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Sermon: September 15, 2013  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“FOLLOW ME”**  
Luke 9:51-62

- ☑ **I have decided to follow Jesus,  
I have decided to follow Jesus,  
I have decided to follow Jesus,  
No turning back, no turning back.**

❓ We sing with sincerity. But *do we know what we are singing? Will we follow?*

■ Please turn with me to Luke 9:51: **“As the time [approaches] for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely [sets] out for Jerusalem.”**

➡ As for the *when*, what follows happens **“As the time [approaches] for [Messiah] to be taken up to heaven.”** It is a direct reference to the Ascension, when Christ will return to his Father’s throne on the fortieth day after Easter. It is also shorthand for his suffering, death, and resurrection which will lead up to it.

➡ As for the *where*, we are on the road to Jerusalem. Over the past year or so Lord Jesus has focused his efforts in Galilee and nearby Gentile areas. Now he turns his gaze south and “[sets] out for” Judea.

➡ As for the *how* (or the *manner*), Jesus embarks **“resolutely.”** The Greek literally reads: **“(his) face he resolutely set.”** Knowing full well what awaits him, he “[sets] out” for his destination, not casually but decisively, not grudgingly but willingly, not fearfully but courageously.

Back to the *when*. Why doesn’t Luke write, **“As the time approached for him to”** die? Why doesn’t he write, **“As the time approached for him to”** rise up from the grave? That is how we talk about the climax of Christ’s ministry, isn’t it?

Not Luke. He condenses it into an image of the Ascension: **“As the time [approaches] for him to be taken up to heaven.”** Luke interprets Christ’s humiliation in light of his glorification. The splendor of his Resurrection and Ascension is bound to the shame of the Cross.

○ {Jn 12:23, 27-28} During Holy Week Jesus will declare: **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from his hour?’ No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”** Christ and his Father are magnified, not *in spite of* the cross, but *in, through, and because of* the cross.

○ {Jn 13:31} At the Last Supper he will announce: **“Now is the Son of Man glorified ...God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.”** This glorification is his sacrificial death, and the salvation it will accomplish.

○ The apostle Paul picks up on this theme in Philippians 2:6-11: God the Son  
**made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a  
servant...  
And being found in appearance as a human  
being,**

**he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death –  
even death on a cross!**

**Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above  
every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee  
should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the  
earth,  
and every tongue acknowledge that  
Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.**

○ In Hebrews 12:2 we discover that **“For the joy set before him”** (that is, his glorification at the Ascension) **“he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (there is the Ascension again).

■ Back to Luke 9:51: **“Jesus resolutely [sets] out for Jerusalem,”** because **“the time”** is approaching **“for him to be glorified”** through his death, resurrection, and ascension. This snapshot of the Messiah informs everything that follows.

■ Verses 52-56:

<sup>52</sup> **“And he [sends] messengers on ahead, who [go] into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but the people there [do] not welcome him, because he [is] heading for Jerusalem.”**

Jesus is heading from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south. What is the shortest distance between any two points? It is a straight line.

In this case, that line runs directly through Samaria. Naturally, Samaria is populated by Samaritans – and Samaritans hate Jews.

They are especially hostile to Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Most will not rent out a room or sell food to them. There have even been instances of violence. Consequently, most Jews take the long way around, crossing the Jordan to the east and travelling through Decapolis and Perea.

Not Jesus. He leads his disciples into Samaria.

○ {Jn 4:39} He has done it before, to great effect, when he met the Samaritan woman at the well. She received Jesus as Messiah and told her neighbors all about him. As a result, **“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of [her] testimony.”**

Not this time around. These Samaritans reject the Lord because he is **“heading for Jerusalem.”**

■ **“When the disciples James and John [see] this,”** (54-56) **“they [ask], ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’ But Jesus [turns] and rebukes them. Then he and his disciples [go] to another village.”**

☑ To quote N.T. Wright, **“Jesus’ journey is not a triumphant march, sweeping all resistance aside. It is the progress of the gospel of the kingdom, and ... that means the message of love.”** And *αγαπε*

love is incompatible with the annihilation of an enemy. God might call us to die for his kingdom; he doesn't call us to kill for it.

○ {Jn 3:17-18; Lk 4:18-19} Still, there is judgment, for though **“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him... whoever does not believe” “in the name of God’s one and only Son” “stands condemned already.”** The penalty for these Samaritans is missed opportunity: the Savior who preaches and embodies **“good news to the poor... freedom for the prisoners ... sight for the blind,”** liberty for **“the oppressed,”** and divine **“favor”** for all who are under the curse of sin was eager to stay with them, and he might have invited them to be his disciples. Instead, he moves on.

■ Luke 9:57-62 records three encounters between the Messiah and three potential disciples:

**As they [are] walking along the road, a man [says] to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”**

**Jesus [replies], “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”**

[The Messiah says] **to another man, “Follow me.” But he [replies], “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”**

**Jesus [says] to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim and the kingdom of God.”**

**Still another [says], “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.”**

**Jesus [replies], “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”**

These are among the hardest sayings to come out of the Lord's mouth. Bible scholars disagree about their intrinsic meanings, and even more about their day-to-day application.

{2 Ti 3:16-17} I cannot settle all those disputes. I can equip us with some basic principles which, if we practice them, will open us up for this Scripture to teach, rebuke, correct and train us **“in righteousness.”**

✍ Principle #1) Live by grace; reject legalism.

Live by grace is receiving and sharing God's unmerited mercy and kindness. Legalism, by contrast, is following rules in an effort to earn or repay God's favor.

○ {Mt 22:27-40} Jesus demolished legalism at every turn and restored the Law to its proper function as a conduit of grace. We see this most clearly as he pairs the directive to love God with your entire being with the one to **“Love your neighbor as yourself,”** then states that **“All the Law and the Prophets hang on these commandments.”**

Verses 57-62 are a gift and a means of grace and love.

✎ Principle #2) Embrace discipleship; reject easy believism.

○ {Lk 9:23} Discipleship is practical commitment and obedience to Christ regardless of the cost. He declares (in no uncertain terms): **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”**

○ Easy believism is living as if belief does away with the need for sanctification and obedience. Yes, **“it is by grace [we are] saved, through faith... not by works”** (Ephesians 2:8-9); however, the next verse clarifies that **“we are... created in Christ...to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”** (Ephesians 2:10).

Verses 57-62 are an invitation to discipleship.

✎ Principle #3) Conform to confirmed convictions.

The intrinsic meaning of Scripture is fixed. The truth of a given passage never changes. However, the application of Scripture does vary. It can change by time, place, culture and particular circumstance.

○ {Ro 14:5-6, 14} Paul teaches that on debatable matters **“Everyone should be fully convinced in their own mind.”** For example, believers **“who eat meat do so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and those who abstain do so to the Lord and give thanks to God.... But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean”**.

If the Holy Spirit convicts you to apply verses 57-62 in a rigorous manner, and if this is confirmed by other texts, in prayer, and by your conscience, then conform to that

conviction. If the Spirit convicts you to take a looser application, and this is confirmed by the same signs, then adhere to that conviction. Either way, do not judge your brothers and sisters who are of a different conviction.

✎ Finally, Principle #4) Draw near to Jesus.

**“Follow”** is the key word in this text.

In verse 57 a man says, **“I will follow you wherever you go.”** But he turns away, because he is unwilling to suffer discomfort and insecurity. He keeps his roof and his bed; but he loses Jesus.

In verse 59 Jesus says **“to another, ‘Follow me.’”** But he turns away, because he would rather bury the physically dead than raise the spiritually dead. He keeps his old priorities; but he loses Jesus.

In verse 61 **“Still another [says], ‘I will follow you, Lord.’”** But he turns away, because he will not put Jesus first. He keeps his old commitments; but he loses Jesus.

And what do you have if you lose Jesus?

Nothing!

Verses 57-62 are an invitation to draw near to Jesus.

**I have decided to follow Jesus,  
I have decided to follow Jesus,  
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No turning back, no turning back.**