

THE ULTIMATE COMMITMENT



And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.

Mark 10:32a

Jesus was ahead of them because he knew exactly where he was going. He was leading them to a place where they would behold the love of God with their naked eye....

- where every chain would break and they would be free men and women,
- where they would be absolutely flooded with the life of God.

There was a door up ahead on that road that would do all this and more

... it was called Calvary. If he could keep them with him all the way to Calvary, their lives would be changed forever.

But they would have to stick with him.

Jesus could see that their courage was starting to fail.

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.

If there's any verse in scripture that describes the Body of Christ ... at least as we find it where we are ... it's this verse.

Jesus is walking ahead - the twelve and all the other followers of Jesus are lagging behind. Why are they lagging behind? Because they're amazed at Jesus ... he's heading for Jerusalem ... and they've been told by all the people who should know that if Jesus shows up in Jerusalem for this Passover there's going to be trouble.

The disciples are lagging behind because they're afraid.

"If we go up to Jerusalem with him and he gets in trouble, what's going to happen to us?"



Peter tried to tell him, "Lord, you're heading the wrong way. Let's go back to Galilee and let things cool off." But Jesus shot him down,

"Get behind me Satan."

The professing church is trying every excuse it can think of to keep from going up to Jerusalem with Jesus.

We're not ready to go to Jerusalem Lord. We don't know each other well enough yet. Don't you think we should get to know each other better?"

"Our self-esteem is wounded. Give us a little more time to improve our self-esteem."

"There isn't enough joy among us yet Lord. We can't go up to Jerusalem until we have more joy."

But Jesus turns around and says,

"Are you coming? ... Are you coming with me?"

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise."

Mark 10:32-34



"I'm going up to Jerusalem to die and I want you to come with me."

"I want you to watch me lay down my life so that you can see God's love for you and so that you can learn how to lay down your life too." But instead of taking in what Jesus is saying, they're far too busy with their own agenda.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

Mark 10:35-37

Little do they realize that what they're asking for involves a cross---the very thing they're trying to escape.

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has; been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:38-45

"I've come to lay down my life ... follow me and you'll see God's face at Calvary and you'll learn how to lay down your life too."

Now let's give the disciples credit.

- They were reluctant.
- They were amazed and afraid and stumbling over their own egos,
... but they kept going with Jesus.

James and John did drink the cup Jesus drank ... Peter drank the cup.

They were the remnant of a huge army of disciples which started out with Jesus and withdrew from Jesus as soon as the cross came into view.

The same sifting is going on in the Body of Christ on earth right now.

Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem ... he's up ahead ... we're lagging behind because we're amazed and afraid. And now we have to decide whether we're going to keep going to Jerusalem and the cross, or head back to the sunny peaceful shores of Galilee where it's safe and comfortable.

The professing church is made up of two kinds of people...

- the ones who are busy trying to find themselves,
- and the ones who are losing themselves step-by-step as they
...follow Jesus on the road to Jerusalem.

At first it was hard to tell who was who. It was one big happy crowd. But now the crowd is beginning to separate. And the question that decides where we fit in all this is:

Where is your ultimate commitment?

Is it to yourself, or is it to Jesus?

- If it's to yourself, for goodness sake why put yourself through any more hassle ... go on back to Galilee.
- If it's to Jesus, you have no choice. You have to follow him even if you lose every friend you ever had ... half your family ... even your own life.



Let me be blunt. If your ultimate commitment is to yourself, do yourself a favor and forget about Jesus ... he'll always mess up your plans.

But if your ultimate commitment is to Jesus, then let him be your joy.

Make it clear to yourself, to him, and to the world that he is your Lord.

If your ultimate commitment is to Jesus, then turn from the things that compromise this commitment, whatever or whoever they are.

We hear much these days, about the call of the Spirit for all of us to draw together ... to fit in with each other ... to wash each other's feet.

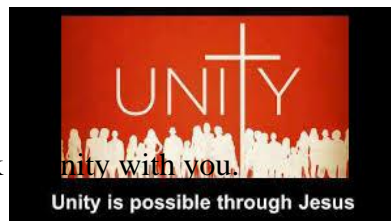
We know that our impact on the world for the kingdom is directly connected to our unity with each other. But the key to this unity, the source of this bond of peace, which is to hold us together, still comes down to a single issue in each of our lives:

Our commitment first and last to Jesus himself.

He is the vine we are the branches.

Our unity with each

other is possible only through our unity with him.



- If I am alive in him, then I can walk

- If I have drifted from him ... if my vision of him is vague
... my unity with you will be superficial, and the first wind that blows will tear it apart.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep."

The issue is not,

"Come on Peter, are you going to feed my sheep or aren't you?"

But, ***"Peter, do you love me?"***



If Peter's love for Jesus isn't clear, he'll forever be going off on fishing trips of his own.

Peter will only feed the sheep when he's clear about his love for Jesus.

The Spirit of the Lord is gathering a people to himself. At an hour when the professing church is caught up in its own vanity, Jesus is gathering disciples ... men and women who are first and last committed to him.

When we talk about Jesus we're not talking about an idea or a concept or a set of rules. We are talking about a person who knows us and can be known by us, who can speak to us, who can breathe life into our souls, who stands in judgment of everything in us that's evil, false, devious and vain.

He died on that cross, he rose from the dead. He is God the Son, who through the Spirit stands in our midst and searches every heart reading these words.

Behind every symptom of disunity in the Body,

every form of lukewarmness,

every depression,

every case of burn-out, is the foundation issue:

"Where is your ultimate commitment?"

Is it to Jesus or is it to yourself?"

When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I Corinthians 2:1-2



This was Paul's ultimate commitment when he came to Corinth and all the time he was there ... Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul followed Jesus on that road up to Jerusalem, that's why he had such power, bore such fruit.

He knew where his commitment was.

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith....

Philippians 3:4b-10

When Jesus says to Paul, "Come on Paul, we're going up to Jerusalem. Walk with me and I'll show you the love of God and I'll teach you how to lay down your life," Paul says, "Lead on Lord, my life is yours"

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise."

Mark 10:32-34

Now it's we who are on that road to Jerusalem.

The Spirit of Jesus is searching our hearts and asking,

**"Are you with me ...
are you with me?"**



Will you let me take authority over your everyday life?

over your thoughts,
over your dreams,
over your memory,
over your attitudes,
over your material wealth?"

Many of us are frustrated about our ministries. We are saying, "I haven't found my ministry. Nobody has given me a chance to use my gifts. I'm not fulfilled."

The only way to any ministry, that is truly a ministry in the eyes of God, is to take this road with Jesus to Jerusalem.

It leads to a cross.

It leads to the pouring out not only of his life but of yours.

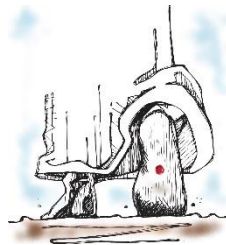
Take this road and you will find resurrection power and resurrection life for a dying church in a world of death.

"Follow me. Follow me and I will lead you to the place where you will see the love of God with your naked eye.

Follow me and I will bring you to the place where every chain will break and you will be a free man, a free woman.

Follow me and I will bring you to the place where you will be flooded with life from God.

Follow me to Jerusalem ... to the cross ... to drink my cup ... share in my baptism of fire."



Either we answer with our lives, or we turn back to our own vain little worlds

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