

“Let Us Follow Jesus”

(Luke 9:57-62 – Pentecost 6 – July 20, 2025)

Luke 9:57-62 – ⁵⁷Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” ⁵⁸And 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.” ⁵⁹Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” ⁶²But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ:

At the time of our text, Jesus’ cross loomed before Him. Earlier verse 51 says: “When the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” Jesus knew all that He must face at Jerusalem, that He must be rejected and crucified on the cross. But He went forth willingly to suffer all, to win our salvation from sin, death, and hell. He went forth joyfully to sacrifice His life to win for us the forgiveness of sins, to win for us a place in His eternal Kingdom.

Along the way, Jesus sent messengers before His face to prepare the way. He enlisted His disciples in the important work of calling sinners to repentance and faith, that they might receive their Savior and share in all the benefits of His Kingdom. But as we heard, many did not receive Him. Yet even then, He did not want to bring judgment on those who rejected Him; for He had come to save sinners (vs. 51-56)

Now in the verses before us, Jesus continues to reach out with His invitation to three men. At first, they seem willing to follow Him in faith and join in the work of His Kingdom. But He has to give them a reality check. They do not understand the implications of following Him in the way of the cross. As we consider Jesus’ words, **“Let Us Follow Jesus”**: **1) Realizing that it will not always be easy, 2) Knowing what must be our first priority, 3) Looking ahead with an undivided heart.**

1) Realizing that it will not always be easy

“Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go’” (vs. 57). This man eagerly volunteered to follow Jesus. But Jesus could see that he had wrong ideas. He imagined that following Jesus would mean a life of ease and success, that identifying himself as a

Christian would bring a life of glory and status, and that things would go the way he wanted from now on.

His offer to follow wherever Jesus led was not rooted in realistic expectations. It was like Peter's boast that time when he said: *'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death'* (Luke 22:33). We know what such over-eager pride amounted to in the actual hour of trial – in shameful denial of Jesus. Again, this man's shallow faith and enthusiasm was like the seed that fell on rocky ground and grew up quickly without much root; but under a hot sun, it scorched and withered away just as quickly (Mark 4:5-6).

At times, we may have boasted in our enthusiasm to follow Jesus. When things were going well, we said: *"I will follow You wherever You go."* But then things went the opposite of how we dreamed. Maybe the path to success we had planned took a negative turn, or friends no longer liked us when we shared our faith. The path Jesus led us on became difficult, disappointing, and painful. We questioned His leading. Under the hot sun of temptation, maybe we tried to follow the path of ease and pleasure we had hoped for by sinful pursuits. In the hour of trial maybe our bold zeal faded, and we tried to pursue the path of glory among men by denying Jesus.

How does Jesus respond to one whose enthusiasm in following Him is distorted by dreams of ease and success? He gives a realistic picture. He tells him to count the cost of being a disciple: *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"* (vs. 58). In other words, following Him will not always be easy. Jesus Himself, as the Son of God, in becoming the Son of Man, had less comforts in this world than the wild animals. In His ministry, He was constantly on the move with no place to call home. He was despised and rejected. He was not a preacher of worldly success and glory. And Jesus said: *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher"* (Matthew 10:25). He shows the path His followers must walk by choosing spiritual pursuits over fleshly, a life of eternal purpose over temporal, and heavenly glory over earthly.

We can be thankful that Jesus counted the cost in becoming our Savior. He who had infinite heavenly riches made Himself poor, so that through His poverty we might become eternally rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). He gave His all for our salvation – laying down His life on the cross, shedding His blood that is precious beyond all the treasures of this world – in order to cleanse us of all sin and present us holy before His Father. Jesus has joined us to Himself in Baptism and faith, making us heirs of His eternal Kingdom. So we are encouraged to follow Him with a realistic outlook,

knowing that it will not always be easy; yet rejoicing that by the riches of His grace, He is giving us treasures beyond compare in His heavenly Kingdom.

2) Knowing what must be our first priority

“Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God’” (vs. 59-60). Apparently, this man already was a believer, because Jesus’ invitation was to join Him in the mission of preaching the Kingdom. The fields were white for harvest; there were many souls to be won through the preaching of the Gospel. But this man had many other things he wanted to do first. Jesus’ invitation seemed inconvenient as he thought of all the details of his father’s funeral, settling the inheritance, taking care of the property, etc.

Jesus is not speaking against the Fourth Commandment and honoring parents. But the point is that, when there is a conflict between serving the Lord and serving other temporal interests, we must choose our priority. The work of God’s Kingdom and saving souls for eternity is far more important than passing worldly concerns.

Jesus could see that this man was putting worldly concerns over spiritual and eternal concerns. From the perspective of God’s Kingdom, his father’s soul had entered eternity and was beyond reach. Now anyone, even a spiritually dead unbeliever, could take care of burying a dead body. But Jesus was getting this man to think of spiritual and eternal priorities – first, to care for his own soul by following Jesus, hearing His Word, and growing in faith; and then, to care for the souls of others whom he still could reach by preaching the Kingdom of God, sharing the Gospel of forgiveness and eternal life in the name of Jesus who came to save sinners.

Are there times when we need the same exhortation? There will always be one more worldly concern that seems urgent, one more thing to do before we sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to His Word. There will always be one more reason or excuse why we cannot quite get to sharing the saving Gospel with lost souls around us.

We can be thankful that Jesus did not let other priorities distract Him from His spiritual and eternal mission of saving us. His laser-like focus was on preaching the Kingdom of God, bringing His salvation and eternal life to us through His Gospel. We are encouraged to follow Him with the same priority. We can do no better for ourselves and for our loved ones than to be in His Word and Sacraments, receiving His forgiveness and salvation ourselves, and then sharing it with others for their eternal good.

3) Looking ahead with an undivided heart

“And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’” (vs. 61- 62). This man offered to follow Jesus, but his heart was divided between love for Jesus and love for others. With an old-style plow pulled behind an animal, you had to keep both hands on the handle and look forward. Looking back would cause you to veer off course. Jesus knew that if this man were to turn back now and say farewell to family and friends, his relationship with Jesus would veer off course and be lost. He would choose earthly relationships over his heavenly Savior.

Are we tempted to try and follow Jesus with hearts divided between love for Him and other loves? Is there someone we desire more than Jesus, to whose wishes we bow rather than to Him? Is there some worldly treasure or sinful pleasure we would sorrow to leave behind for Jesus’ sake? Is there some idol we cling to, something we trust for happiness in life, saying: “I’ll follow You, Jesus, as long as You don’t take this away”? Our sinful nature always wants to turn us back to worldly loves, to divide our hearts from Jesus and make us unfit for God’s Kingdom.

Thankfully, Jesus always looked straight ahead with an undivided heart in His mission to save us. All His life He put His hand to the plow, working to fulfill all righteousness for us. Then *“He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”* (vs. 51). Looking straight ahead with an undivided heart, our Savior took up His cross for us, neither veering to the right nor to the left in His resolve to take away our sin and death and render us fit for the Kingdom of God.

It is good to know that our acceptance in God’s Kingdom does not depend on us. We do not have to try and convince Him that we have always followed faithfully when the way was difficult, or that we have always chosen right priorities in life, or always plowed a straight row with an undivided heart. We confess our sins knowing that Jesus forgives us all our sins, knowing that He accepts us in His Kingdom because of all He has done perfectly to earn our salvation. Jesus has given us a relationship with Himself as righteous children of God by faith.

Therefore, it is our joy to follow Jesus and join Him in the work of proclaiming His Kingdom. It is our joy and privilege to share with our fellow sinners the Good News of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life Jesus has won for all!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.