

# TRUE VALUE

LUKE 9:46-62

**In Order To Successfully Follow Jesus, We Must Understand What Is Valuable.**

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**Every Single Person Is Valuable To Jesus. He Died So That Everyone Could Be Saved.**

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# True Value

Luke 9:46-62

We are at the point in Luke's Gospel where we move into the next part. We will finish up with Jesus' ministry in Galilee and move on to His Journey to Jerusalem. In the first part of the text, the Galilean ministry comes to an end. It is really a sad ending. The disciples get into an argument as to who is the greatest. The next section of the text describes the start of Jesus' march to Jerusalem as the King of the Jews. During this trip He will describe the nature of His Kingdom and His Kingship. This will go through chapter 19.

In the last section of this morning's text, we will see how differently we view discipleship from the way Jesus defined discipleship. The theme that runs through these sections is values. It seems to me that most of the time we run into problems with our faith; it can be traced back to having distorted values by which we make decisions.

Sometimes, that can be a problem when we try to communicate with others. Sometimes we have different values and assume they value the same things we do.

Being a pastor, I get to know quite a few funeral directors. One day while we had some time, I sat down with one of them and said, "Doesn't this business get to you after a while?" The undertaker said to me, "There are indeed some depressing days," to which I responded, "I would think so. How do you handle it?" The undertaker said, "But then ... somebody dies ... and I snap out of it!"

A dead body generally brings sadness to us. However, a dead body to an undertaker is a valuable commodity. As Jesus marches to Jerusalem, He will lay out what His Kingdom values are.

The main idea of this morning's text is this. **IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY FOLLOW JESUS, WE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT IS VALUABLE.** The interesting thing about the Apostles is they are common men who come from all walks of life. We can see ourselves in them. I'm sorry to say that I can identify with all the boneheaded things they say and do, but I don't find myself acting as honorable and courageous as they do. I would encourage us to take a good look at what they value and how Jesus corrects their values. As we see Jesus correct their values, let's allow the Holy Spirit to correct ours.

## THE VALUES OF MINISTRY (VS 46-50)

In verses 46-50 Jesus teaches them the values of ministry. **EVERY SINGLE PERSON IS VALUABLE TO JESUS. HE DIED SO THAT EVERYONE COULD BE SAVED.** The challenge for pastors and leaders is that we don't get all caught up in "ministry" while forgetting that each individual is important. What I mean is that we can often

get so caught up in accomplishing a particular goal or frantically making a program work, we often run roughshod over the very people we are trying to minister to. In secular business, it's almost always about the bottom line and people become expendable. In the church it's as much about the people and the journey as it is the end result.

In verses 46-48 Jesus drives home the fact that each person is valuable. The setup to this incident is very important. Jesus had just taken the disciples aside and informed them that He would soon be betrayed and handed over to suffering and death. The disciples didn't get the full force of it, and it was uncomfortable enough for them not to want to pursue it. The next thing Luke informs us of is that the Apostles started to argue amongst themselves as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus just poured out His heart to them and they are arguing about who will be the greatest.

They are still thinking in terms of Jesus being the political Messiah. They plan on getting to Jerusalem, overthrowing the Romans, throwing out the false religious leaders, and ruling the world together with King Jesus. In other words, they are jockeying for the vice president's position.

I think Jesus has two lessons to teach the disciples. The first one is humility. Jesus recognized what was driving this argument. And so Jesus took a little child and had him stand beside Him. In the Greek and Roman cultures, and to the Hebrew culture to some extent, children had very little value. In terms of value, they came behind working animals and women. They had no status. It is hard for us to understand because most of us value children. Our society doesn't value retarded children, handicapped children, recovering addicts, or the homeless very much. Think of Jesus standing right next to the person you least value. And now Jesus says to you, "Whoever welcomes this little child welcomes both Me and God the Father." And then the lesson Jesus teaches is, "For the one who least among you all is the greatest."

The obvious lesson is that effective ministry is grounded in humility. Let's say we were the ones standing around arguing who will be the greatest. Jesus then stands up, chooses the one person we all think is the least valuable and stands him right next to Himself. He looks each one of us directly in the eye and says to each one of us, "If you welcome and embrace this one, I will welcome and embrace you. And if you welcome and embrace Me, you are welcoming and embracing God the Father." In logic, this is called a hypothetical syllogism. In logic, the proposition would be stated, "If A then B. If B then C. Therefore, if A then C."

In other words, Jesus is saying that if we welcome and embrace this person who we think very little of, we are actually welcoming and embracing God. That also works in reverse. If we look at this person with contempt and callousness then God will take that personally. He will take that as if we were treating Him with callousness and contempt.

Jesus is saying that each person is important in ministry. No one is more important than the other. Each person is precious to Jesus. The warning is that when we talk to someone or have dealings with someone, we better treat them as if we were dealing with God Himself.

There is always the temptation to treat the well-educated and wealthy with respect. We tend to value those with talents and abilities more than those who are poor, shabbily dressed, and with no apparent talent or money to support the church. By the way, that is why the pastors of this church have no idea what people give. We avoid that type of temptation to treat those who give more, better than those who give little. Giving is strictly between each person and God. We will preach and teach the importance of giving and how giving reflects our love for God, but that is as far as we go. What each one gives is between the individual and God. So humbly recognizing that each person is precious in God's sight and ministering to all equally is the first lesson Jesus wanted to teach the disciples. We are to minister without prejudice.

But there is another truth Jesus wants to communicate to the apostles and to you and me. Verse 47 says that Jesus knew their thoughts. What could have been the motivation for them to start arguing about who would be the greatest? Think about this for a moment. The disciples left their jobs, family, and friends behind to follow Jesus. Jesus has kind of been sending them mixed messages. On the one hand, Jesus has accepted the title of Messiah. He did powerful miracles and taught powerful messages. On the mountain, He was transfigured and revealed His inner glory. There was no doubt thinking Jesus was the Messiah Who would become their political leader. Jesus would defeat the Romans and subdue the entire earth. Jerusalem would become the capital of the world.

On the other hand, Jesus kept hinting at the fact that He would be betrayed. He would have to suffer and die as part of His Messianic mission. What would happen to the disciples? Peter expressed their anxiety when Jesus dialogued with a rich young man. The man came to Jesus and asked Him how one could obtain eternal life. Jesus told him to obey the commandments to which the young man said he did. Then Jesus told him to sell all he had, give his money to the poor, and follow Him. The young man was sad because he couldn't give up his wealth and status. Jesus said this:

***"23... I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 24I say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23-24 / NLT)!***

Since this guy was such a good guy the disciples were naturally astounded and they asked Jesus:

***"25... Then who in the world can be saved ..." (Matthew 19:25 / NLT)?***

***“26 Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible” (Matthew 19:26 / NLT).***

This prompted Peter to ask:

***“27... We’ve given up everything to follow You. What will we get out of it” (Matthew 19:27 / NLT).***

Do you hear the anxiety in Peter’s voice? Can we see why they would start arguing about who would be the greatest? They gave up everything to follow Jesus and at this point they are confused as to what Jesus’ destiny is and what their destinies are.

This is how Jesus responded to him:

***“28... I assure you that when I, the Son of Man, sit upon my glorious throne in the Kingdom, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will have eternal life. 30 But many who seem to be important now will be the least important then, and those who are considered least here will be the greatest then” (Matthew 19:28-30 / NLT).***

Let’s get back to our passage. If Jesus were actually captured, tortured, and killed, what would be the future for the disciples? This fear is driving them to these sorts of arguments. So here is the other message Jesus is teaching the disciples. He is inviting each disciple to place himself in the place of the little child. And then He told them that whoever welcomed them, was in reality welcoming both Him and the Father. Jesus was teaching the disciples that even the least of the disciples were important to Him. In other words, God the Father and Jesus personally identified with each of the disciples. If anyone treated them well, they were actually treating God well. If anyone mistreated them, they were actually mistreating God.

The question Jesus is answering is, “Is it worth it to follow Jesus?” In other words, when we are wronged and we forgive, is it worth it? When we give up lust to pursue purity, is it worth it? When we give up worldly wealth to follow Jesus, is it worth it? Jesus says to each one of us, “If you follow Me, whatever you have to give up will be nothing compared to the reward I have waiting for you in heaven.” Each of us is precious to God. That should cause us to be at peace. And further, that should give us the love and confidence to humbly acknowledge the value in other people.

Because we see how much we are valued by Jesus and how He commands us to value others, we can easily submit to the truth that the Gospel of Jesus is what is truly valuable as laid out in verses 49-50. What’s interesting about this incident is that the disciples just had an experience where they were unable to cast out a demon from a little boy. John now notifies Jesus that someone was casting out

demons in His Name. They tried to stop him from doing this because he did not belong to their group.

Jesus then went on to tell John that the ministry power is open to all who name the Name of Jesus. We often forget that the church is bigger than any local church. I have seen pastors and church leaders become very jealous of other ministries. I know that many pastors on the north side were upset when Willow Creek was thinking about opening a branch here. My feeling is that I work for God. I would be thrilled if Willow Creek opened a branch here and reached thousands of people. It's not about me or Devon Church. Ministry about serving God and doing the job He has given each one of us to do. Most people who attend Willow Creek would probably not feel comfortable in our local church. And I'm quite certain that many of us would not feel comfortable in a Willow Creek service. God's intent is to reach all types of people. We simply need to be faithful to where and to what God has called us to. The ministry is all about Jesus; not any person or any institution. We work for Jesus and He has already told us that we are valuable to Him. There is no room for jealousy in the Kingdom of God. **EVERY SINGLE PERSON IS VALUABLE TO JESUS. HE DIED SO THAT EVERYONE COULD BE SAVED.**

### THE VALUE OF FOCUS (VS 51-56)

I know that focus is something I can do pretty well; not because I'm disciplined or well trained. I'm just obsessive compulsive. So focus is good if I'm focused on the right thing, but if I get focused on the wrong thing, that could be bad. In verses 51-56 we see the value of focus. **EFFECTIVE MINISTRY DEPENDS ON KEEPING FOCUSED ON FOLLOWING JESUS.** We have just completed our study through Jesus' Galilean ministry. It was a very successful ministry. The main question that drove this section was, "Who is Jesus?" God the Father authoritatively answered that question.

Jesus is the Son of God, God in the flesh, and the Promised Messiah. Now identified as such, Jesus will now start His calculated march to Jerusalem where He will accomplish all He has been predestined to accomplish as the Promised Jewish Messiah. This will take us through the end of chapter 19. So far, we have seen a strong but very humble and compassionate Jesus. However, in this section, He will often describe the fate of those who reject His Lordship and He will further define what life in the Kingdom will look like.

At the very beginning of this section, Jesus reveals that He is focused on the mission in verses 51-52. In the Greek text, the theme comes across much clearer than it does in English. The key word becomes face. In verse 51 the text says Jesus "purposefully set His face" to go to Jerusalem. In verse 52 Jesus sent messengers "before His face" to get things ready for Him. In verse 53 the Samaritan village rejected Him because Jesus' "face was focused" on Jerusalem. The Greek word for face has a lot of the same nuances as does our English word. It can refer to a person, a look, an appearance, a person's presence, a direction, a purpose, and attitude, a direction of one's inner thoughts, and various other things. In these three verses, the word face takes on different nuances each time. As we

have just said, Jesus was focused on His mission. At the transfiguration, it seems as if God the Father let Jesus know that it was time for Him to accomplish His primary mission, to rescue us from the ravages and penalty of sin. We know that His mission was to suffer and die in our place. Look at verse 51. Jesus purposefully and intentionally set His face towards His mission in Jerusalem. Jesus now starts His march towards His destiny. He knows exactly where He is going and exactly what He is going to encounter. It seems to me that if we approached our relationship with Jesus with that same determination and focus, there is no telling what God could do in and through us. Jesus was focused on doing the Father's will and we know what Jesus accomplished through His obedience.

Next, Jesus sent the disciples on ahead of His face to prepare a Samaritan village to receive Him. Here the word for face is used as His physical arrival and presence in the city. The disciples would inform the people that Jesus was coming to their city. Now this may not raise any eyebrows if we are unaware of the culture of the day. The area of the Samaritans was populated by people who were once Jews but after being conquered by the Syrians, they were forced to settle down with people from other parts of the conquered empire. They intermarried and were no longer able to even trace their Jewish roots. Even though they retained a lot of the Jewish religious thoughts and customs, they were rejected by the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. There was a deep seeded hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews. Usually when Jews traveled between Galilee and Jerusalem, they would avoid traveling through Samaria by crossing the Jordan River and travel on the east side of the river until they were parallel with Jerusalem and then crossed to the west side.

Here is why this is so interesting. The Samaritans were still connected to the Jewish nation through blood. Jesus is gathering to Himself all Jews. We don't see a good outcome in this Samaritan city but Jesus went to another city in Samaria. The Apostle John put it this way:

***"4 He had to go through Samaria on the way" (John 4:4 / NLT).***

John said that Jesus had to go through Samaria. We know that the town happened to be Sychar and the whole village came out to welcome Jesus and they received His message enthusiastically. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the Jews were once again driven out of Israel and scattered throughout the world. They have been persecuted for the past 2,000 years. But in 1948, God gathered Jews from all over the world back to their homeland of Israel. As Christians, we need to say to ourselves that God started something new again with His people. Remember in his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul said this to those of us who are Christians:

***"25I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud and start bragging. Some of the Jews have hard hearts, but this will last only until the complete number of Gentiles comes to Christ. 26And so all Israel will be saved. Do you remember what the prophets said about this?"***

*“A Deliverer will come from Jerusalem,  
and he will turn Israel from all ungodliness.*

*27And then I will keep my covenant with them  
and take away their sins” (Romans 11:25-27 / NLT).*

The disciples went ahead to a Samaritan village to prepare them to meet Jesus. I think this is an important thing for us to remember as well. When we witness to unbelievers, our job is not to win them to us or even to convert them. Our job is to prepare them to meet Jesus and then to introduce them to Jesus. God the Holy Spirit will remove the blinders from their eyes and soften their hardened hearts. Jesus will then come into their hearts. To be sure, we can be with them every step of the way but their conversion must not be because they like us. It must be on the basis of their meeting Christ.

In verses 53-54 we see people focused on the wrong things. In verse 53, we see the people of this Samaritan village reject Jesus because they are focused on the wrong thing. They are focused on the fact that Jesus is focused on fulfilling His religious mission in Jerusalem. The Samaritans made Mt. Gerizim the holy site for their worship and rejected Jerusalem. What they should have been focused on is that the Jewish Messiah came to gather them as His very special people. Jesus had to go through Samaria not because it was located on a desirable highway. Jesus had to go through Samaria because of love. Jesus loved them and wanted to be their Savior. But because Jesus’ face was set towards Jerusalem, they rejected Him.

Because of a false Jesus we have created in our minds, because of jealousy, anger, pride, or other craziness, we reject Jesus like the Samaritans did. We have already studied about another city that rejected Jesus for all the wrong reasons. Jesus healed a man who had been tormented by a legion of demons. Jesus healed the man and in the process, the demons entered a herd of pigs and drove the pigs off the side of a cliff. The villagers were so focused on the demons and the pigs, they asked Jesus to leave. They should have focused on the fact that a man who had been tormented mercilessly by demons was now healed and restored to his right mind.

Let’s continue with the word face. These people were face to face with Jesus and they rejected Him. Someday they will once again come face to face with Jesus and I’m quite sure they will not be happy to see what Jesus has to say to them. Someday you will be face to face with Jesus. Someday I will be face to face with Jesus. What do you suppose He will have to say to us as He looks into our eyes?

In verse 54 the disciples get focused on the wrong things. James and John become enraged over this village’s rejection of Jesus. They want to call down fire from heaven and wipe the village and its people right off the face of the earth. It’s a nice

sentiment, but that is not the disciple's job. Sometimes I think we forget that. Over all the years I have spent in ministry, I can't begin to tell you how many people I have met who think they are the Holy Spirit. Somehow Christians feel it is their duty to be fruit inspectors, finding fault with others, criticizing, and judging. And I have to say that in almost every case, the lives of these Christians are more messed up and confused than the people they are finding fault with and judging. If you know people like this ... or if you are a person like this, let me take this time to remind ourselves of a teaching of Jesus we have already studied through in the Gospel of Luke:

***“37 Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven. ... 41” ... why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? 42 How can you think of saying, 'Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye” (Luke 6:37-42 / NLT).***

Let's try to remember that we are not the judge. Jesus is the judge. Jesus quickly brings that to the disciples when in verses 55-56 He gets them focused back on the mission. What James and John were saying sounded noble and righteous. But verse 55 tells us that Jesus rebuked them. They were focused on two wrong things. First they were focused on their own importance as if they needed to defend Jesus' honor. Secondly they were focused on results. As we said before, God the Holy Spirit is responsible for results not us. Our job is simply to introduce people to Jesus. Sometimes people will give their lives to Christ. Sometimes they won't. Jesus simply sent them to another Samaritan village. We know from the fourth chapter of John, they had incredible results in that village.

We constantly need to remind ourselves that we are not God the Holy Spirit and that results are in the hands of God, not ours. It seems to me that if we were totally honest with our church reporting, we should be reporting many setbacks and failures. That is the way it was for the disciples. Why should it be different for us? How could it be that every project, event, or ministry opportunity be a rousing success? I think we have to be honest and report setbacks and failures as well as successes. We should be suspicious of all glowing reports. EFFECTIVE MINISTRY DEPENDS ON KEEPING FOCUSED ON FOLLOWING JESUS. I know this is difficult because we all struggle with pride. But keeping focused on the right things will help us to stay on track.

### THE VALUE OF URGENCY (VS 57-62)

In verses 57-62, Jesus describes the value of urgency. SINCE JESUS IS COMING BACK SOON, IT IS URGENT THAT WE REACH PEOPLE WITH THE GOSPEL. I think the main problem that hinders us today is that we have come to feel comfortable defining the word church as a building or an institution. We often look for the church to fulfill our personal responsibilities. I have family members who are not Christians. I have friends who are not Christians. I have many people in my circle of friends and neighbors who do not know Christ. I'm the church. I'm the one who

has been called to tell them about Jesus. You are the church. You're the one who is supposed to be telling people about Jesus. Jesus is coming soon. So in some instances, we are in a somewhat similar place as the disciples.

In verses 57-58 we can see that discipleship is difficult. A man approached Jesus and said that he wanted to follow Jesus. Somehow we as a people have come to think that life should be enjoyable, easy, and pain free. In fact, one of the reasons we come to church is to ask Jesus to make our lives good so we can avoid trouble and pain. That's just plain superstition. If that's what we want, we should just go to a magic store or embrace some crazy mystical religion.

Jesus told the guy that following Him is like living in the field as a soldier. I was an army chaplain stationed with a field unit. Believe me, living in the field is no picnic. I couldn't wait to get back to the garrison after being in the field. Jesus reminds us that being a Christian is a constant battle with an enemy who never rests. We must be alert and constantly on guard.

In verses 59-60 remind us that discipleship is urgent. Jesus approached another guy and said to him, "Follow me." When Jesus approached Peter, James, and John, they dropped their fishing nets, left their boats on the beach, and their family and friends behind, and followed Jesus. Jesus called Matthew and he left his money and books behind to follow Jesus.

This man seems to make a reasonable request of Jesus. He says, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Look how Jesus responds. In seminary, when we were taught how to minister to those in grief, His response would have earned an F. Jesus said to the guy, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

This seems like a harsh and unreasonable response by Jesus. And commentators who are embarrassed try and put a gentler spin on it. I think Jesus is saying, "Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. There is nothing we can do for the physically dead. Go and preach to the spiritually dead so that they can live after death."

I don't know where we get the notion of Jesus walking around like Gandhi, with his head down, and hands together in prayer. Jesus is a tough guy. He is gentle with the meek but He doesn't have a lot of patience with the proud, especially with the religious proud. I think if we find ourselves making excuses why we are not following Jesus, conquering sin in our lives, and telling people about Jesus, then Jesus is probably not very pleased with us.

And in verses 61-62, we see Jesus make it clear that discipleship is one way. Another guy who wanted to follow Jesus wanted to go and say good-bye to his family. Jesus said that anyone who looks back is not fit for service in the Kingdom of God. We put so much worldly sentimentality on Christianity that is not biblical. I have to say that I find myself often hampered by my psychological and pastoral

training. I'm always afraid to say something to someone that may hurt their feelings or even to point out the obvious truth to them because my training says that pastors and psychologists should let people come to their own conclusions. I agree that we don't have to go out of our way to be obnoxious or rude. To be sure, I have to be careful of that. However, I think I find myself reluctant to say the plain simple things that Jesus said.

He says to us that we should suck it up and grow up. Discipleship is difficult. Discipleship is urgent. Discipleship is Jesus' way. There is no room for bargaining about it. Jesus says, "If you want to be My disciple, then do it on my terms. Grow up and quit being a baby." The fact is this. SINCE JESUS IS COMING BACK SOON, IT IS URGENT THAT WE REACH PEOPLE WITH THE GOSPEL.

I have come to realize that many of my struggles in living out the Christian faith is that I have often gotten worldly values confused with Bible values. IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY FOLLOW JESUS, WE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT IS VALUABLE.

John Hess-Yoder gave this illustration from his missionary days in Laos about values:

***"Before the colonialists imposed national boundaries, the kings of Laos and Vietnam reached an agreement on taxation in the border areas. Those who ate short-grain rice built their houses on stilts, and decorated them with Indian-style serpents were considered Laotians. On the other hand, those who ate long-grain rice, built their houses on the ground, and decorated them with Chinese-style dragons were considered Vietnamese.***

***The exact location of a person's home was not what determined his or her nationality. Instead, each person belonged to the kingdom whose cultural values he or she exhibited."***

We have to keep this in mind. As Christians, we live in the world but we are really citizens of God's Kingdom. We need to live by His values.