

Luke 9:51-62 - Joining Jesus' Journey

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Date: 09 July 2017

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Amen. Thank you all. Beautiful song. When we moved to Huntsville about nine years ago, we noticed something really quickly.
- We noticed that there were regularly and at all times of day these loud explosions. We called them booms because we had little kids.
- We didn't know at first that living near the arsenal would be so noticeable. And so there would be times where we'd be walking around and all of a sudden just jump or scream because the explosion startled us.
- But if you've lived here in Huntsville for a while, you may have had the same experience that we did. Pretty quickly, the regular explosions became a part of life.
- [0 : 5 8] It was something that even at times faded into the background. We didn't even realize they were happening anymore. The kids stopped being woken up from naps and slept straight through them. We carried on with our day and we'd have guests come in town to stay with us.
- And in the middle of a conversation, they would, what was that? And we would say, what was what? We didn't notice anything. Oh, oh yeah. It's the arsenal. We didn't even hear it.
- Things that used to startle us and shake our lives and change things about our days faded into the background. Stopped impacting our lives.
- We got so used to them. And I tell you that today because here we are singing songs about Jesus and the cross again.
- In the passage we're going to read, Jesus is going to talk again about the importance of his going to the cross. And since it's the same thing we've heard before, we have a tendency in our hearts to get used to it and disregard it.
- [2 : 0 5] Say, oh, pastor didn't tell me anything I didn't know this morning. Nothing really new. But Jesus keeps talking about the cross and it keeps coming up for us not because he thinks we need new information.
- But because our hearts and our lives need transformation. And the cross of Christ is not simply some preacher's hobby horse that he loves to talk about.
- It is the message of salvation. The good news of grace. The hope of the world. And so we talk about it. The wonderful cross bids me come and die and find that I may truly live.
- Maybe you don't realize what an outrageous claim that is. But that's the claim that Jesus makes. About himself and his cross. So we dare not allow the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ to become background noise in our lives.
- It's my encouragement to us as we turn to God's word this morning. Let's pray together and ask God to help us hear and heed his word again this morning. Pray with me.
- [3 : 2 8] Father your word is truth. It is sweeter than honey from the comb. It is exactly what we need.

So we ask that you would speak to us through it clearly. That we might love and follow Jesus more.

We ask in his name. Amen. Luke chapter 9 at verse 51. This is God's holy word.

The God of heaven and earth speaking to you this morning. Hear his voice. When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up.

He set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him who went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him.

[4 : 33] Because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it. They said Lord do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village. As they were going along the road someone said to him. I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him. Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests. But the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. To another he said 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.

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.

[5 : 40] Grass withers the flowers fade. These words of our God will stand forever. I mentioned the booms from the arsenal today.

Because it's in this passage that Jesus here sets out on a journey to Jerusalem. It's going to take up the next 10 plus chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

In other words the next 25 to 30 years of your life in our sermon series. Not quite that long. But Jesus is headed to Jerusalem. And that's exactly what begins to shape the stories as we follow.

He will teach a lot along the way. He will do a lot of amazing things along the way. And those are important. But the whole time the story is framed by his journey to Jerusalem.

For the most important thing. As his days on earth draw near to their conclusion. He's going to keep sounding that note. That primary focus that comes up.

[6 : 45] He set his face to go to Jerusalem. He's so committed to doing that. That is so much a part of a priority for him. That everyone around him begins to notice.

Verse 53. The Samaritans notice his face was set toward Jerusalem. This is where he's headed. Jesus and his disciples along with him.

They're Jerusalem or bust. This is the priority. It's where we're going. It's like you write that in shoe polish on the back of your minivan. Disney or bust.

This is where we're going. We will get there. This is where our hearts are set on being. I picture Jesus and his disciples all in a car much smaller than a minivan.

Thirteen grown men in one accord. The Bible says. Thank you. That was really tolerant actually. I couldn't resist the oldest and worst preacher joke that there is.

[7 : 49] It was just too close. But Jesus and his disciples are going Jerusalem or bust. That is where they're headed. It's where their hearts are set. They're going there.

Why? Why is Jesus so set on Jerusalem? What's the big deal? It's not a vacation, is it? They're not going there because it's a great place to be.

Jesus' face being set toward Jerusalem echoes the words of prophets like Isaiah. Who says the Messiah sets his face like a flint to walk into suffering.

Isaiah 50 verse 6. This is just part of the context. I gave my back to those who strike. My cheeks to those who pull out the beard. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

But the Lord God helps me. Therefore I have not been disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like a flint. And know that I shall not be put to shame. I'm going toward this suffering.

[8 : 51] My face is set on it, Jesus says. It's what he's been saying already in Luke chapter 9, isn't it? As we've studied here through the past few weeks, verse 22. Jesus said the Son of Man must suffer many things.

And be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes. And where's he going to do that? Where do you find the elders and the chief priests and the scribes? That's in Jerusalem. And be killed.

Verse 44. He says to his disciples, Let these words seek into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. We're going somewhere.

And we're going there to suffer. And to die. That's why Jesus is set on going to Jerusalem. And he demonstrates here for us again his single-minded commitment to his redemptive mission.

This is what he's about, right? It hasn't changed. He sets his face to endure the cross. To pay for the sins of his people. To restore every inch of his creation to the way he created it to be.

[9 : 57] To establish his kingdom as a refuge for all who are in need of rescue. That's what he's about. The journey to Jerusalem is not a vacation at all.

And yet, Jesus is calling us to join him in that journey. He's called us already to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow him.

And here in this passage, as he calls again, we're going to see some different responses to that call on our lives. First, we see the response of the Samaritans.

Their flat-out, principled rejection of Jesus. Verse 52. He sent messengers ahead of him who went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for him.

But the people there did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem. The Samaritans didn't receive him. Why is that?

[11 : 01] Why did Jesus going to Jerusalem bother them? Why didn't they want him to stop and stay along the way? You may or may not know that the Samaritans and Jews weren't the best of friends.

The Samaritans had at least some Jewish blood, some Jewish heritage in them. But they had rejected the Jewish people, religiously believing they had the true understanding of God.

They believed Yahweh wanted to be worshipped on Mount Gerizim in their territory. Not on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the way we read about in the Old Testament.

The Samaritans have adopted their own holy books and as such have their own set of messianic expectations. What they're looking for in a king and a rescuer, a deliverer for them.

And this is not it. Any supposed religious leader, Messiah, who thinks he needs to get to Jerusalem is a fraud by their account.

[12 : 05] They won't join Jesus' journey even as hospitable hosts. They want nothing to do with him on religious principle. They simply reject him and his message.

Now maybe that's where you've been with Jesus or where you are this morning with him. You just don't believe he is the hope of the world.

The only savior of sinners. The way for you to be restored to God. If that's the case, if that's where you are and you just say, listen, I've heard it before but I don't believe it.

If that's you, I'd love to talk with you. I'd love to be able to have that conversation. Maybe you, like the Samaritans, probably would have believed that whether or not Jesus was God himself was of utmost importance.

Maybe you'd acknowledge that and say, yeah, who Jesus is really does matter. Matter, I'd love to have the conversation with you to talk about your questions and your personal concerns and what makes you wrestle with Jesus.

[13 : 16] But before we leave this principled, upfront rejection of Jesus rather than talking to me, I want you to see Jesus' response. It's in verse 54 after his disciples have a suggestion.

His disciples James and John saw it. They saw that Jesus was rejected by the Samaritans and they said, Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

But Jesus turned and rebuked James and John. Jesus said, by no means. James and John want to call down fire from heaven like Elijah.

Jesus said, by no means. Jesus said, by no means. Jesus said, by no means. He says, by no means. Jesus said, by no means. That He really is God. And by exercising judgment upon them. Jesus rebukes His disciples in a way that demonstrates they don't really understand the point of His journey.

The mission that Jesus is on. He's on a mission to redeem. He bears patiently with those who reject Him and He heads to the cross to suffer and die quite possibly for some of them, some of those Samaritans who would yet come to believe in Him.

[14 : 38] Yes, the Bible speaks of judgment for sure. But Jesus' single-minded commitment to head to Jerusalem is to redeem. That's what's on His heart.

It's the stance that He calls those who follow Him to have toward those who do not yet believe in Him. If you're a follower of Christ, this is how He calls you to treat others who don't follow Him.

Not to be eager to see their judgment, but to be anxious for their redemption. A friend who rejects Jesus offhand, who says, no, no, no, Christianity, I've seen it and it's not for me.

Jesus persists in loving you even in your unbelief. Maybe you feel like you've settled that years ago in your mind.

It just wasn't true. He just wasn't worth it. He's been patient. He's brought you back here again this morning to hear His Word and to see His heart to rescue and to redeem.

[15 : 51] Jesus is the Savior who comes and calls to you and says there's no other way. Come and trust Me. Oh, I'd urge you to investigate that, to listen to Him, to hear His Word again.

But many of us here this morning aren't publicly and on principle rejecting Jesus. We're in church after all, right? Now that's why we're here.

I've publicly said, I'll follow Jesus. Many of us have. We'd say we're on that journey with Jesus. But what does that really mean?

Jesus is about to raise that issue in the rest of our passage so it gets a little bit harder for us. You may know that Skeet Simonis, one of our elders, and I are preparing to go on a trip to India this October.

We're partnering with one of our mission partners there in India. Going to India is not a cheap, trip. So when you think about taking a trip, there are always costs associated, not just mission trips, but business trips and personal trips.

[17 : 05] They have costs. And if you're like me, you consider them up front before you make the decision to go on the trip. Perhaps the most obvious costs are financial. There's travel and lodging and food to be taken into account.

To be on the trip will call me to financial commitment. But there are a lot of other costs of taking a trip. The people you will be gone from.

I'll miss my family for two weeks. That's no small thing. The comforts of life you will miss. Being able to sleep in your own bed, drink water from a tap, and so forth.

Going on the trip will cost missing other events and activities that you would have been a part of back home. For me, heyday falls in the midst of the India trip.

So I don't even get to be in a dunking booth all fall. It's a huge cost for me. I really do miss being with you all. Whatever the costs are to a journey, to a trip you're taking, you have to evaluate them up front and then decide, so given all these costs, is the trip worth it?

[18 : 19] Is it worth it for you to take that trip, to make the journey that you're considering? And that's what Jesus challenges us to do with the journey of following Him.

He's calling us to follow Him to the cross, to suffering on a redemptive mission, no matter what the cost. And He's not unclear on this.

It's not hard to understand. In fact, He's already told us a few weeks ago that it could cost us everything. What He does this morning is just get more specific on what those costs might be.

He and His disciples encounter on their journey three people who, unlike the Samaritans who reject Him offhand, say they're interested in joining Jesus on the journey.

They've shown up at church, perhaps. They've talked about Jesus. And yet, practically speaking, when it comes to their lives, the cost may be too high for them.

[19 : 21] First one is in verse 57. As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

This man says, I'll follow you anywhere, Jesus. And Jesus says, well, hold on a second. Let me make sure you know what you mean by that. It may not be where you think you'll be following me.

It's not glamorous. Truly following me means being uncomfortable and unwelcome in this world. I don't even have the homes the animals do, Jesus says.

Jesus has experienced this no room at the inn response from the world all the way back to His birth and all the way up to the verses we just read from the Samaritans.

Part of the cost of following Jesus is being uncomfortable and unwelcome in this world, facing hardship and rejection.

[20 : 33] Part of the cost of following Jesus is being uncomfortable and unwelcome in this world, facing hardship and rejection.

Rejection. It doesn't sound like a sales pitch, does it? Jesus is trying to be honest about the cost. And sometimes we sit there and those words go right over our head and we think I've heard that before.

Hardship and rejection. And hardship and rejection. Uncomfortable. Unwelcome. These aren't the things you usually wake up searching out every morning. What does that cost look like for us?

It could mean you don't live in the neighborhood you'd prefer because the world doesn't give you that option or you choose not to take that option for the sake of the kingdom.

It could mean you make less money because you're pursuing Jesus more. It could mean you get left out of a group because of your commitment not to get drunk or your passion for the Lord's Day.

[21 : 34] Whatever it is, if you're not willing to be uncomfortable, and unwelcome in this world, you aren't really journeying with Jesus.

There's a second interaction in verses 59 and 60. Another man comes up and Jesus says to him, follow me. But the man said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

Jesus said to him, leave the dead to bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God. This guy's got interest in Jesus. He likes him. He calls him Lord.

And he's got important things to do. This was a high social priority in these days. It could have taken up to a year or more to complete the appropriate burial process for a family member.

And this was so important in this society that it actually took priority over circumcision, over the Passover sacrifice, over other important religious obligations you had to fulfill.

[22 : 38] All of those were put off while you handled the burial. That's how high a priority this was. And Jesus says, there's something else of higher priority that cannot be delayed.

Following me. Proclaiming the kingdom of God. Offering life. Not dealing with death. And Jesus is not saying that social customs and family values and honored traditions are necessarily bad things.

He is saying they should never be chosen over him and his kingdom. Jesus may call you to the mission field instead of the four years of college that you've been looking forward to and everyone expects you to enjoy.

He may call you to invest in a kingdom opportunity with a needy friend instead of becoming an elder at your church like people have been expecting you to and you've been hoping for. He may call you to a new area of ministry that wrecks your retirement plans everybody's been hearing about for years.

If you're unwilling to prioritize the mission of his kingdom over social norms and honored traditions you aren't really journeying with Jesus.

[24 : 04] Finally Jesus pushes on those family relationships one more time. He knows our hearts are deeply committed there. So verse 61 another man comes and says I will follow you Lord but let me first say farewell to those at my home.

And Jesus said to him no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Seems like a good idea right? I'm going to be gone for a while.

Let me go say goodbye first. Listen Jesus is not against loving your family. But just like with the guy and his father Jesus says the primacy of the kingdom must be clear.

We need to face straight on this morning some of our idolatries here. For some the cost of this with our families is so painful it means being shunned.

Never getting to speak to our families again when you convert to Christianity from another religion. For others it's different. It may mean clinging to Jesus when your children disdain you for how you're raising them.

[25 : 19] For others the cost may be the family you've dreamed of not marrying the guy you really like because he doesn't share your heart for following Christ.

Or it may be the cost of the stage of life you thought you were in as God leads you to foster or adopt someone into your family and it's going to disrupt where you thought you'd finally gotten.

But if you're unwilling to sacrifice your ideal family relationships for the sake of kingdom priorities you're not really journeying with Jesus.

That's what Jesus is calling us to do isn't it? It's not unclear here. He says follow me proclaim the kingdom now don't let the practical realities of life keep you from actually following me as you say you want to do don't say you'll follow me but reject me in your life he says that to all of us kids don't say I'm too young I'll follow Jesus when I'm an adult college students young adults don't say oh I'm going to follow Jesus after just a few years of pursuing my own pleasures and my own dreams I'll follow him later young couples don't say I'll come to church again once I have kids I'll give to the kingdom again once we make more money young families don't say I'll look for others to love and share the kingdom with once my kids are grown and I actually have the time to think about anything else empty nesters don't say

I'm checking out of church now that the kids are gone or I'll re-engage with my neighbors once I retire and have the margin for them retirees don't say I've journeyed with Jesus so long so many years now I can live for myself no the call is to follow Jesus now today for all of us it's a clear call to sacrifice comforts and successes and other priorities now to have the glory of the gospel the redemptive mission of Jesus so shake your heart and startle you that you would give up anything to follow him that it would transform your life it would grab the attention the affection of your hearts and that every decision would be made in light of it now you follow Jesus no matter the cost his call is really clear what's not clear interestingly is the response to that call and if you noticed it's an interesting literary device that we don't know how any of these three men responds to Jesus do we

[28 : 29] Jesus responds to them but we don't know do they join him on the journey or turn to their other priorities when they count the cost is Jesus worth it it's a way that Luke can put the question to each of us you don't know how they respond how will we respond are the practical priorities of your life revealing a rejection of Jesus it's unsettling isn't it that's good otherwise I don't think I've been faithful to this part of God's word I've got to tell you honestly if our studies in Luke just this summer haven't created some challenging conversations for you at home we probably missed Jesus message we don't naturally get it and it doesn't naturally fit what we expect

I hope the gospel is exploding again in your ears and that it's shaking your hearts and lives in ways that you can't ignore I certainly haven't given every answer to every situation but Jesus has shown us a clear priority for himself he's told us where he's headed and a clear call to follow him there it doesn't matter what it will cost he's telling us that he's worth it last week many of us got to hear from one of our long time mission partners he was back in town and telling us that he just had a grandchild who's eight months old his first grandchild he and his wife left their kids and grandchild just Wednesday to go back to the Middle East to pastor an international church in a dangerous war-torn part of the world and he shared with us about his heart for that his report was so interesting and so challenging but I think my favorite part was something his son said the father of the new grandchild was here with his missionary dad a 27 year old who'd grown up on the mission field and we asked him how do you feel about granddad heading over to the

Middle East again and he said this he said I grew up in a Christian home but I wasn't a Christian until high school and part of my conversion experience was reading 1 Corinthians 15 and it said I passed along to you the things that are of first importance and there that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that he was buried and he was raised from the dead on the third day and he said I read that and I thought to myself my mom and dad actually believe that those are the most important things I looked at my parents lives and I said those are the most important things to them and he said that was a significant part of me coming to trust in Jesus myself so I'm sad that they'll be gone and that my child won't have his grandparents nearby in the next few years but how could I not be glad to see them live that commitment out before many others who need to know the hope of Jesus as I did kids and adults this is what is of first importance kids this is why your parents are here this morning they could be out making more money somewhere they could be out having more fun somewhere but they're here because what is of first importance is the cross of Jesus

Christ and his love for them Jesus gathers us around this table regularly so that we don't forget what is of first importance that he came to the cross to die for us to redeem us remember how Paul said I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes and that's what you've been called to do is to proclaim his kingdom to follow him and so if you're a follower of

Jesus Christ come this is this is food for the journey to strengthen you as you follow him in difficult places even to death come and rejoice and celebrate if you're here and you're a follower of Christ but not a member of this church this is not our table it's his it's his table he calls all of us to come and celebrate together who would turn from our sin and embrace him again who have joined any church that preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for salvation come and celebrate if you don't know him if you've rejected him on principle if you've said you know what it's good to know Jesus but there's some other things that you have to do too or I'm hedging my bets I don't know if he's going to come through I'd really rather something else don't don't come to this table rather consider coming to

[34 : 35] Jesus Jesus says don't come and do something that would profess outwardly what's not true of you inwardly and when you come to this table you say the death of Jesus in my place is the only thing that brings me to sit down with my heavenly father in fellowship with him if that's your heart come and feast if it's not he patiently comes to you to redeem he goes to the cross because he loves the world won't you trust Jesus and come to him let me pray and then we'll come to this table father thank you for a table that reminds us what's of first importance gave us this to do repeatedly because you wanted us to remember and to proclaim your death until you come and we do it this morning we proclaim there's nothing in us good enough to commend it to you but there is plenty in the life and death and resurrection of

Jesus and we hold on to him this morning to encourage us in our faith through these elements in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org lake content out of near you land on do here when from