

1. The cost of following Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to the scriptures, to our reading this evening, and you'll find it in Luke's Gospel, chapter 14. Well, we're going to read the whole chapter, but Andy Gemmler is going to be preaching tonight from the last portion of it, verse 25 onwards.

If you have one of our church Bibles, I think you'll find it on page 874. Page 874, and we'll read the whole chapter, which gives the context. Luke 14, then, at verse 1.

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man came before him who had dropsy.

That's congestive heart failure. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and the Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? But they remained silent.

And he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?

[1 : 1 7] And they could not reply to these things. Now, he told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, When you're invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him.

And he invited you both will come and say to you, Give you a place to this person. And then you'll begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you're invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher.

Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

He said also to the man who had invited him, When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid.

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled and lame, the blind. You'll be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You'll be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

[2 : 3 8] When one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

And at the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who had even been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I bought a field, and I must go out and see it.

Please have me excused. And another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. And another said, I've married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

So the servant came and reported these things to his master. And the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and lame.

And the servant said, Sir, what you've commanded has been done, and still there is room. And the master said to the servant, Go out to the highways and the hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.

[3 : 50] For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. My great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he is enough to complete it.

Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able, with 10,000, to meet him who comes against him, with 20,000?

And if not, well, the other is yet a great way off. He sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltedness be restored? It's of no use, either for the soil or for the manure pile.

[5 : 22] It's thrown away. Now, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen. Amen. May God bless us, his word.

Luke chapter 14. If you're following in one of the church Bibles, page 874, let's play for the Lord's help as we come to study his word together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have spoken to us so clearly in the person of your Son through his words and his actions.

And we pray that hearing and seeing him, we might understand more firmly what it means to follow him. This we ask in his name.

Amen. Consider, if you would, how off-putting the public face of Christianity seems to be so often.

[6 : 32] Don't you think? Think on the one hand of the notice board outside the average church building that you pass on your way backwards and forwards every day. And it's rather less than enticing poster.

Here are some real life examples. Jesus is for life, not just for Christmas, making him sound like some sort of pet. carpenter of Nazareth seeks joiners, making it sound as though all we need is play on words to get people through the door.

Come in for a faith lift. Or, don't let life worry you, let the church help. There's more truth in that than the writer intended.

Or the very common and slightly sad, all welcome. They tend to sound rather desperate, don't they, those notices, to have someone, anyone, come through the door.

Consider, on the other hand, the God channel version of public Christianity on television. God wants to bless you in life so abundantly, and then five minutes later, the inevitable, send your faith donation to this address and see how God will bless you.

[7 : 45] So often, Christianity seems either desperate to get your money or just desperate to have anyone show some interest. Well, what a relief it is to see Jesus in action.

Mark, Luke, chapter 14, verse 25. He is so different from that, is he not? Great crowds accompanied him.

For a start, he doesn't need to persuade people to follow him. There isn't, he doesn't, you just can't keep people away. And second, and even more unusual, he does not hide anything from people.

There isn't a hidden appeal for money five minutes later. There isn't loads of small print kept out of the way because it's uncomfortable. Three times in this short passage, he speaks openly with the strongest negatives.

Look at the end of verse 26, the last four words, cannot be my disciple. And verse 27, cannot be my disciple.

[8 : 59] And verse 33, cannot be my disciple. These are not words of a man desperate to feel significant or to get your money.

know they're the words of a supremely impressive person, knowing precisely what he has come to do and speaking with transparent honesty about exactly what it will be like for anyone who wants to follow him.

He's so refreshingly different. Let me introduce to you this short series on Sunday evenings. We're in Luke's gospel, obviously, and we're going from chapter 14 to chapter 17, following Jesus through one leg of a very important journey.

Let me introduce you to the journey that Jesus is on. Three things to say about it. First, it is a very important journey. Turn back to chapter 9 verse 51.

Chapter 9 verse 51. Jesus is on a journey to Jerusalem and it dominates this part of the book. When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

[10 : 12] Now, of course, for us, Jerusalem is just another city. But in the Bible, a city which had been at the very heart of God's love and God's plans for hundreds of years.

And Jesus speaks about it in precisely those terms. Turn on to chapter 13 and verse 33. Here, Jesus speaks of Jerusalem with God-like affection, salvation, but utter realism.

I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not. Do you see the affection in those words?

And the realism. He loves this city passionately and he expects to die when he arrives there. Now, let me say, if you're new to the Christian message, just finding out for yourself what it's all about, the death of Jesus is right at the very center of the whole thing.

[11 : 36] And let me say that when you grasp how Jesus' death fits in, you are well on the way to grasping what the whole of the Christian message is all about because that is where he's going.

It's where he's going in this story. You cannot read the words of Jesus and think of his death as being an accident or being at the edge of his concerns. It's right here in the middle.

I must go on my way for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem. And let me say, if you haven't quite yet got it in your head, why Jesus came to die, well, keep pursuing that question until you do because that's where the money is.

That's what it's all about. He's intending to go to Jerusalem to die. It's what's on his mind. Now, we're going to travel a bit of the way to Jerusalem with him on these Sunday evenings.

We get little journey markers all the way through this part of Luke's gospel, little signposts to remind us that we're on that road, we're on that journey. Let me just point a few of them out to you.

[12 : 49] Turn to chapter 9, verse 57. Here's the first. As they were going along the road, someone said to him, little reminder that we're on the road to Jerusalem.

Or look at 10.1. He sent people ahead of him to every place where he himself was about to go. We're on a journey, a little reminder.

Or 10.38. As they went on their way. And where are they going? They're going to Jerusalem. Now we are following the journey between two of these little journey markers in Luke's story.

The first is in 14.25. Now great crowds accompanied him. Where's he going? Oh yes, he's on the way to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. That's the first. And the second is right on in chapter 17, verse 11. This is the next one. On the way to Jerusalem, he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.

[13 : 55] It's an important journey. And that's why Luke constantly reminds the reader that we're on that road and we're heading for that destination.

Second thing about this journey. the closer Jesus gets to Jerusalem, the further he goes on the journey, the bigger the crowds get.

11.29. When the crowds were increasing, he began to say. Or chapter 12, verse 1.

Many thousands of people had gathered together. Here, chapter 14, verse 25, great crowds accompanied him. Thousands and thousands of people are following by this point.

Why so great a following? Well, three reasons I think. First, he is so impressive looking. If you skim through Luke's gospel, you find Jesus healing the sick, exercising control over evil, even raising the dead.

[14 : 59] He is so impressive to see in action. Who would not want to follow him? More than that, he is just the sort of person these people were looking for.

For they looked forward to the day promised by God when God's king would come to Jerusalem, rule over God's people, rescue them from their enemies, change everything for them forever.

And more than that, on the journey already, Jesus has talked about a great victory celebration. We read it earlier in chapter 14 this evening.

A great celebration banquet is planned when God's king comes to rule over God's kingdom and do all those things, end sickness forever, end evil forever, end death forever, establish God's loving rule forever.

And Jesus looks such a good candidate for the role of king. He has the power, he has the words, he might be the one, he's even talking about it, and so not surprisingly, crowds have grown, if he'd been past your door, you'd be following, and so would I.

[16 : 18] Third thing about this journey, as the crowd has got bigger, Jesus' words of caution have become stronger and stronger.

9.57, look at that please, would you? Chapter 9, verse 57, please, do turn the pages, it encourages you that you're still awake out there. 9.57, first note of caution, someone said to Jesus, I'll follow you wherever you go, and Jesus said to him, well that's absolutely marvelous, I'm so delighted that you've decided to take the step of faith, well not quite, foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head, what an encouraging word that was, or 11.29, when the crowds were increasing, he began to say, I'm so glad you're all here following me today, I really am, well not quite, this generation is an evil generation, he says, notes of caution all the way through, as the number of people get bigger, until we get to 14.25, and the caution turns into a full-on warning, now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, if anyone comes to me, and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple, and that kicks off a whole series of warnings in this next leg of the journey, and they're here because they're necessary, you see,

Jesus is heading towards a great banquet, a great celebration, a great victory, but between him and that great celebration lies a brutal death, it's as if his death reaches out to him along the road from Jerusalem, and those following need to know that, because it would affect not only him but them, and so do we, because the shadow of the cross reaches forwards through every age and touches the life of anyone who has ever followed Jesus, all the way to us today, these warnings are necessary, but let me say, is it not wonderfully refreshing that they're there, don't you think?

we're so used to leaders hiding things from us in order to remain popular, it's just normal, it's what they do, we're so used to having the less palatable bits of our insurance policies hidden away in the small print, we so rarely read the small print because it's so boring, and there's so much of it, but it's where the business is happening, we all know that we're supposed to read it, we can hardly ever be bothered, and then one day somebody does something like stealing our cat, and we read the insurance policy in desperation and find that we're not covered for that kind of loss, and we'll have to pay for a new one, and we all know how easy it is, don't we, to be swept along with a crowd of other people on a wave of enthusiasm, only to find that when the wave breaks, the things we'd hoped for don't materialize.

is it not refreshing to come across a leader who doesn't do small print, isn't that refreshing? He gets the difficult things right out on the table for everyone to see at the beginning, he makes sure everyone hears them, repeatedly, he wants no one to be in doubt about what he's doing or about what following him means, it's wonderfully refreshing and reassuring.

[20 : 39] Now with that reassuring reality in place, let's take a look at this first section of our leg of the journey. What does it mean to follow Jesus?

Well, Jesus says there are two absolute requirements of everyone who follows him. They apply to everyone who wants to follow Jesus and he says, cannot be my disciple.

Well, in the same way, three times it is emphasized that these words apply to everyone without exception who follows Jesus.

Look at verse 26. verse 27. If anyone comes to me, anyone, look at verse 27, whoever, every person, verse 33, any one of you who, you see the comprehensiveness of this, there are not different sorts of Christians according to Jesus.

There really aren't. There are just disciples and non-disciples. There are people who are learning from Jesus and people who are not learning from Jesus.

[22 : 03] There are people who are submitting to Jesus and people who are not submitting to Jesus. There are true followers and people who are not following truly. of course there are all sorts of people who have the label Christian attached to them in one way or another, but he says there are really only two sorts for these conditions apply to everyone without exception who would follow him.

What makes a true disciple? First, total loyalty, verse 26. And this is expressed in the most shocking terms.

If anyone comes to me and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Now let me say if those words were not on the page, you'd never have thought they could possibly be in the Bible, could you?

You wouldn't have made up these words and put them into the mouth of Jesus. Aren't Christians supposed to be pro-family? Aren't Christians supposed to be people who think that human friendships and relationships are important things?

What on earth is he saying? Well, it's a figure of speech, it's a way of speaking for emphasis. He is not saying that following him is like being a member of a religious cult.

[23 : 23] It's one of the characteristic things about religious cults, that they really do turn people away from their families and friends and previous set of relationships to belong to them.

people. But in the Gospels, Jesus rebukes people for not honoring their parents. He can't mean actually positively hating. But what he is saying is that he has to be the primary relationship in life from this point onwards.

He demands first loyalty. He's to be the most important person in the lives of those who follow him, without exception. Life following Jesus is to be life with him in charge.

He's not against family and friends. He's against rivals. And of course, family and friends make very good rivals to Jesus sometimes.

Ask yourself, what is stopping me following Jesus more wholeheartedly? And you might say, well, my own sinfulness, and of course, that would be right. But often, quite high up the list of the things that stop us following Jesus more wholeheartedly is something like, if I do that, that person who is close to me will not respond well.

[24 : 48] Could be a parent, a sibling, even a child. Could be a best friend, an employer. Could be someone in church. Could be someone in the denomination.

often the biggest threat to following Jesus is our closest human relationships. Because we derive such a sense of security and identity from those relationships.

They're often our primary opinion formers. Now, let me say, you will not believe this if you are 20 something, but let me assure you that when you are 40 something, you will become day by day more like your same-sex parent.

You cannot believe that is true, can you? You do not want that to be true, let me assure you, it is. 40 somethings, is that not true? Didn't you wake up one morning and find that you suddenly turned into your mother or your father, whatever you are?

People have very powerful effects on us. and it can be very difficult to step out of line with their desires for us.

[26 : 01] Of course, Jesus isn't saying we're to cultivate negative relationships with other people, but he is saying if you follow him, you'll find yourselves sometimes at odds with those closest to you.

I was converted as a student at a Christian union mission about this time of year. actually. And after I was converted, I had a very good friend from school who just did not want to be friends in the same way anymore.

It was very difficult and painful. Some of you all found as you've grown up in life that your parents are unhappy with the career choices that you've made because you were Christian or unhappy with the way that you've brought your children up because you want them to be Christian.

or any number of things may have brought you into awkward conflict with the strong opinion formers in your own life.

Jesus says, if you want to follow me, I am going to be the Lord of everything and absolute loyalty belongs to me. There are no rivals.

- [27 : 15] Absolute loyalty. Second, death to self. Verse 27. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

When Jesus took up his cross, he put his own interest to one side and he endured great difficulty to save us from our sins and their consequences. And he expects everyone who follows him to put their own self-interest to one side and be willing to have him in control.

And that will always mean conflict from the outside world and conflict with the sinful nature inside. Of course, for these disciples on this journey, it didn't involve much of that yet.

When it came to cross time for Jesus, all of this crowd, this huge crowd, all of them had deserted him. He alone suffered the pains of the cross.

He alone gave his life for the sins of the world. He alone died so that we might be rescued from death and hell. He alone did that all on his own. But the point he makes here is that everyone who follows him, everyone, can in some measure expect to share something of the hostility from outside and the inner having to say goodbye to self that he had to do.

- [28 : 49] If you follow him, there will be things that come to you from the outside that will be difficult to endure. If you follow him, there are things that will come naturally to you from inside that you will have to put to death.

If you're on the road to that great victory banquet at the end, you cannot escape the difficulties of the journey. That's what he's saying.

Difficulties from without and from within. Let me say that if you are finding it hard to follow the Lord Jesus today, if life has got difficult for you from outside or from inside, let me encourage you to take heart.

It is a sign of being on the right road towards a great future. We think, don't we, that when life is going badly, when difficult things come from outside, or when we find our inside sinfulness a great trouble, we think, don't we, that that's a bad sign.

Jesus says, well, that's what you're signing up for, verse 27. Death to self. It's a difficult road carrying a cross.

- [30 : 16] It was for him, it always is for those who follow him. Two absolute requirements then. Total loyalty, he's to be really in charge, and death to self.

They go together. He's to be Lord, we are to be in second position. Two absolute requirements.

And now, two vital considerations. Jesus follows those very strong words up with two little parables, both of which emphasize how important it is to think hard about the cost of following him.

the first is this, don't follow Jesus lightly. Verse 28. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Otherwise, when he's laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish. this is a financial example, a building example, a bloke building a building.

- [31 : 32] He's got great plans, but everybody who has their head screwed on in the building trade knows that it takes more than great plans to pull off a great project.

It takes resources. Every year for the last 16 years or so, we've gone on holiday in the summer, part of the summer, to the far northwest of Scotland, to Westeros, just down the beach from the cottage in which we stay, is another cottage which all the time that we've been working on it has been unoccupied and been having work doing on it.

Somebody from somewhere in England, I think, bought it once and really didn't have the resources to do the job. Neither were the resources of time or of money.

And so every year, for the last 16 years, there's been a little bit here and a little bit there added and it's taken a long, long time. And I imagine the locals think, what an idiot.

Why did he buy that? And spend 16 years doing bits of stuff to it, rather than coming up here and enjoying living there. Goes on holiday to be a workman. What a silly thing to do.

[32 : 48] I sometimes watch that program, Grand Designs. If you're not familiar with Grand Designs, you'll know that Grand Designs is a kind of building pornography. It's people who have their great building projects, and it's all televised, and you get to learn what the building project is and follow it through.

Three things strike me every time I see that program. One, it always takes much longer than they thought it was going to take. Two, it always costs miles more money than they thought it was going to cost.

And three, it's always massively stressful, and much more so than they might imagine, and their marriage nearly breaks down as a result. Somehow, the reality of building things proves to be rather bigger than they had imagined.

That is precisely what this parable is talking about. What Jesus is saying is, following me is a good thing, but make sure you take seriously what a big thing it is before you do it.

Don't follow me lightly. Just as is true with building projects, so it is true of following Jesus. Do not start following him unless you think you know what it means to continue all the way to the end.

[34 : 17] And you intend to continue all the way to the end. Don't follow him lightly. Second parable, don't resist him foolishly.

Verse 31. Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he's able with 10,000 to meet him who goes against him with 20,000.

and if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

This second little parable is a parable about warfare. Imagine Jesus says that you are a king. A foreign king is advancing over the horizon.

he has with him a very large army. You get your army out and you find it is only half the size of his army. Before you decide to go out and fight him, perhaps it might be sensible to consider whether you have any hope whatever of winning or whether it would be better off trying to make peace with him as soon as possible before he gets irritated about having come so far before you make peace.

[35 : 43] This is a parable about getting your head straight in relation to reality. And I think the point here is we would be mad to think that we can resist the coming rule of Jesus by fighting against him, by remaining in opposition.

About as stupid as a king who decides to go out and fight an army twice the size of his and think that he's going to win. That's how stupid it would be to resist the rule of Jesus.

It is coming. His victory is coming. The banquet is already planned. The celebrations are already well known to God. There is no doubt that it will happen.

What a silly thing it would be to resist his rule. rule. It's not a rule. It's not a fight you can win. Now put these two parables together.

The first, don't follow lightly. Make sure you've got it sorted out in your mind what it will involve. But the second one says, for goodness sake, do follow.

[36 : 56] Do follow. don't remain in the non-following camp. That will be a very bad idea in the end. I wonder if you're an impulse buyer or a careful researcher.

I think humanity tends to divide into those two categories. There are many ways of dividing humanity, but that is certainly one of them. People tend to divide into impulse buyers and careful researchers.

Some people wake up one morning and have no idea that by the end of the day they will have bought a very expensive coffee-making machine. Some people decide that they are going to buy a very nice coffee-making machine and spend a long, long time researching precisely which coffee machine would be the right one to buy.

And the trouble with being that sort of person is that new coffee machines come on the market all the time. And once you've researched for a month, you've got a whole bunch of new ones to research, and so it goes on. Some people never get round to buying the coffee machine.

Some people buy it without thinking, oh, just buy one of those, and actually it proves to be much more expensive and much less useful than they thought. Other people know they need one and really want one, but never get to buying one because they are always thinking and never deciding.

[38 : 14] That's the way these parables work. Don't just do it like that, thinking you can continue without having weighed it up, but for goodness sake, go for it.

don't sit around wondering all the time whether it's really a good decision and whether you can really stand up to Jesus' rule and that go well for you in the end. What a silly thing that would be to do.

Do you see how their parables work? Don't follow him lightly, but don't resist his rule. And I think the bit at the end about salt is just a little finishing off parable saying, start as you mean to go on.

Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It's thrown away.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. He's picturing the situation. If salt were to lose its taste, it would be useless for anything except well, throwing out into the rubbish heap.

[39 : 17] It would be a total waste. In the same way, to start as a follower of Jesus but not continue to the end would be a stupid thing to do. A total waste.

Let me conclude. The big issue here is that there is a person to be followed towards God's great celebration at the end.

Now, I don't know about you, but for me, it would be much more comfortable for it to be impersonal. But it's personal. If anyone comes to me, says Jesus, this person is the greatest person.

He has the right to everything. There is no point setting out on the road with him if you won't let him have everything. I would like it to be more comfortable than that, to only involve a bit of life.

the bits that I could decide. I would like it to be more like buying a ticket for a celebration party at the end. You know, if I could pay for the ticket up front and just forget about it and get to the party at the due date, that would be the thing.

[40 : 34] But no, this is a victory party. This is a party where the great victorious king shares his victory with those who've been with him on the road, following him, going his way, doing it his way.

It's uncomfortable. But let me say, isn't there something intriguing and attractive about someone who is as open as this about how things are going to be?

You're never going to be deceived by someone like this, are you? Never. If you've been a Christian for a while, you'll know that it's just like this following Jesus, isn't it?

You've not been deceived. You're on the right road. If you're not yet a Christian, well, you won't be received. He gets all the difficult stuff out on the table at the beginning. This is the deal.

There are no hidden clauses, no unanticipated nasties, no small print. It's all there to be seen. The destination, a great banquet, a renewed world.

[41 : 47] I'll take you there. I'll give it to you for nothing. You can't get in on your own. It'll cost you everything because I'm to be in charge from now on. It won't be comfortable on the way because you'll be following after my pattern, but I'll take you there and give it to you for nothing.

Isn't there something wonderfully attractive about that kind of frankness, honesty, realism, straightforwardness? You would know where you were with one like this in charge, wouldn't you?

Well, let's pray. Why don't we just have a moment to reflect on what we've learned and maybe to respond in our own hearts to what God has said to us.

We were lost. We....

We We We thank you, gracious God, that when your son came into this world with the intention of dying on a cross for the sins of the world, he did not falsely encourage people.

[43 : 25] He did not pretend that the road ahead of him or of those who follow him was any easier than it was really going to be.

We thank you for this honesty and realism. We thank you, too, for the great promise of this part of Luke's gospel, that there is a victory in sight.

A great celebration to be had when finally God's kingdom is fully realized. And we pray, Heavenly Father, that you would help us, please, in the meantime, to bear our own cross and come after your son.

We pray that you'd help us not to be put off by conflict from without or from within. We thank you that you've made these things clear to us, that they'll happen.

We pray that we might therefore not be discouraged when they do, but look forward to the great victory which your son has earned.

[44 : 45] Help us, please. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.