



Luke 9:57–62

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’

58 Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’

59 He said to another man, ‘Follow me.’

But he replied, ‘Lord, first let me go

and bury my father.’

60 Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’

61 Still another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.’

62 Jesus replied, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.’

Reflection

(Today’s reflection is given by Craig Tubman)

We are in chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel and we have just started the travelogue. Remember this is the section of Luke's gospel that extends from 9:51 through to 19:28. As we are walking with Jesus to Jerusalem he is teaching us what it really means to follow him.

Today Jesus throws in an agricultural image to help us understand one aspect of discipleship. 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God'. In the ancient world you would plough your fields using oxen. You would direct the oxen and they pull the plough to dig your planting lines. Now you imagine what happens if you are looking behind you as the oxen is ploughing – you will lean on the side you are

turning, the oxen will shift his course, your planting lines are going to be all over the shop and your field ruined. You know that once you start ploughing you need to be looking ahead focussed on getting those lines straight.

So it is, Jesus says with following him. Once you start this journey with him, you need to be looking ahead rather than focussing on what is behind.

How does this conversation even come up? Because as Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem Luke records a man comes up and triumphantly declares: 'I will follow you wherever you go'. The irony here is that Luke has just told us five verses ago that Jesus set out resolutely for Jerusalem. What will happen in Jerusalem?

Jesus will be betrayed, falsely accused, beaten within an inch of his life and crucified on the hill known as Golgotha. Jesus knows this. He has already told his disciples this (although they haven't seemed to understand it). And now we have this keen bean who probably thinks Jesus is going to seek some political overthrow of the Romans saying: 'Jesus I will follow you wherever you go'.

If in yesterday's passage we learnt that following Jesus involves handing over judgement of others to him, in today's passage we learn that following Jesus involves handing our own lives over to him. That might mean going places we don't naturally want to go. It may mean changing things we wouldn't have the strength on our own to change.

Jesus picks up on this man's request by questioning whether he really does want to follow Jesus wherever he goes. In effect Jesus replies by saying: 'if you want to follow me, you will end up homeless'. Now this is significant because the man asking this question is probably hoping that Jesus will get him a seat of power in the new Jerusalem kingdom that he believes Jesus is going to usher in. He thinks that by following Jesus he will receive a very plush pillow in a very expensive house with a very important position. Jesus moves to crush this false vision immediately. Following Jesus will not lead to earthly power and wealth. So with that being the case, why don't you rethink your bold statement and come back to me when you have counted the cost.

Luke then records Jesus extending the invitation to follow him. But in these cases the recipients far from being naively bold like the first man are naively dismissive of Jesus invitation. They like the idea of following Jesus but only on their own terms. First let me do this, then let me do that then if I have the capacity I'll follow you.

Jesus moves to crush this false view as well – following him is not an 'add on' in your already busy life. Rather it's a whole new way of understanding life. If you keep looking back and dabbling in past lifestyles and world views then you won't be able to follow Jesus for he invites us into a whole new life with a new shape and a new future.

Think & Pray

I wonder as you hear these words from Jesus today, where you find yourself? Could you be like the first man, eager to follow Jesus because you think it will give you a good life by the standards of this world? Could you have fallen into thinking that if you follow Jesus now, he owes you the things that you want from life in the future?

Perhaps you may resonate with the second group, who like the 'idea' of following Jesus, but don't want to give up their old lives or old views on things. Who aren't ready to put a hand to the plough and look forward?

I wonder what it may mean for you this day to follow Jesus and trust in his word

and the leading of his Spirit in your daily life? With Jesus we have a glorious future and the promise of transformation of our very selves. But this does not always come in the shape of life we had planned. God works in all things for our good to shape us more like his Son. But often the 'all things' includes ridicule for our faith and unexpected turns which leave us asking how God could be present.

But Luke reminds us that Jesus had set resolutely out for Jerusalem. It was Jesus own crucifixion that would secure the salvation of the world. Many saw defeat, but things were not as they seemed. So it is with following the Lord of all. There is freedom and new life, but often this is different to what we had initially hoped. This can be confronting but we trust that in all things

God is good and keep our gaze forward on the plans he has for us.

Why not take some time today to reflect and pray over these things?