

Following Luke 9: 51-62 3rd Sun. After Pentecost June 30, 2019

[Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem... [A]nother said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Following

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus set his face to Jerusalem. He goes to redeem the world on the cross. He goes to His death, and to His glory and to His father. And nothing will stand between him and his destination. As he says elsewhere, on the third day he reaches his goal.

But Jesus does not go for himself. He leads a train of captives behind. He calls people to follow where he leads, to the cross and to life. He leads to salvation.

But not all follow. He comes to Samaritan village, and, much less follow, they won't even receive him. He's going to Jerusalem to a feast. He passes by their places of worship, their mountains and temples. They feel rejected, so they reject him. They won't even let him stay the night.

So it is in our world. Christ, or at least his followers, are intolerant. They proclaim there is only one way to heaven, and that is through the son. And the world not only doesn't follow, it refuses to receive Christ and his followers. And Christ's face is set to Jerusalem. He goes to redeem the world. He bids follow.

Now James and John are indignant. They want to defend Christ. They ask to call down fire on the village. They are confident. They might even call it faith. They are ready to defend Christ and his honor, as if God would not send 12 legions of angels if he asked, and as if God is not the one who honors the son. They are indignant and distracted. But Christ's face is set to Jerusalem. It is set on salvation. He rebukes James and John, and they go on to another village that does receive Him.

How often we too are also indignant - with those who reject us. How often we say we defend ourselves as we say we follow Christ. How often we tear down and attack others, and stop talking or caring about their salvation, because we are right and they won't acknowledge that. How many times spend time and energy and anger arguing, when we could move on and proclaim the kingdom elsewhere. How often we are more concerned with winning than in seeing the word proclaimed. But Christ's face is set to Jerusalem. It is set on salvation. He bids us follow.

A scribe comes up and says he will follow Jesus wherever he goes. Jesus reply shocks us. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay 'his head.'" From John, My kingdom is not of this world. From Isaiah, "who can speak of his inheritance. Christ wants that following will not result in big houses or bank accounts in this world. He wants followers who follow., who aren't distracted by the things of this world. Christ's face is set to Jerusalem. It is set on salvation. He bids us follow.

He bids another, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And we see how hard following is. And we recoil. We want to bury our dead. We skip church to go to funerals. And we think funerals are one of the best reasons to have churches. For many, it is the only time they enter. So we even make up stories - that the man's father was not yet dead, that he was making

excuses. Surely Christ didn't mean you can't go to a funeral. But I will ask you a question - if you don't miss a funeral, if you care for those who died, did you also care that they live? Did you proclaim the kingdom that they need not die eternally? Do you attend funerals more or proclaim the kingdom more. Christ clearly tells us how important the kingdom is, that it must be preached. The spiritually dead can bury the dead fine, but only his follower can proclaim the kingdom. Christ's face is set on Jerusalem. It is set on salvation, and he bids us follow.

Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." It seems such a small request, and God tells us to honor our father and mother. Yet here is another who sets what is good against the kingdom, who is not ready to follow, who makes a small request. But it is one you can drive a truck through.

How often we also put our family first - we need money for a house, money for the kids college, money to not burden our children - We care for our family and give only what is left to the kingdom. How often our time is spent on sports and plays and activities, but the kingdom is ignored. Christ's face is set on Jerusalem. It is set on salvation, and he bids us follow.

God is gracious and gives time to receive but the time comes for him to take his people home. Follow now. Do not let family or business or sports or pride stand between you and your lord. Follow. Amen.