

### **Sermon on Luke 9 June 30, 2013**

Today's Gospel reading is the pivotal moment in Jesus' life. He has "set his face to go to Jerusalem." In doing so he has chosen to say no to settling down with a wife at his side and children at his feet. He said no to honing his skills as a carpenter and bringing the joy of his craft to others. He said no to experiencing getting gray hair, the birth of his first grandchild, or to the respect that would someday be his as a wise elder of the village of Nazareth.

In setting his face towards Jerusalem Jesus has said yes to a certain and premature death on a cross. He said yes to humiliation and suffering. He said yes to placing his life and death in the hands of another, not being at all certain of the consequences of that act. And as he travels to Jerusalem he calls for others to follow with him. One has said he would follow Jesus wherever he would go, but Jesus warns him that the way is uncertain. He doesn't know where he will sleep or eat. His journey depends on the hospitality of others; he won't be in control. We don't know if the man followed or not.

Are we any different? Are we ready to give up our illusion of control over our lives? And it is an illusion; just ask anyone from Moore, Oklahoma, or Joplin, Missouri or any farmer in this congregation who's been trying to get in crops and get them sprayed! Are we ready to follow Jesus come what may? We may say yes now while things are going well, but as soon as adversity strikes we become like the disciples and revert back to our old lives where we are comfortable.

To another Jesus says, "Follow me." But the man needed to go and bury his father first; another says he needs to say good bye to his family. Jesus refuses to accept these conditions; these excuses. But it's ones duty to bury ones parents as part of the command to honor your father and mother. The other just wants to do what Elisha asked of Elijah before taking over as prophet. These seem to be reasonable and obligated

tasks one needs to perform before leaving, but we can't let them stand in our way of following Jesus and proclaiming God's kingdom.

This proclamation has priority over family, country, and business obligations—no matter how good or mandatory they are. And that's what so radical about this Gospel reading—Jesus claims priority over the best in our lives, not the worst. Jesus doesn't say to choose him over the devil, but over family.

I'm guessing that most of us here today have a comfortable place to live in; we have kids, pets, and aging parents to care for; these lessons raise serious questions about what the importance of following Jesus has in our lives. Just what is it exactly that we will do or do without in order to follow Jesus? Personally, I'm hoping it's not an either/or thing, but more of a horse/cart thing. That is I'm hoping that Jesus is not saying: Either you are on the road 24/7 and you never let your family come first, or you are not my follower. What I'm hoping Jesus is saying is: Make sure that following me is what guides all that you do. Don't put me aside to go bury your father; make following me guide you as you bury your father. Don't put me aside as you say goodbye to your family; make following me guide you as you say goodbye. Don't use your family obligations, the busyness of your life as excuses to not proclaim God's kingdom.

What might this look like in our busy lives? Show of hands—how many of you drive family and/or friends to sporting events or practices, music lessons, dance recitals, doctor appointments, school, work, airports? We may not sit down to eat meals together as often as we used to, but we spend a lot of time together in our vehicles, don't we? What if we were to use that time to proclaim God's kingdom instead of watching movies or listening to the radio? As parents you are called to raise Christian children and young adults; how can they know what it means to be Christian if no one has taught them? Some of you are probably thinking right now, "But I don't know what to say or how to start the conversation?"

In your bulletin is a take home sheet called "Taking Faith Home." In it are Bible readings for the week, questions for conversation starters, prayers, blessings, table prayers, devotions, service projects and rituals and traditions for your family to participate in. Take this home and use it. Ask the questions—you'll be surprised by the answers you get and you will get answers!

Not here on a Sunday for worship—no problem. Most of you have keys to the front door—come on Monday and take an extra bulletin home with you.

I leave you with a final thought about today's reading. If you were to be arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?