. How is the word of God better than an experience like that? As overwhelming as an experience like that is, it has limits. People can find ways to explain it away. You really cannot prove that you saw that or heard that. Our faith is not built on private experiences. If we were, then we would have this private faith that would hold no authority for anyone else. Your experience is not binding on me or anyone else. If you had an experience like that, you would be subject to memory loss yourself, or doubts that you imagined the whole thing. Peter is very clear that this experience was incredible and it still amazed him. But he was telling us that we have something even better. We have God's Word. God's Word will never fade away in time, or in authority. It stands forever and speaks forever and it demands our trust even as it fills our hearts with the very faith it calls us to have. Peter says, "to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark

place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

What are you living for? Is it worth it? Can it give you real life forever?

Who is Jesus? Is he worth what he calls you to do? Can he give you real life forever?

Jesus has thrown down the gauntlet. Will you take the challenge?