

Sermon for June 29, 2024 – 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 9:51-62 EHV

Theme: Jesus' determination for your salvation is:

- 1) Your power to love those who oppose you.
- 2) Your motivation to give up everything for His kingdom.

⁵¹When the days were approaching for him to be taken up, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²He sent messengers ahead of him. They went and entered a Samaritan village to make preparations for him. ⁵³But the people did not welcome him, because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. "You don't know what kind of spirit is influencing you. ⁵⁶For the Son of Man did not come to destroy people's souls, but to save them." Then they went to another village. ⁵⁷As they went on the way, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." ⁵⁹He said to another man, "Follow me!" But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ⁶⁰Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another man also said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus told him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

What picture comes to your mind when you hear the word "disciple?" Do you imagine 12 Jewish men in robes hanging around Jesus? Maybe you think about a Christian pastor or teacher. These are all disciples of Christ, but so is anyone who believes in Jesus and learns from Him. That means **you** are a disciple of Christ!

What does Jesus want his disciples to do? To follow Him - loving and trusting Him above all things, and loving others as we love ourselves.ⁱ

Jesus has high expectations for His disciples. Why? Because He sees a world lost to sin and doomed to hell, and He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone.ⁱⁱ He wants all people to repent and be saved.ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus was so determined to save you that He gave up everything for a time to rescue you from your sins. As His disciple, Jesus wants you to share in His determination to save others.

Let us consider both Jesus' expectations for our discipleship and how He enables us to meet them, under the theme: **Jesus' determination for your salvation is** 1) your power to love those who oppose you, and 2) your motivation to give up everything for His kingdom.

Part One: Jesus' determination for your salvation is your power to love those who oppose you

Our sermon text takes place about six months before Jesus' death. He finished His ministry in Galilee and wanted to minister to the people in Jerusalem. He knew what would happen to him there - that He would be betrayed, killed, and, on the third day, raised to life^{iv} - but that didn't deter Jesus. No, as our sermon text says:

⁵¹When the days were approaching for him to be taken up, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem.

Why was Jesus so determined to go to Jerusalem? Because He wanted to save you. He trusted that His suffering and death would accomplish your everlasting forgiveness. Love for you and faith in His Father's promises gave Jesus the joyous resolve to finish His work as your Saviour.

⁵²He sent messengers ahead of him. They went and entered a Samaritan village to make preparations for him.

The Jews and Samaritans hated each other so much that most Jews did what they could to avoid Samaria when walking to Jerusalem. But Jesus didn't. Why? Because He resolved to save the Samaritans, too.

⁵³But the people did not welcome him, because he was determined to go to Jerusalem.

Even though the Samaritan heard great things about Jesus, they were upset that He did not acknowledge their religion as true.^v They wanted a "Samaritan" Saviour, not a Jewish one. Oh, how foolish old prejudices make people: by rejecting Jesus, they rejected their Samaritan Saviour.

⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?"

James and John were appalled at how the Samaritans insulted the Messiah by their actions. Recalling what the LORD did through the prophet Elijah to some soldiers of the unbelieving King Ahaziah,^{vi} James and John were ready to defend Jesus' honour by calling down curses upon the Samaritans.

⁵⁵But [Jesus] turned and rebuked them. "You don't know what kind of spirit is influencing you.

⁵⁶For the Son of Man did not come to destroy people's souls, but to save them." Then they went to another village.

Jesus hated the attitude these disciples were displaying. He came to save people, not destroy them.^{viii} He was on his way to Jerusalem to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world - including the Samaritans! If James and John were to be His disciples, they needed to learn how to love their enemies, not curse them.

The book of Acts reveals that many Samaritans came to faith after Jesus' ascension. What would've happened if James and John's wish came true? Many souls would've been lost to hell.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as Jesus sent disciples to prepare for His arrival in Samaria, Jesus has sent you to the people He has placed in your lives to prepare them for His coming on the Last Day. Sadly, some will meet your message with hostility. What should you do when this happens? Should you hate and curse them? No, God wants you to love them to the degree He loved them and return their hate and mockery with tolerance and love.

But how do you love people who hate you? Your strength to love can only come from Jesus, who was so determined to save you that He willingly suffered the shame of crucifixion to save you.

But why did Jesus allow himself to undergo such abuse from the mouths and hands of sinners? Because he believed his Father's promises regarding His work: that it would bring about your salvation and end in glory.

Yes, faith in His Father's promises gave Jesus the determination to love those who hated Him. And it moves you to do the same. How? Because you, too, are convinced that Jesus accomplished your salvation. You believe in His promises regarding your future and share in His love for the lost.

Therefore, even though you have not perfectly loved others as God loved you, Jesus forgives your sins and, in the peace of His forgiveness, calls you to love others as He loved them. Trust in His promises and find in His love the power to love those who oppose you. Find in Him the motivation to give up everything for the sake of His kingdom.

Part Two: Jesus' determination for your salvation is your motivation to give up everything for his kingdom.

⁵⁷*As they went on the way, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."*

Sadly, this man was not just eager to follow Jesus; he seemed too eager. This man seems like an idealist: like a person who hears about a glorious war in a far-off land and hastily joins the army, not considering all the horrors he would have to endure as a soldier.

Confronting the man's idealism with the reality of discipleship, ⁵⁸*Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

Jesus did not say these things to discourage the man, but to keep him from false expectations.

Many Christians think that their discipleship entitles them to comfortable and trouble-free lives. Jesus tells us to expect something entirely different. *"In this world you are going to have trouble,"* He once said, *"But be courageous! I have overcome the world."*^{viii}

And therein you see your only power to give up earthly comforts for Jesus willingly: His promise to have overcome the world. Yes, the more you focus on Jesus and His promises, the more willing you become to give up temporary, earthly comforts when called to do so. Why? Because you look

forward to something better than anything this world can offer: everlasting life with God in paradise.^{ix}

⁵⁹*He said to another man, "Follow me!" But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."*

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that this man was already a disciple. Jewish culture dictated that he drop everything to provide his father with an honourable burial. Wasn't fulfilling his cultural obligations to his family more important than going with Jesus at that moment?

⁶⁰*Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."*

We need to evaluate Jesus' response in the context of the rest of Scripture. Jesus is not saying that disciples should neglect their families to do "the Lord's work," because taking care of family is the Lord's commanded work! Remember the same Jesus who spoke our text also commanded children to honour their parents, and that family members take care of one another.^x

Then why did Jesus say what He said? Didn't He care for the man's family? Yes, He cared so much that He resolutely went to Jerusalem to offer His life in payment for their sins.

Nevertheless, this man's father was dead, and nothing could change that fact. There were, however, many people still alive who needed to hear Jesus' soul-saving Gospel before they died. That is what Jesus wanted His disciple to focus on.

Jesus' terse answer teaches a truth we all need to take to heart: **absolutely nothing** is more important than following Jesus and proclaiming His Gospel, not even planning a grand funeral for a father.

So, where does that leave us? I mean, haven't we all let family gatherings or events get in the way of our worship of God, which were far less critical than burying a loved one? Yes, we all have and, in doing so, broke the first commandment. So, where does that leave us? At the foot of the cross, asking Jesus to forgive us.

And Jesus not only forgives us, but He also uses His Gospel to open our eyes to the reality of His mission. The greatest love we can show our family and friends is not just spending time with them to do "whatever," it is encouraging them in Christ. I mean, what kind of message do we send our family and friends when we compromise our time with the LORD to have an early brunch or hit the links with them? Such actions make the Gospel seem less important than human leisure. We give a far better testimony to the importance of Christ by not compromising our time with the LORD. Who knows, showing such dedication to Jesus might, over time, pique our family and friends' curiosity to ask us more about Him.

⁶¹*Another man also said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those at my home."*

As reasonable as this man's request seemed, Jesus perceived a threat. Perhaps the man's family would influence him to stop following Jesus if He went back.

Therefore, ⁶²*Jesus told him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

A plowman must maintain his focus on the road ahead to create a straight line. If he looks back, he will ruin his field. Similarly, Jesus' disciples must have the same focus and determination that He possessed. Jesus **must** have first place in their heart and not worldly things.

For some, this might mean leaving their friends and close relatives behind to go to a new place. That is difficult, as memories of past joys with family and friends will tempt them to look back with longing and not focus on the glorious mission Jesus placed before them.

Wherein, then, do we find the power to offer Jesus such dedication? Doesn't it seem like He is asking too much of us? I mean, I know that I can't love Jesus as ideally as he desires. Don't you confess the same? So, where does that leave us?

At the foot of the cross, looking to Jesus for forgiveness. And, as we bask in the glory of what He has done for us, He changes us. Like the moon looking at the sun, we can't help but reflect His light. Yes, the more time we spend with Jesus in the Gospel, learning about His mission and love, the more we grow in our discipleship. We soon find ourselves doing things we would otherwise never imagine ourselves doing, like loving our enemies or giving up worldly comforts for the sake of Christ's Gospel.

Yes, **Jesus' determination for your salvation** is your power to love those who oppose you and your motivation to give up everything for His kingdom. May the LORD preserve us in His Gospel grace, trusting his promise that *our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.*^{xi} Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Matthew 22:37-39 & John 15:9-17

ⁱⁱ Cf. Ezekiel 13:32

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. 1 Timothy 2:4

^{iv} Cf. Matthew 17:22-23 EHV

^v Cf. John 5:21-26

^{vi} Cf. 2 Kings 1:1ff

^{vii} Cf. John 3:17

^{viii} John 16:33 EHV

^{ix} Read Hebrews 11 that shows how the Old Testaments saints willingly gave up earthly ease and comfort as they looked forward to God fulfilling His Gospel promises.

^x Cf. Ephesians 6:1-3, Ephesians 5:8, Mark 7:9-13, Ephesians 6:4, Timothy 3:4-5

^{xi} Romans 8:18 EHV