

Luke 9, 57-62.

The blessed Xmas festival with all its pomp and splendor has ~~again~~ come and gone. The children have sung their happy Xmas carols, and we, who have passed the time of childhood too ~~has~~ joined them in singing songs of happiness and praise. Everywhere there were signs of joy over the fact that Xmas Saeson had again appeared. Friends and relatives remembered each other with greetings and gifts, portraying the happiness and significance of the Great event of the birth of the Sav. Even the streets of our city were beautifully decked with their well-known Xmas garb of green trees and decorations. Everywhere the lights were burning on the Xmas trees, which tho many people perhaps failed to see the significance of the lights, were a symbol of the truth, that about 1900 yrs ago the Light of the World made its appearance in the sp dark world.

however, as the days following this blessed Xmas season come, the happy songs and carols ~~again~~ begin to wane. The festal gaiety again disappears, the decorations are being removed from the trees and homes, in just a few more days the spirit of Xmas will not only be gone, but Xmas itself will also be forgotten. Yes, sadly enuf, it will be forgotten by a great many people, especially among the ranks of the unbelievers. And it is only natural that the unbelievers should forget the Xmas season very quickly, since it has not had the proper meaning and significance to them. Is it not true that to the majority of people Xmas is just another day of feasting and gluttony? Is it not the greatest concern of most every one that appropriate gifts be given and rec'd, not thinking at all that the gift rec'd or given should remind us of that greatest gift which we have rec'd from G in the person of JX, our Sav? A bit of close observation at Xmas time will convince us beyond doubt that this spirit of worldliness is growing from year to year, and it seems to have invaded also the ranks of Xtianity. But that is not as it should be. To us Xtians the Xmas festival has a greater and more lasting meaning. With us there is more than just a tree, decorations, gifts and outward signs of friendship. We too enjoy these things, but they are there merely to remind us of that greatest gift and blessing which has ever been given to mankind, namely JX. and the fruit which the Xmas festival has worked in our hearts is and should be a lasting one. It is not sufficient that X was born in Bethlehem 1900 yrs ago, he must also be born in you. *Tho X a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if he's not been born in Thee, Then thou art still forlorn.*

Since the celebration of the Birthday of our Sav has just passed, it will now be a good time to pause a moment and enquire into our relationship to X. And especially, since this is the last Sunday of this year, it will be an appropriate time to consider whether we have done justice to the name which you bear, Xtian, or disciple of X. I am taking it for granted since I have no reason to doubt regarding any one of you ~~that you~~ and pray to G that I shall never have that you are all sincere in your Xtianity and mode of serving G. G forbid that it should ever be otherwise. If there should at any time be any one who professes discipleship before man but is insincere, let him remember that "The L knoweth them which are his". You may deceive man, but not G. But even a Xtian may at times ask himself the question, is my discipleship of the right character? What does G require of me as his follower or disc? Our T answers this

THE REQUIREMENTS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

1. Willing self-denial
2. Undivided loyalty.
3. Unflinching steadfastness.

T. 57. 58. From the chapter from which our T has been taken, we see that a great multitude of people had been following the Sav. The majority of them were no doubt sincere in their plans to go with X, altho some of them had been drawn to him out of curiosity thru the miracles which X performed. He had miraculously fed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes. He had cleansed a child who had been afflicted with the devil. He had also given his 12 discs the power of miracles. Having seen all of these things and having heard the messages which X preached to the people, there were others too who wanted to join the ranks of the discs. And so it happens that a man comes to X and gives the wonderful promise, 57b. St. Matthe tells us that this man was a Scribe. To get a confession such as this from a Scribe was very remarkable, since there

were few religious leaders who were thus minded toward the Sav. Most of them would have nothing to do with him and sought in every way to put X out of the way, lest he should gain too many followers and thus rob the Scribes and Ph of their religious standing among the people. However, this scribe is very friendly toward X, and makes the bold profession that he would be willing to follow him wherever he would go. And there is no reason to believe that this man was not sincere in his ambition and intentions. It too would have been a wonderful thing if he could have been able to carry out what he here promises. But, from the answer which X gives him, we see that the man had evidently not thought the matter thru thoroughly, and had forgotten or failed to see that to become a disciple of X would necessitate real, genuine self-denial.

T. 58. J, the all-knowing G himself, who could look into the very heart of man and see his inner thoughts, saw at once that this man had given a nasty pledge, and had failed to count the cost. In order then that he should not join the ranks of X's followers blindly and in ignorance, X informs him that discipleship necessitates willing self-denial. And in impressing this fact upon the man X brings an ex out of everyday life. He says, the foxes have their dens and place of refuge, the birds of the air have their roosting places, however, the Son of Man is dwelling in such earthly poverty, that he hasn't even so much as a comfortable pillow upon which he may lay his head. And, if this is the condition of the Master, surely the disciples cannot expect anything better. True discipleship of X would mean, willing self-denial with regard to earthly things and a sharing of the earthly poverty of the Master.

Christian fr, in studying this text we should not overlook the lessons which it contains for us. During the past year we have been sailing under the banner of X's leadership. We have professed his name and want to be his disciples and followers. Let us then ask ourselves the question, have I counted the cost? And, in what respect have I shared the poverty which X took upon himself when he became man? Have I really practised willing self-denial with respect to material things in order that the work of the L might prosper? And have I been a willing worker in the kingdom of X? Have I sacrificed time and money and effort in order that the affairs of our church might be carried on to the glory of G and the welfare of our neighbors, or have I been one of those who always shirks his duty and has no time for the work of X when our true discipleship demands of us that we justly deserve the name which we bear, - Disciples of X. If we fail to reconstruct our lives in such manner, that we have time for X and his work, we have not yet learned the lesson of true discipleship of X. Remember the words of the L, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

11.

True discipleship also includes true and undivided loyalty to our Sav. T. 59. 60. In these words of our T the L asks another person, saying, "Follow me". He is calling him to become his loyal disciple and follower. And it seems that the man understood at least in part what it would mean for him to become X's follower. For, he asks X for enough time until he go home and bury his father. It would seem to us that this would be a very good reason why he should postpone his discipleship. However, X, who again could see into his heart, saw also what would happen in that case. He saw that this man would come into contact with friends and relatives who would surely discourage him from taking his intended step and devote his time exclusively to the work of the L. And for that reason X tells this young man, "Let the dead bury the dead", i.e., let the spiritually dead, those who have no interest in X and his work, bury their physically dead. And, he adds, "But go thou and preach the Kingdom of G." He should spend his time in a more worth-while manner, namely, by preaching the way thru which one might be saved from eternal death.

From our T we learn clearly that we, as disciples of X owe him undivided loyalty and faithfulness. Our attention should not be divided. Either we will direct our attention exclusively to material things, at the expense of the salvation of the soul, or we will center his affection in the things pertaining to the Kingdom of G. And this is also a very timely question just at this time, it being the last Sunday of the year. Have I given

to the L what is rightly coming to him? Have I followed him whole-heartedly? Which interests have demanded most of our time? Have we permitted business or family interests to deter or hinder us from serving G as we should have? So interests are always the most important and should therefore receive the first and greatest attention. For that reason the LJ makes his demand so strong from the man of our T. If we fail to follow the L with undivided attention and loyalty, we are ~~xxxx~~ shirking our Xtime duty. Truly, "Seek ye first the kingdom of G and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

True discipleship of X also demands of us unflinching steadfastness.

III.

1.61.62. X also spoke to another man regarding his discipleship during the same time. This man seemed willing to go, for he says, "I will follow thee", but he also makes a request of the L before he wishes to take up his discipleship. He wanted to bid farewell to those whom he should have to leave behind. Again, to us it seems a fair request. However, X gives him a very sever answer. v.62. In other words, ^{with him} if your greatest interest is in the things at your home, you cannot serve me to the best of your ability. His discipleship should be unconditional. He was not yet fully decided whether he could give up his home for the service of X.

The example which X gives him is one out of everyday life. He says, that if a man goes into the field to plow, he must concentrate his efforts upon his work, and cannot be looking back at other things continuously. If he does that, his ~~row~~ ^{furrow} will be very crooked, and the work will be unsatisfactory. For that reason also with regards serving X, there should be prompt and quick decision, accompanied with unflinching steadfastness.

The ex of our T is a picture of many people today. They would like to become followers of X, feel favorably inclined toward the church, and yet, they feel that the break will be too great, and ~~that~~ fear that they will perhaps be asked to deny ~~themselves~~ some of the worldly pleasures which they had indulged in before. First they wish to satisfy all of their human and earthly interests, and then, if time permits, and things are as they should like them, they will give a moments time to X and their sp needs. Surely, they are unfit for true discipleship with X.

As this year is drawing to a close, place the question squarely before you and answer it to your G, "Have I rendered faithful service unto my G? Have I been constant and steadfast in caring for my souls et welfare? Remember, we simply cannot serve two masters. May G fill us all with zeal and the knowledge of true discipleship, so that we may all follow H-im as it becomes a true child of G.

AMEN.