

## The Folly Of Those Who Do Not Follow Christ For Fear Of Earthly Losses.

Text: Mark 8:1-9  
Suggested Hymns:

440, 388, 387, 343, 451

- 1) Because Christ Imparts Such Sublime Heavenly Gifts As More Than Cover All Earthly Losses.
- 2) Because Christ Provides For Those Who Follow Him With All The Necessities Of Life.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 8:1-9, <sup>1</sup> *In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them,* <sup>2</sup> *“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.”* <sup>4</sup> *Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?”*

<sup>5</sup> *He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.”* <sup>6</sup> *So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. <sup>7</sup> They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. <sup>8</sup> So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. <sup>9</sup> Now those who had eaten were about four thousand.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are informed in this Gospel that *“in those days”* a very great multitude followed Christ and remained with Him for three days in the wilderness.

In our days the great multitudes do not follow Christ. They refuse to associate themselves with Him. The chief reason why so many feel loath to come

to Christ is because they have an idea that a true Christian must bid farewell to all earthly joys.

A true Christian, in their opinion, must always be sad and gloomy, and absorbed in spiritual contemplations. What folly to think so!

True, the person who becomes a Christian must first pass through the dark valley of repentance, and experience that divine sorrow which will make him feel as if he was to be cast into the depths of hell. He must learn that he is a damnable sinner, and as soon as this truth dawns upon him he will weep and lament, and his soul will be filled with extreme sorrow.

But in a short time this sorrow is turned into joy. The Christian is informed by the Gospel that God from pure grace has forgiven him all his sins, that His beloved Son Jesus Christ has bled and died for him on the cross, and that there is now no condemnation<sup>1</sup> to those who are in Christ Jesus.

This the Christian sincerely believes, and in such faith he finds true joy, such joy as the world does not know of. Who can enjoy life more than a true Christian, who knows that his sins are forgiven and that God is favourably disposed towards him?

Another reason why so many in our days will not follow Christ is because they fear that, in addition to being deprived of earthly joys, they would have to dispense with earthly goods and commodities if they became true Christians.

They see that many Christians are poor and remain poor, that only a few are successful in the race for riches, and that they are despised by the world. Now this is a burden which they feel reluctant to bear, and they prefer to remain with the world, expecting to fare better with the children of the world than with the poor and despised followers of Christ.

The folly of such thoughts are apparent from our Gospel. For what are we told of the multitude that followed Christ? They had bodily wants, it is true. They had nothing to eat. But did Christ let them perish? No; having fed their souls with the bread of eternal life, He also provided for their bodily needs.

Let us, then, show with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *The Folly Of Those Who Do Not Follow Christ For Fear Of Earthly Losses*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

**1. It Is Folly Not To Follow Christ**  
**Because Christ Imparts Such Sublime Heavenly Gifts**  
**As More Than Cover All Earthly Losses.**

The people who followed Christ into the wilderness did have to suffer temporal wants in consequence thereof. We are told, <sup>1</sup> *In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them,* <sup>2</sup> *“I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.”*

To this day those who follow Christ, faithfully adhere to Him, and walk in His commandments frequently must suffer want and endure earthly losses in consequence.

If you want to be a true Christian you must not set your mind on riches and have no higher aim and ambition than to make money, accumulate wealth, and gain earthly possessions. The children of this world unhesitatingly use all means, even the most crooked means, to enlarge their property.

But for conscience' sake a Christian must let many a favourable opportunity go by, which the worldling would gladly embrace, for increasing his fortune.

The consequence is that many a faithful Christian does not prosper in the world, though he seems to have the best of chances; he remains far behind in the race for riches, and the children of this world consider him a fool because he is so scrupulously conscientious and does not make better use of the chances offered to him.

But the Christian is aware that there are greater treasures, immensely more valuable possessions, than earthly goods; that there are sublime heavenly gifts, which Jesus imparts to those who follow Him.

The Christian is aware that Christ did not come into this world to secure for him treasures that the moths corrupt and the thieves steal,<sup>2</sup> but such treasures that will not perish even when heaven and earth shall pass away. They remain his forever. He knows that Jesus has secured for him the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.

Is it surprising, then, that in this world Christians sometimes must suffer earthly wants and temporal losses? They are subjected to crosses and tribulations, to misfortunes and afflictions. They are kept away from the sinful pleasures of this world, and avoid them because they are dangerous to the soul.

All this is for the very purpose that they do not lose sight of the heavenly crown, that they do not cease setting their affection on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. *“<sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”*

What folly, therefore, not to follow Christ for fear of earthly losses! Does not Christ impart to you such sublime heavenly gifts as more than cover your earthly losses and all that you may have to sacrifice on this earth for Christ’s sake?

What will you lose, if for this short span of time on earth you would have to remain poor, when eternal riches will be heaped upon you in heaven? What will you lose, if you would have to be a beggar on earth, when you will be made a king in heaven?

What will you lose, if in this world you should never succeed in acquiring a house of your own, when there is a mansion reserved for you in heaven?

Would we not call a person foolish who is required to part with a dollar today, and who is faithfully and with absolute certainty, promised a thousand dollars for tomorrow by a rich king, but who would rather keep and hold fast the dollar than to get possession of the thousand dollars?

See, just as great and a still more foolish is the person who wants to enjoy earthly goods and possess temporal treasures rather than get possession of those things which *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*<sup>3</sup>

For those heavenly treasures which God has promised us are not uncertain things. They are more certain and more safely to be relied upon than anything in the world. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Lord’s Word shall not pass away.<sup>4</sup> He has made true all His promises given for this world.

He has made true all His promises concerning His beloved Son and the great work of redemption to be performed by Him. He has made true His promise

that, while the earth remains, *Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.*<sup>5</sup>

He has made true His promise that, *“While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”*<sup>6</sup>

And so He will make true also this promise that *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*<sup>7</sup>

Is it not, therefore, the greatest folly on earth not to follow Christ, not to seek heaven with Him who alone is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, the sole Guide to heaven?

Surely, it is certainly foolish to cling to this world, to consume these few days in the search for earthly goods and pleasures, and then to lie down and die in your sins to be summoned before the tribunal of God, there to find yourself among those who must hear the stern rebuke, *“depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”*<sup>8</sup>

## **2. It Is Folly Not To Follow Christ Because Christ Provides For Those Who Follow Him With All The Necessities Of Life.**

The folly of those who do not follow Christ for fear of earthly losses is also apparent from the fact that Christ provides for those who follow Him with the necessities of life.

We read, <sup>4</sup> *Then His disciples answered Him, “How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?”*

<sup>5</sup> *He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven.”* <sup>6</sup> *So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude.* <sup>7</sup> *They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them.* <sup>8</sup> *So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments.* <sup>9</sup> *Now those who had eaten were about four thousand.*

See how abundantly Jesus provides for those who had entrusted themselves to Him. He has compassion on them. He is the first to think of their bodily wants. Before His disciples call attention to the needs of the people, before anyone thinks of the impending calamity, Jesus is fully aware of the facts and says, ***“if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way.”***

And when His disciples were at their wits end and knew of no way out of this trouble, He performed a divine miracle and made the small quantity of seven loaves and a few small fish suffice for the vast multitude of four thousand, multiplying the food under His blessing hand and thus procuring for them all they wished to eat.

Christ is the same to this day. His attitude towards those who follow Him is the same. His dealings with them are the same. To this day Christ often leads those who trust in Him into the wilderness, that is, into situations and conditions that grow alarming with suffering and want.

Nor does He seem to pay any attention to their bodily needs. But this only seems so. He has compassion on them. He is well aware of all their needs. He knows all their troubles, and before they can cry to Him for help, He has already determined how or in what manner to come to their assistance; as it is written, ***“It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.”***<sup>9</sup>

Christ deals with those who follow Him as a good father and mother deal with their children. They will refuse to give their children those things that will be hurtful to them, and the children’s most fervent wishes must sometimes remain unfulfilled.

But will a good father and mother ever deny a child the necessities of life? No; rather they would themselves die of starvation. Even so Christ does deny us many things that we wish and crave for in this world, He denies them because they would be injurious to us, and disastrous to our eternal welfare.

But there is one thing which He never denies, and that is the necessities of life. He procures for us that which we must have for the preservation of our lives, and He always in some way furnishes us with food, even though He may have to do so by a miracle.

David therefore says in Psalm 37:25, <sup>25</sup> *I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.*

What folly, then, not to follow Christ for fear that you might meet with earthly losses and reverses! True, riches are not promised to you if you follow Christ. God may bless you with riches also, if He deems it best for you. But there is no promise of riches in connection with Christianity.

But what is it you need first of all and above all earthly things, riches, or the necessities of life? There is an old Greek myth that a man was so desirous of riches that he requested the gods to turn into gold everything that he touched. His wish was granted, and he died of starvation because even the food that he touched was turned into gold when he put it to his mouth.

If we have food and clothing we should be content. For what more do we need to support this life? And every Christian is sure of that. He gets it; Christ procures it for him, and never fails to do so. What folly, then, not to follow Christ for fear of losses when your allegiance to Christ secures for you with absolute certainty the very necessities of life!

Let us all, therefore, follow Christ and entrust ourselves to His merciful care. It is always good to be where Christ is, even if it is in the wilderness. He provides for the mortal body as well as for the immortal soul, and if we are with Him we shall always be able to say, *“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom 8:1

<sup>2</sup> Matt 6:19

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9

<sup>4</sup> Matt 24:35

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 9:11

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 8:22

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:18

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 7:23

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 65:24