

Sermon on Luke 9:51-62 June 26, 2016. Trinity Lutheran Church

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you from Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We can go to many directions to interpret our gospel text today. But I am focusing on two themes. The first one is very straightforward. Jesus said in Luke 9: 59 *"Follow me"*. Two simple words. Two words that have transformed millions of lives, yet words filled with amazing implications. It is about discipleship.

Discipleship is a one-time event in our lives. Disciples are people who have been adopted into God's family of faith through Jesus Christ. Yes, we became a disciple of Jesus on our baptism. That is our identity.

Disciples are people whose lives have been graced by God. To belong to God is to be Jesus' disciple. To be a believer in Jesus is to be his disciple. **We are all Jesus disciple. No exception!** Wherever we are in our faith journey, we are all disciples of Jesus by virtue of God's grace. We become disciples because God makes us part of the family. Yes, we all know that. Thank you, Jesus, for calling us to be your disciples

The second point I want to dwell a bit is the attitude of James and John who asked Jesus if he wanted them to command fire to come down from heaven that will consume those they see as opponents!

But before we go into the details of it, let's set the scene. We are now in the ninth chapter of the gospel of Luke. Last Sunday, we were in Luke chapter eight. This chapter nine is a pivotal chapter in Luke's story about Jesus. In many ways, it is the center between Jesus' mission of teaching and preaching in Galilee and his journey to Jerusalem and the cross. To better understand about James and John, we actually need to go back a few verses. In chapter eight and the beginning of chapter nine, Jesus has calmed a storm, cast out demons, healed an ailing woman, restored a girl to life, and fed the multitudes. In short, Jesus has been overturning the powers that oppress humanity in all forms.

All of this is followed by Peter's confession that Jesus is the messiah and Jesus' expansion of Peter's understanding of what "messiah" means. From there Luke takes us to the transfiguration, and here we have Peter, James, and John, came along to the mountain top experience (Luke 9:28-36) and they were urged to listen to Jesus. And there are several more miracles before we come to our text today from verse 51. And here we are in the beginning of our gospel text, *"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."* This is Luke's signal to us that the heart of Jesus' mission is about to commence, that all that has come before has been only the opening move to reveal God's kingdom, and that now Jesus is about to inaugurate it most fully.

Before Jesus set up for Jerusalem, he sent messengers ahead of him. Which means that they must have told the Samaritan Village that Jesus will come by but he is going to Jerusalem. So as they approach the Samaritan village they did not receive Jesus. Maybe they were not happy that Jesus won't stay with them but set for Jerusalem or may be for different reasons that we don't know. It is unclear. But whatever the precise reasons are, it comes as a rejection, and that angers James and John, who immediately want to destroy the Samaritans. And that is the center theme of this sermon.

Regardless wherever we are, I found it everywhere I have been living in many countries in a different times, this idea of when others resist our sense of the way we think things should be, we first view them as opponents and then want to remove or even destroy them!

I think it is our human nature as it can be found anywhere in the world. We want security around us. We want to control our surroundings. And the thing is that we want everyone to cooperate

with us. We want them to see things like the way we see things and they do things like we way we do things. But if not, they are simply different from us and we can just label them as others to the point of moving to destroy them. That is exactly what James and John wanted to do and ask Jesus if he would agree with them.

But we know the story. Jesus rebukes them. Jesus sets up his way to Jerusalem to save the whole world and he would not agree with someone to solve problems by violence, to define people as different, and to assume that some are in while others are out.

We thank God that we are people living in the 21st Century. We know exactly what happened to Jesus when he sets up to Jerusalem. He was falsely accused, unjustly tried, cruelly treated, and brutally executed. Jesus' response to the chaos, limitation, and vulnerability of this world is not to deny it or try to control it or defeat it, but rather to embrace it...even to the point of death. But God raised Jesus from the dead, showing us that there is another way. We do not need to return hate for hate, eye for an eye or tooth for a tooth! We do not need to resort to violence out of fear; we do not need to control those around us in order for us to flourish.

We remember every day that through the death and resurrection of Jesus. God is in control and God will not abandon us. God will bring us to life on the other side. Meanwhile, there are more things we can do as disciple of Jesus focusing on the purpose of the church which is to do mission. To reach out and share God's love in what you are doing in everyday life. Go and show to the world that you are Christ's disciple and think about the good fruits of the Holy Spirit within us: "*Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.*" Galatians 5:22-23

Amen!

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