

Luke 9:51-62

“And the time came for Jesus to be taken up and He set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

Into this broken, crazy world God sent His one and only begotten Son, Jesus. Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God preaching, teaching. Forgiving, feeding, healing, strengthening, blessing, showing compassion, and mercy. These activities were just the start of His redeeming work that God sent Him to do.

This morning we have come to the pivotal point in Luke’s gospel. ***And the time came for Jesus to be taken up and He set face His face to go to Jerusalem.*** Now is the time for Jesus to focus His attention to the work that will bring all of His redeeming work to fulfillment. All of the teaching, preaching, healing, blessing, mercy, compassion, and forgiving would mean nothing without the redeeming work He will accomplish in Jerusalem. So, He sets His face steadfastly to the cross where all of His work will come together. There Jesus will be taken up on a cross, to accomplish this work for our salvation.

As Jesus and the disciples set out to go to Jerusalem they go through Samaritans Country. Normally good Jews would avoid Samaritan Country because of the animosity that exists between the two peoples. Remember Jesus has His face set to go to Jerusalem. So, the direct route to Jerusalem makes sense.

As Jesus sets out, He sends messengers ahead of Him to announce His passage. The Samaritans do not welcome Jesus and the disciples. The Sons of Thunder, James, and John, suggest that Jesus bring fire from heaven on the Samaritans for their unwelcoming response. Remember the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans? Jesus will have nothing to do with that. Jesus rebukes them. This is not the time of the fire of God’s judgment. The fire of God’s wrath from heaven is not for the Samaritans, even if the Jews never liked them. The fire of Gods wrath from heaven is not even for sinners. Instead, The fire of God’s wrath is for Jesus Himself. He has face set for Jerusalem, not for Himself, but for Samaritans and sinners. It is on that cross where Jesus will take the judgment of all sinners, Samaritans, people we particularly do not like, and for you and me. Jesus is on a mission, and He will be stopped.

And we give thanks to God for that.

Next as Jesus continues His journey, a would-be follower of Jesus said he would go anywhere with Jesus. I suppose He has heard what Jesus has been doing, teaching, healing, showing compassion and mercy, strengthening, and forgiving. He would like to get in on some all the great things that Jesus is doing to bring in the Kingdom. Jesus describes the lodging we might get. Remember when Jesus sent the messenger before Him to prepare for His passage through Samaria? Part of the mission of the messengers was to arrange lodging and meals. But they were rejected. So for this part of the journey, it will be sleeping under the stars with stone for a pillow. Comfortable, hospitable lodging is no guarantee. ***Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.***

Remember, Jesus' face is set toward Jerusalem which means rejection, arrest, and a cross?

Next Jesus invites another man to follow Him. He would like to go along with Jesus, but he needs to bury his father first. Since Jews took care body prep and funeral and burial on the same day this would seem like a reasonable request. However, Jesus' mission is urgent, and delay when it is more convenient will not do. ***Let the dead bury the dead , but as for you come and proclaim the King of God.***

Now, what if his father was still alive and in pretty good health. He just wants to wait until He had fulfilled all his family obligations. So, it could a while before he would join the journey. Too many worldly affairs to take care of.

Jesus' Response us how serious this journey to Jerusalem is. It is one that will lead to death. Who wants to take a journey to death? But this what the journey with Jesus is about. It is about following to the cross and experiencing the hope we have in His resurrection and the live.

Luke reminds us in the opening words of this gospel lesson, "When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up," Taken up. Again, we are going to have try to picture this in our minds. It is the same word that is used to describe Jesus' Ascension into Heaven where He seated at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty.

Yes, this is a journey to death where Jesus has an appointment with the cross. The good news is that Jesus has an appointment with an empty tomb. God will raise him from the dead and Lift Him up to His Right Hand.

Jesus comes with power to endure death and to conquer death. Putting our lives with Jesus means we die to the old life of sin and sinful desires, fleshy desires; only to be transformed into the new life filled with Love, Joy, Peace, faithfulness, kindness, generosity, and self-control.

If this man were to respond to Jesus' invitation to follow Him, and was to witness all these things, he certainly would have a powerful witness to proclaim at His father's funeral.

Next, Jesus encounters a farmer with a plow in hand. Seeing Jesus, he is willing to follow Jesus, but he needs to first say farewell to his family. Jesus' words are harsh. "No one who put his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Now I am thinking of the journey that a farmer makes across a field. Before GPS guidance required an intense focus to plow in a straight line. Just as intense as Jesus' setting his face to Jerusalem. He really looks focused, not looking back or sideways, or even at the plow. Focus forward. To this too, remember Jesus face is set toward you too.

This is a great image for Jesus' journey. Right vision. It is the vision that God has had from the very beginning. Jesus came from eternity to live in our place of space and time. Jesus is focused on The His Father's promised future. He sees God ruling over sin and death that comes to us all. He has a signpost to focus on. A tree outside of Jerusalem where he will hang to defeat sin, death, and devil. Buried in a tomb Jesus became the seed himself and burst open into a resurrection and ascension making possible the new life and the new heaven, the new Jerusalem. This Jerusalem is our destination in our journey.

One last thing here. Remember James and John's suggestion that Jesus Christ bring fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans? Well, just before Jesus is taken up in

His Ascension, He commissions the disciples, *You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

That is why Jesus did not order fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. For Jesus' face was set to go to Jerusalem for His own country men, and for the Samaritans, and for you and me. Join this journey for you too have been witnesses of all these things that Jesus has done for you and our salvation.

As we are now sent to witness remember Jesus does not turn His back on us, leave us, or ignore us. Even with missteps, speaking bad things about other we do not particularly like, veering from His way, fall for something more attractive and putting that above our relationship with God, He still has His face set toward you. Which is really our only hope and the hope of this broken and crazy world.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.