

Third Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 8

Year C RCL

June 26, 2022

1 Kings 19:15-16,19-21; Psalm 16; Galatians 5:1,13-25; Luke 9:51-62

“He set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

By: The Rev. Dr. Fabian Villalobos

“When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.” V.51

This expression is exclusive to the Gospel of Saint Luke and suggests the purpose, the motivation, and the decision of Jesus towards his destiny. Jesus is obedient to the Father and to fulfill his mission, he understands that he needs to go to Jerusalem to die on the cross. Jerusalem features prominently in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus begins and ends his gospel in the temple in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the place of Jesus' death, and it is also the place of his resurrection. The book of Acts of the Apostles which was also written by Luke, begins in Jerusalem with the Ascension of Jesus and the story of Pentecost.

"And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem." V.52-53

The Bible (see Jn. 4:9) manifests the hostility between Jews and Samaritans and given this animosity, it is not surprising that the Samaritans refuse to show hospitality to Jesus the pilgrim prophet. The Samaritans who do not receive Jesus proves how he was rejected and despised. When reading the life of Jesus in the Gospels, we discover the drama is current even today. Not everyone wants to receive or host Jesus. This rejection began on the holy night of his birth, and persists in many places, people, and communities.

"When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" V.54

The disciples' desire for destruction is proof of the violent condition of our human nature. When things do not go as expected or when we cannot or do not want to dialogue, violence is resorted to seeking to impose one's own opinion as truth. The current war in Ukraine; the horrific attack upon our U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020 after presidential elections; the need for semi-automatic weapons of mass destruction; the verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and mistreatment every day of women, men, boys, girls, and the elderly all show

the violent dimension of the human being directs the lives of many in our society. Violence is an imperfect human solution that shows the inability to recognize, respect, and accept the will, the opinions, the lifestyle of another person or people who differ from who I am. Not only do we want things our way, when someone thinks, acts, or lives differently, we see violence as an alternative (unfortunately extreme).

When James and John are not accepted, not welcome, they invoke violence as a response- they want fire to come down from heaven to destroy the people they consider their adversaries. This is not a movie or the story of a specific group of terrorists, this is the Gospel, and unfortunately the protagonists were the disciples of Jesus. The fact that this pretense of violence by the disciples is present in the gospel indicates that no one is exempt from violent desire. All human beings are tempted by the violent solution, because a peaceful solution requires work, inclusion, and openness to the differences of the other.

The disciples James and John, show their selfishness and misunderstand what it means to be a disciple, what it means to be on the journey with Jesus.

James and John's idea of discipleship was wrong, their immaturity, and their violent desire to destroy shows fanaticism, and extremism. James and John believe that all people need to believe in the same way that they believe. This

selfish, exclusive, violent attitude can also be present in us, in our families or communities.

"But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village." V.55-

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Jesus, the Prince of Peace, not only shows his disciples mutual love, in his teachings, he respects and even recognizes the cultural, racial, historical differences between Jews and Samaritans. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus declares that it is possible to receive and give love, even to those we consider our enemies or who are different from us (see Lk. 10:25-37).

The second part of the gospel confirms the characteristics of discipleship and reveals the qualities every Christian should have.

"As they were going along the road, someone 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." V.57-58

The lack of material and financial stability is a sign of self-sacrifice and total dedication to God's plan. The true disciple understands and recognizes that wealth is in God. He follows God selflessly, freely, and generously without seeking or expecting anything in return.

The necessary characteristic of the disciple is freedom from material attachments and total surrender.

"To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." V.59-60

Although burying our dead is necessary, the priority of the disciple is the proclamation of the Kingdom.

The necessary characteristic of the disciple is to live in the present, the dead belong to the past. The disciple must be free from their past and live with God on a day-to-day basis.

"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 a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." V.61-62

Not even family is as important as God. The last condition is the exclusive attention to the Kingdom of God.

The necessary characteristic of the disciple is the exclusive, radical, unique love for God. The freedom of the affections allows the exclusive love for God.

Just as Jesus called James and John, he calls each one of us by name, to follow, love, and serve him. Our example is Jesus who undertook his journey to Jerusalem with courage to save us; so radical, free, and unique should be our dedication and commitment to God every day. Amen.