

Scripture Study

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

(Ps 16:1-2,5,7-11)

Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Luke 9:51-62

Overview of the Gospel:

- The Gospel reading from two Sundays ago ended with Jesus making the first prediction of the suffering, death, and Resurrection awaiting him in Jerusalem (Luke 9:22). Then in Luke's Gospel, with Peter and John present, he discusses his Passion with Moses and Elijah during his transfiguration (9:28-36), and predicts it a second time after this (9:44).
- In this Sunday's Gospel reading, we see that Jesus is now "resolutely determined" (literally translated, has "set his face") to complete his journey to Jerusalem.
- Jesus determines to pass through the region of Samaria on his way, but the Samaritans, with which the Jews had a historic animosity, rebuff his advance party since he was traveling to Jerusalem, whose Temple worship they did not accept. James and John, recalling what the prophet Elijah had done in similar circumstances (2 Kings 1:9-14), counsel retaliation. Jesus rejects their advice.
- As he journeys onward toward his destiny, many come to him and vow to be his followers. Jesus, who knows all men's hearts, makes it clear that anyone who would be his disciple must commit to be so on Jesus' terms and not their own.

Questions:

- Why does Luke point out that Jesus was "resolutely determined" ("set his face") to make his way to Jerusalem? What did he expect to find there? Who else "set his face" against the rebellious inhabitants of this city (Jeremiah 21:10, RSV-CE translation)?
- Why does Jesus respond differently toward his enemies from Elijah, who James and John suggest he imitate? What is the difference between Jesus and Elijah?
- Elijah's disciple was Elisha (see the First Reading). What does the story of Elisha's call teach you about the response of a disciple should be?
- Why does Jesus take such a "hard line" toward those who profess an interest in him? How does he respond to the excuses offered by the three men (verses 57, 59, 61)? In your own words, what do each of Jesus' sayings mean? What is his point?
- Of the issues listed here (comfort, social obligations, family concerns), which one would tempt you to not follow Jesus?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 557, 544

Closing Prayer

Our labor here is brief, but the reward is eternal. Do not be disturbed by the clamor of the world which passes like a shadow. Do not let the false delights of a deceptive world deceive you.

-St. Clare of Assisi

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings this week!

"No one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God"

Scripture: *Luke 9:51-62*

When the days drew near for him to be received 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 ready for him; but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire 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, a man 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." But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 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."

Meditation: Are you surprised to see two of Jesus' disciples praying for the destruction of a Samaritan village? The Jews and Samaritans had been divided for centuries. Jewish pilgrims who passed through Samaritan territory were often assaulted. Jesus did the unthinkable for a Jew. He not only decided to travel through Samaritan territory at personal risk, but he also asked for hospitality in one of their villages!



Jesus' offer of friendship was rebuffed. Is there any wonder that the disciples were indignant and felt justified in wanting to see retribution done to this village? Wouldn't you respond the same way? Jesus, however, rebukes his disciples for their lack of toleration. Jesus had "*set his face toward Jerusalem*" to die on a cross that Jew, Samaritan and Gentile might be reconciled with God and be united as one people in Christ.

Tolerance is a much needed virtue today. But aren't we often tolerant for the wrong thing or for the wrong motive? Christian love seeks the highest good of both one's neighbor and one's enemy. When Abraham Lincoln was criticized for his courtesy and tolerance towards his enemies during the American Civil War, he responded: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" How do you treat those who cross you and cause you trouble? Do you seek their good rather than their harm?

When the Lord calls us to follow him he gives us the grace to put aside everything that might keep us from doing his will. Loyalty to Jesus requires sacrifice, letting go of my will for God's will. A

would-be disciple responded by saying, *I must first go and bury my father*, that is, go back home and take care of him until he died. Jesus certainly did not mean that we should refuse to care for others, especially our parents in their old age. His startling statement, however, made clear that God must always be first in our lives. If we love him above all, then everything else will fall into its proper place and time.

Jesus surprised his disciples by telling that they must not look back but keep their focus on the goal set for their lives – full happiness and union with God. A plowman who looked back caused his furrow to be crooked. Likewise, if we keep looking back to what we left behind, our path in following God will likely go off course and we'll miss what God has for us. When the going is rough or the way ahead looks uncertain, we are tempted to look back to the "good old days" or to look for "greener turf". Are you resolved to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and to "stay the course" in following him to the end?

"Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess you have given me. I surrender it all to you to be disposed of according to your will. Give me only your love and your grace – with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more."
(Prayer of Ignatius Loyola, 1491-1556)

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