

Pentecost 3 / June 26, 2022

Luke 9:60

“Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Go and Proclaim the Kingdom of God

Have you ever set your mind to do something? Can you think of a specific moment in time where you made your mind up and from that point, pursued a certain goal? Maybe you made up your mind to get married, go to school, get a different job! Our text is a turning point in Jesus’ ministry. Luke says, “When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem.” In Jerusalem, Jesus would fulfill the purpose for which He came into the world. He would suffer and die for our sins and rise for our eternal salvation.

The time had come to begin the final phase of His mission. He set His face towards Jerusalem with this single purpose in mind. Nothing would change His mind from making this journey. Nothing would deflect Him from fulfilling the purpose for which He came. Not the ties of His earthly family. Not the pull of fame from the multitudes that followed Him. Not even the fear of humiliation, suffering and death would prevent Jesus from reaching His destination and achieving His goal. He had come to proclaim the kingdom of God. He would establish it through the blood of His cross.

In our gospel Jesus calls disciples and calls them to follow Him with the same determination and mind set. Nothing is more important than the kingdom of God. Nothing is more important than following Jesus. He brings us into the kingdom of God through faith in Him as Saviour. He calls others into the kingdom through the gospel message proclaimed by His followers. The message of the kingdom is the good news that everyone who calls on His name will be saved. Nothing is more important than proclaiming the kingdom of God, by sharing Jesus and calling others to faith in Him.

The kingdom of God is God’s righteous reign in the world. It begins in the human heart through faith in Jesus. It extends into the world through the gospel call. The kingdom of God comes now through the word and the inner working of the Holy Spirit, who creates faith in the human heart. It will come in its fullness when Jesus returns and makes all things new, in the creation of a new heavens and a new earth. There is no greater call than the kingdom call. God calls us to Himself in Christ. Nothing is more important than responding to His call with faith, knowing Jesus as Saviour and following Him as Lord. Nothing is more urgent than the call to proclaim the kingdom, so others also may believe. As Jesus said to the man in our gospel, “but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

The Samaritan Village

Jesus sets His face to go to Jerusalem. The shortest way to Jerusalem was to pass through Samaria, which is what Jesus did, sending disciples to a Samaritan village for provisions. Samaritans were the descendants of the peoples the Assyrians brought into Galilee from other nations eight centuries earlier, to replace the Hebrews they deported when they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. Like the Jews, the descendants of the southern kingdom of Judah, they worshipped the Lord as God. Like the Jews, they held to the five books of Moses. In many ways their beliefs were identical to the beliefs of the Jews, but they had their own peculiar beliefs. One point of disagreement was the place of worship, which for them was not Mount Zion in Jerusalem, but Mount Gerizim in Samaria.

In chapter ten Jesus tells the parable of a Samaritan, who helps an injured Jew, after his Jewish brothers fail to render him aid. He was a friendly Samaritan, but these Samaritans were not friendly. They refused Jesus and His company entrance to their village. This is evidence of the mutual hostility that existed between Jews and Samaritans. We are not told why they responded like this. Possibly they felt it would be a sin to assist Jews who were on their way to worship in Jerusalem, a place, they considered forbidden by God. Perhaps they simply didn’t believe Jesus was the Messiah and didn’t want to hear the kingdom call.

Have you ever told someone about Jesus and received a negative response? Have you ever told someone about Jesus, received a harsh rebuke and felt anger? A woman struck up a conversation with a stranger with the purpose of telling him about Jesus. When the appropriate time arrived in their conversation, she began her witness. However, the person to whom she was speaking was in no mood to hear about Jesus and told her so. The woman was quite offended. No one had ever shut her down like that before. She was quite put off and in anger told the man to whom she was witnessing that if he didn’t want to hear the plan of salvation, then “he could just go to

hell,” and with that she stormed off. That’s what James and John want to do to the Samaritan village in our gospel, send them to hell by raining fire on them from heaven. Jesus rebukes them. He didn’t come from heaven to rain fire. He came to bring salvation. Proclaiming the kingdom means allowing people their space if they do not want to hear. Proclaiming the kingdom means not burning bridges with anger, so that people never want to hear about Jesus again. Proclaiming the kingdom is allowing the Holy Spirit to work in people’s lives, whether they respond favourably to us or not. The message of the kingdom is that Son of Man came, not to destroy people’s lives, but to save them.

The Cost of Following Jesus

Jesus and the disciples continue on their way. As they travel, Jesus encounters three people. A man, who volunteers to follow Jesus. Another man, whom Jesus calls to follow Him. Lastly, a man who agrees to follow, but not yet. Earlier in this chapter Jesus challenged those who followed Him to consider what it meant to be His disciples and to count the cost, as well as the benefits. Many followed, simply because of the signs Jesus gave. Many followed, because they expected an earthly paradise and wanted to reap the benefits of His kingship. The disciples James and John requested the places at His right and left hand, when He came into His kingdom. He said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me.” He wants us to count the costs, so we don’t become discouraged and turn away before we reap the benefits. Before we wear His crown, we must share His cross.

He seems to discourage the first man saying, “Foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.” But He’s not discouraging him. He wants us to be aware of the hardships that come with following Him, so that when they come, we do not become discouraged, give up discipleship and miss the eternal blessings of the Kingdom of God. The next two men want to follow, but with conditions. The first wants to delay, so he can bury his father. The second wants to go and say goodbye to his family. Neither request sounds unreasonable, yet Jesus rebukes both men. To the first He says, “Let the dead bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” To the other person He says, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Why does He do this?

Jesus knew more about their personal circumstances and the motivations that lay behind their requests than we do. Those things we don’t know, but we do know He was not speaking against the law which commands respect for father, mother and family. Respect for family, especially parents, is enshrined in the commandments. His reason for speaking as He did was not meant to disregard the commandments, or show disrespect for family and family obligations. The point He makes is that His call is unconditional. He was pointing out the supreme value of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field, for which a man sold everything he had, so that he might have it. There is nothing more valuable than faith in Jesus and God’s righteous reign in our hearts. There is nothing more important than answering His call with faith and faithfulness. There is nothing more urgent than the call to share the good news of the kingdom, by telling people about God’s love and the salvation He has prepared for all people in Christ Jesus.

Lutheran pastor and leader of a German resistance movement in the second world war, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, commented on our text saying, “When Jesus calls a person, He calls him to die.” Not a physical death, but a spiritual death to self, to the world and to all worldly attachments. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. In Him is life and only in Him do we have life in its fullness. There is no one more important than Jesus. He is our God and Saviour. There is nothing more important than knowing Jesus as Saviour. He brings us to the Father in peace through the blood of His cross. He establishes God’s righteous reign in our hearts through the word and washing of holy baptism. There is no attachment more important than our attachment to Him as Saviour.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that we have no other attachments or any obligation to family, friends and the world in which we live. We are called to honour our father and mother and to love others as God loves us. Rather than no obligation, this means we have the greatest obligation of sharing with them the good news of Jesus and the kingdom of God, through our words and by our actions. Jesus calls us to faith. Jesus calls us to follow Him in faith, by proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. He establishes the kingdom of God in the human heart through faith in His name. He will give the kingdom in its fullness to all who believe when He returns and makes all things new. God bless us with faith to hold Jesus in our hearts as our greatest treasure. God bless us with grace to proclaim His kingdom by telling others about Jesus and His saving love offered for all to receive, given freely to all who believe. In Jesus’ Name. Amen