

The Invitation of Jesus

Let me first be plain about what I'm asking you to do. I'm asking you to follow Me (Matthew 4:19; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21)—my example and my teaching (John 8:31, 51; 1 John 2:6)—the teaching recorded for you in the New Testament. And I'm asking you to do that, no matter how difficult it may be, no matter what you may have to give up (Luke 14:25-33). I'm asking you to put My will before anyone or anything else. I'm asking you to no longer do what you want to do (2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 2:20), what your friends want you to do, or even what your loved ones want you to do (Matthew 10:34-37). To put it in the simplest terms possible, I'm asking you to love Me and keep My commandments—and you don't get to pick which ones; you must obey them all (John 14:15; 15:10; Matthew 28:20). I know this sounds demanding—it is a big commitment, but consider this: Compared to the yoke and burden of sin, My yoke is easy, and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

Of course, I realize in order for you to do that, to make that kind of commitment to Me, you have to first believe in Me (John 1:12). You need to know you can trust Me. Well, I've left you plenty of evidence. When I was here on this earth, I performed many miracles, and these were not done in secret (John 7:31; 11:47). I raised the dead; I gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf; I healed the sick; I made the lame walk again (Luke 7:22). Many people observed these miracles, and some of these witnesses recorded what they saw (John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:1-3). Read their testimony in the New Testament, and you will be utterly convinced.

And while you're reading, be sure you read about My death, burial, and resurrection. Put to death by means of crucifixion, I was then buried in a tomb, a tomb sealed and well-guarded (Matthew 27:64-66). But My body did not remain in the tomb. No, my disciples didn't come and take My body. Measures were taken to prevent that. What really happened was on the third day, by the power of God, I was raised from the dead (Luke 24:1-6; Acts 2:24; Ephesians 1:19-20). Just ask those who talked with me, ate with me, even touched Me in those days after My resurrection and before I ascended back to My Father (John 20:19-21:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). I said all that to say this: you can trust Me completely. I am the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64). I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Whatever I tell you, whatever I ask of you, whatever I promise you, you can believe it's the absolute truth. You can believe My words come from heaven (John 12:49-50), and will lead you to

heaven. These very words I speak to you are the words of eternal life (John 6:68). You can count on that.

But to further persuade you to follow Me, let Me tell you what I can do for you.

You are a unique part of My creation. You have a soul, and the things of this world cannot satisfy the needs of your soul (Luke 12:19-21). Only I can give you what your soul really needs. I can give you living water (John 4:10). I can give you the bread of life. If you come to Me and partake of what I offer, you will never be hungry or thirsty again (John 6:34-35). The needs of your soul—your deepest needs, your most important needs—will be completely satisfied. Please understand that if you should gain the whole world—obtain everything this world offers, enjoy every pleasure it affords—and lose your soul, you have profited absolutely nothing (Matthew 16:26).

Please understand, too, just how dark and dangerous this world really is—so many temptations, pitfalls, things that can lead you down a long, lonely, dark path. I've seen too many people travel down that path. But you see, I am the light of the world (John 8:12). I can show you how to escape these things. I can show you how to work your way through these dangers, these temptations, these obstacles that do nothing but make you stumble around in the darkness (John 11:9-10; 16:1). I can shine a light on your path that will not only help you escape the darkness of this life, but more importantly, lead you into the glorious light of eternity (Revelation 21:23).

What else can I do for you? I can relieve your biggest fear—the fear of death. I am also the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). If you choose to follow Me and remain faithful to Me, even though you may die, you will live, because I will raise you up at the last day (John 6:40, 44, 54). I went back to My Father to prepare a place for you, so that when I come again, I can receive you into this eternal home (John 14:1-3).

We have yet to talk about your most critical need. I know YOU—everything you've said or done or thought (Revelation 2:23), and I know for a fact you have done some things that are wrong. Like everyone else, you have sinned (Romans 3:23). Please understand you cannot come to where I am now—in heaven—as long as you have these sins (John 8:21-24). Do you understand why I came to this earth in the first place? I came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). I came to seek and to save YOU—and I did that, because I love you (Galatians 2:20). I am the Lamb of God, the lamb sacrificed to take away your sins (John 1:29). I am the good shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:11).

Please don't ever think My life as being taken from Me. I willingly gave it, so you could be saved (John 10:17-18). I could have called any number of angels to deliver Me from that awful death, but I didn't (Matthew 26:53). I endured the cross; I despised all the shame associated with the cross (Hebrews 12:2), yes, to do my Father's will, but I also did it for you, so your sins could be forgiven and forgotten (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:12).

Now, let's get to what you must do to come to Me, what you must do to become one of My disciples. Here is your opportunity to show that you really believe in Me, that you trust in Me completely. It begins with you leaving your sins behind (something I call repentance—Matthew 9:13; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38). You see, you don't really believe that I am the way, if you're still trying to do it your way, or anyone else's way. You may have been deceived into thinking that you're already one of My disciples, when in fact you're following the commandments and doctrines of men. Please know that as long as this is the case everything you offer Me is in vain (Matthew 15:9). You must repent and following My teachings, and mine alone. I am your Lord and King (Luke 6:46), and I'm asking you to completely submit to Me and My teaching. I also need you to confess before others your faith in Me (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). I want you to demonstrate that you're not ashamed to profess your allegiance to Me in the presence of others. And I expect you to continue to do that, not just in the words you speak, but in the life you live. Finally, I need you to show that you trust in what My death, burial, and resurrection provided for you. You can do that by uniting with Me in the likeness of My death—by dying to sin (as I just talked about), by being buried with Me in baptism, and then being raised up with Me to live a completely new life (Romans 6:1-11). When you join with Me in My death, burial, and resurrection, your every sin will be forgiven. The sins that once separated you from My Father will be removed (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

I'm offering you an opportunity today to come to Me, but I don't know much longer I can make this offer. My Father has appointed a time to judge the world (Acts 17:30-31). That time may be in the distant future, but it may also come before this day is over. Besides, you don't know what your future holds—in terms of your own life. You may live quite a few more years, but you may also be about to draw your last breath. Please decide to follow Me before it's too late. If you wait until it's too late, you can beg and plead all you want. You can knock on My door until you're weary,

but the door will be forever shut (Luke 13:24-27). Instead of giving you eternal life, I will, with great indignation and wrath, punish you with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 2:5-9). That's not what I want for you. In fact, I came to save you from this wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9-10). Joining with me in this invitation are those who have already decided to follow Me, disciples of Mine scattered throughout the world. They, too, want you to receive the wonderful things I have to offer. They appreciate what they have, and they want you to have it, too (Acts 26:29). They want you to be a part of this wonderful body, this church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23), this group of people who enjoy fellowship with me, My Father, and the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). Please do not delay. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and you will find rest for your soul (Matthew 11:28-29). I will give you joy that no man, and no circumstance can ever take from you (John 16:22); I will give you peace that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:7); and for the anchor your soul so desperately needs, I will give you the hope of eternal life (Hebrews 6:18-20).

Whether you need to come to Me for the first time, or come back to Me, right now (today) is the accepted time; right now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).