

*According to the QUT<sup>i</sup>, the majority of the Australian public (79%) believe “climate change is an important issue for them). (I’m not one of them BTW). And the topic today is not “climate change” – we’re going to be talking about belief systems and the level of commitment to them.*

And I’m using “climate change” as an example. It’s a belief-system that is driving our media/governments/education,, To many, it’s pretty-much a religious commitment they hold... But how committed are they?

*The QUT then goes on to say that 60% of consumers are **unwilling to pay *any* more to purchase a product that meets their “climate-friendly” convictions...***

In other words, they believe it, and believe it vehemently, but not if it costs them...

And so, the way that this works out, is as a nation, we expect:

- solar panels on our roof-tops, but only if the government subsidises them;
- folk want to put an electric cars in their garage, but only if the Commonwealth forks-out to help them to get into that Tesla,  
**and** installs (preferably free) charging stations all over the country; and

We expect those pesky farmers:

- to stop pushing down trees; and
- stop their environmentally **unfriendly** cows from burping; and
- stop using fuel & chemicals to grow their crops, without our grocery bill going up...

It is a case-study of Principle without conviction... It's a very good example of “**voicing** conviction without shouldering the cost **of** that conviction” – “principle without conviction”...

Now, as we read the Bible reading today, did you (in your mind) consider that the gospel we believe/proclaim, could possibly be a little out-of-step with what Jesus proclaimed???? Or maybe it's a **lot** different.

I mean, the Pentecostal name-it-&-claim-it thing – that's an easy target – it's a nonsense. The whole “God wants you to be rich”, and the promises of guaranteed healing and a wonderful care-free life, and promises of all manner of physical blessings now – that sort of stuff is obviously a lie...

But that's not what I'm going to be talking about. Today, I want us to look a bit closer to home – us good Bible-believing, evangelical protestants,,,, Does the Gospel that we believe/proclaim, reflect the Gospel of Jesus?

You see, for many of us, we've been taught, “It's easy to become a Christian”... Just believe in Jesus and say the sinners prayer, and “**boom**” you're saved...

Or we might home into Romans 10, and say, ... **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and**

**believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved....**

But the problem is, we don't go on to tell them about Romans 12

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

**12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

And so our picture of the Gospel might become:

- A confession of faith,,,, without humble subservience to Jesus;

It might be about:

- Forgiveness,,,, without repentance;
- Blessing,,, without current suffering;
- Faithfulness,,, without public disgrace;

And it's:

- where discipleship is “on **our** terms”.... When Jesus calls, **we** choose how, where and when we might (or might not) follow Him

In fact, for many, the gospel proclaimed, can be ‘boiled down’ to “adding a bit of Jesus to your life and adding a little bit of Jesus to your **own** goals/plans”. What an empty, anaemic, pathetic version of Christianity that is.

The Gospel of Jesus is very, very different. (and this is what Baptism is about). “Your old life is finished (put to death)”, and becoming a Christian, is about being born again, into a completely new/different life....

And so in Baptism, you go down under the water, signifying a putting-to-death of self. The old life is dead/gone. And you come up out of the water, raised to a completely new life with Jesus... And what our generation need to rediscover, is the radical upending of all that we were, to follow The Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

My bible gave this passage the heading “The Cost of Following Jesus”.

I’m not really sure that’s the best heading. There’s better places that talk about the cost of following Jesus. (where Jesus talks about taking up your cross to follow Him. He doesn’t say that here).

If I was to give it a heading, I think I’d say, “The Nature of Discipleship”. It’s what “being a Disciple of Jesus” looks like. It’s a picture of the pre-eminence of Christ. This is what it means for Jesus to be Lord. He’s the boss. He’s Number 1. He is the most important thing. And we give up **all** else to follow Him... What do we give up? **ALL!!!** We give up **all** else to follow Jesus.

If Jesus truly is the Son of God, and He is, the **only** form of commitment to Jesus that could possibly be appropriate, is total submission.

If **I** continue to call the shots, and if **I** continue to fit Jesus into **my** plans, who's Lord of my life? It's not Jesus... And if Jesus is not Lord of my life, am I even a disciple of Jesus – I merely **voice** conviction, without shouldering the cost of conviction.

Righto, so a whole village has just rejected Jesus. That sort of sets the tone here. He wanted somewhere to stay for the night, and it's just like the night of His birth all over again – no room at the inn – not for you, buddy. And we talked last week about how Jesus was rejected, and we will be too. And in the lowliness of rejection, we are great in the Kingdom of God...

So, a village has rejected Jesus, and they're heading to another village. And as they were going along the road, there's 3 interactions with potential Disciples of Jesus. The first and the third, **volunteer** to be disciples. The middle one, Jesus calls.

The first one says to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go".

And Jesus says: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

You see, this is the nature of Discipleship. Jesus was essentially “homeless”. Now, that doesn’t mean that every Disciple will be homeless, and not even the majority of Disciples will be homeless. The nature of Discipleship, is not merely **voicing** conviction – it’s **following** Jesus wherever He leads, because He’s Lord.

And the point that Jesus is making here, isn’t about homelessness – it’s about rejection. Even the wild animals have a place to live – They are in their natural environment. The fox is in the hole he’s dug under the log. The bird is in the nest in the tree. But Jesus has just been rejected by a whole village “Nowhere for you to sleep here tonight”...

And being a Disciple of Jesus, in this world, you are different. This world, is no longer your natural environment. In Hebrews, it talks about how we are strangers/aliens/foreigners in this world. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we are merely passing through this world, and we are foreigners – it is no longer our natural environment. And just as Jesus was rejected, being a Disciple of Jesus means the world will reject you too.

And so, stepping up / committing to follow Jesus, takes resolve. It is to trust God, knowing that our home is with Him, and God is with us, wherever we go...

*It’s only a couple of times I’ve ever been asked, “Why does the Bush Disciples logo have a hat hanging on a cross”??? And it’s simply because of the saying “Where I hang my hat – that’s my home.” You come in from work, you take your hat off and you hang it up – you’re home. And in Christ, we’re home – that’s what our logo’s about...*

At the moment, there's a chronic housing shortage in Australia. But what Jesus is talking about here, isn't about a 'general' no-place-to-sleep – He's talking about rejection & even eviction because you follow Jesus. But that's ok, because our home is with the Father.

And that's the difference between modern evangelism, and what Jesus taught. Modern evangelism wants to hook you first, and then maybe later on you might learn about the nature of what you've committed to. Whereas Jesus was up-front. The nature of Discipleship, is to be a foreigner to this world.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> interaction, is where Jesus says to another bloke, **"Follow me."** And he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

Now, that seems a reasonable request. I mean, family responsibilities are important. And even the 10 commandments stipulate to honour your father and mother. But Jesus replied: **"Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."**

Alright, so Jesus called, "Come, follow Me." And the man's response: "Yes, just not yet."

Now, as I read the commentaries, there's been a lot of ink spilled trying to make sense of what Jesus is saying. A

common explanation was “His dad isn’t dead yet, and so it’s just an excuse – it could be years until his dad dies, and then he’ll follow him”. ... Maybe... But you know what? I think that’s missing the point that Jesus is making.

When Jesus called Levi (the tax collector), he left everything – **immediately** he left everything and followed Jesus... But this is an entirely different case... The tax collector - he left his dubious occupation – he left his riches – he left his source of wealth... But the man wanting to bury his father – this represents the most noble of duties...

And yet, the call of Jesus to follow Him, **is more important** than the most noble of duties.

And there’s 2 facets to this: It’s the initial call to repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (to become a Christian)... What excuse is holding you back? There is nothing that should keep you from this...

But it’s also about the nature of Discipleship. Another word for “delayed obedience”, is “disobedience”. *If a parent says to a child, “Pack up your toys – we’re leaving now”, and the child says, “I’m just going to finish making this Lego car, so my sister can play with it when I’m gone”, has the child obeyed their parent? Well, they had a noble reason to continue,, but it’s disobedience. “Delayed obedience”, is “disobedience”.*

You see, with his mouth, that man called Jesus “Lord”. And the request he made, was a reasonable request. “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”... What we **don’t** know, is



what he did, when Jesus denied his request... **"Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."**

And this, is where the rubber hits the road. How we respond to Jesus when He **denies** our requests, that indicates where we're really at with Jesus. Is He really our Lord. You see, it's easy for Jesus to be "Lord" when he's giving me my will. Not so easy for Jesus to be Lord when His will is not my will.

If Jesus truly is that man's Lord, what would he do? He would go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Why? Because that's what His Lord commanded him to do.

You see, the modern notion of following Jesus, **seems** to be about "Incorporating Jesus, into the pursuit of our own plans". (Which is really self-lordship)... **Discipleship**, is following the word of Jesus, even if you pray and He denies your request...

Living the Christian life, isn't simply a matter of praying to mould God's will to fit our own plans and desires... Jesus Christ, who died and rose again, is **Lord**, and we shape and mould our lives, to fit His will....

And so we come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> interaction – Another man volunteers to follow Jesus,,, but with conditions. **"I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home."**

That seems a very reasonable request, doesn't it....

And I think of Elisha when he was out ploughing the paddock, and the Prophet Elijah comes along, and puts his coat upon him. It was a sign of passing on the job of being a prophet of God.... And he keeps walking... And Elisha catches up with Elijah and says, "Just let me kiss Mum & Dad goodbye, and then I'm coming"...

And the way I understand Elijah's response is like: "Go back then, whatever...." But Elisha wasn't trying to get out of it... When Elijah called Elisha, Elisha was ploughing with 12 yoke of oxen. That was a massive tractor. And Elisha goes to his tractor, and he slaughters the oxen, and he uses the wood of the plough, to cook the oxen on, as both a sacrifice to God, and a feed for the people...

His break with his old life was immediate and permanent. God had called Elisha away from farming, and for Elisha, there was no going back – he'd permanently destroyed his farming plant...

And Jesus uses the image of ploughing as a teaching moment.  
**"No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."**

Elisha understood this. That's why he burned his livelihood. He would never go back to it.

*Now, machinery operation has changed a lot since I was doing it. (No, not with oxen)*

*But in my day, when you were planting the front paddock that everyone saw, you'd put your best operator on the job, because you wanted those rows nice and straight... These days, the auto-steer GPS takes care of that.*

*But before the days of GPS, to cut a straight line across a paddock, you'd aim the tractor for a tree on the horizon, and you'd keep watching it, and keep aiming for it. If you keep looking behind you at that point, you're probably going to go off course...*

And the nature of discipleship, is when you start following Jesus, you keep following Jesus... Was Jesus saying it was wrong to kiss Mum & Dad goodbye? No – it was just a teaching moment... The nature of Discipleship, is full-on commitment to following Jesus.

Jesus takes precedence (in all things)...

So, what do we do with this??? Because I don't know about you, but by these standards, I've been a dismal failure. By these standards, I am not fit for the Kingdom of God.

There's been times when:

- I've known what God wanted me to do, and I haven't done it.
- I've heard His call, and I've delayed...; And sometimes

- I'm not focused entirely on Jesus, and I wander off into sin and ways of the world...

You too???

We've **voiced** conviction without shouldering the cost **of** that conviction" – "principle without conviction".

Well, I praise God for His grace and mercy, and that He hasn't written us off... There is forgiveness and 2<sup>nd</sup> chances and in my case, 50<sup>th</sup> chances...

But having said that, this teaching of Jesus, **demand**s that we get real with Jesus... If you and I are not fit for the Kingdom of God, then something needs to change (wouldn't you agree?).

If we are not fit for the Kingdom of God because we're always looking back, it's time to get real with Jesus – it's time to fix our eyes on Jesus, and become a faithful people of conviction...

Is this even possible? In God, yes it is. By His Holy Spirit in us, we not only have the calling, but we also have the power to stand firm in Christ....

Have you ever noticed that the Disciples were a bit all over the place, but then something changed. When Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent His Holy Spirit, from that time on, they never wavered...

The nature of Discipleship, is a tough call... **BUT** God carries us in it, through His Spirit...

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Son.  
We thank You that Jesus gave Himself on the cross that we might be saved.

And we thank You,  
that in Your mercy you call us  
into this new born-again relationship with Jesus,  
where we no-longer live for self, but live for You.

Lord, forgive us for when we try to hold on to the old life;  
Forgive us for when we do not fix our eyes on You,  
and wander off into sin and disobedience.

And we pray for the strength of Your Holy Spirit.  
This world is not our natural environment.  
We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven,  
and don't really belong in this world.

And so Lord, we pray for Your strength,  
that we will trust in You,  
through all manner of rejection,  
Always looking forward to the goal:

# With You in Glory.

And in all things, may the Lord Jesus Christ  
be pre-eminent in our lives,,,  
for His is Lord.

One day, **every** knee will bow and  
**every** tongue confess that He is Lord,  
But for us today, He indeed **is our** Lord.  
And we submit to You entirely,  
for You are our Lord.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.qut.edu.au/study/business/insights/climate-explained-are-consumers-willing-to-pay-more-for-climate-friendly-products>