

Scripture Reading:

Luke 9:43 “And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, **44** "Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." **45** But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying. **46** Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. **47** And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, **48** and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great." **49** Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us." **50** But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side."

51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, **52** and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. **53** But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. **54** And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" **55** But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. **56** For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

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

"Who Is For Jesus?"

This morning we come to what all agree is a major transition with verse 51: “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” Providentially, we come to Psalm Sunday in the church calendar next week and we will focus exclusively on what the meaning of this verse! This week we are going to consider the context of this resolve on the part of Jesus with all the details that Luke includes on either side of verse 51:

- **I have tried to capture the theme that we should see here with the sermon title of “Who is for Jesus?”**

Jesus has already confronted the Disciples with the most important question we must give an answer to in this life when He asked, “Who do YOU say that I am?”

What I think we will see in these verses at the end of Chapter nine is Luke reminding us that we must not only give the proper technical answer to that question, but it must be lived out in our lives as well:

- **As Jesus said in summarizing the Law of God, we must love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength...**

We will see this morning what this means practically for those who are for Jesus!

Remember that Luke’s purpose in giving this orderly account is to show that Jesus has come to save His people from their sins and to establish His Kingdom that will fill the earth: Those whose sins are forgiven become part of His Church through which Jesus will disciple the nations and that is the task that we are to stay focused on!

With that in mind, I think we can make sense of what might appear to be disparate verses thrown together and learn some very practical lessons for our lives! In fact, once we ask that question, “who is for Jesus?” and keep it at the center of the discussion, there seems to be nothing but applications here!

So far in Luke’s Gospel we have seen many who are NOT for Jesus:

- **The religious leaders**
- **BOTH King Herods!**
- **The crowds**
- **The demons**
- **I want to suggest that in this morning’s reading we now come to many who are for Jesus...**
- **However, we will also see that they are FAR from being perfect!**

Start with the Disciples: Jesus again instructs them about His real mission to save His people from their sins saying again that “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.”

- **Do they go off and ponder what Jesus has said?**
- **Do they ask questions looking for a fuller explanation of just what He means?**

NOPE... Rather a dispute breaks out about who among them is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom!

Now of course in the 21st Century we are far more advanced than these poor fishermen from an agrarian society...

-- We have the benefit of the completed Cannon... We have All the Scriptures that God has revealed

-- WE are “Spirit-filled” since the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church at Pentecost

-- We have the benefit of almost two thousand years of Church history and the wisdom of all the great Saints that have gone before

-- We have not only the printing press, but now electronic tools and the Internet providing research and communication that these humble Disciples could hardly have dreamed of having for the Kingdom

- **Soooo... we would never make an error like the disciples did here, would we??**
- **Today we have NO debates in the Church or on the Internet about who is the greatest, right??**
- **Obviously, there is much to be confessed here, and it should include those who only consider themselves to be observers**

Jesus uses a practical example to try and make His point again and things only gets worse for the Disciples...

- **And remember, with the exception of Judas, we KNOW they are for Jesus!**

Jesus confirms the use of something I try to use judiciously here in the pulpit at Church of the King... The illustrated sermon! [Remember the lunch?] Jesus uses a little child set among them to make His point, saying, Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me...” The disciples had fallen prey to what C.S. Lewis called the greatest sin: Pride... What we see so quickly in others but seldom in ourselves! Jesus uses this child to bring the focus back to where it should be and the disciples miss the point as we often do today...

- ⇒ **Discuss teaching a young child**
- ⇒ **Discuss children at the Table**

Again, did the Disciples meditate on what Jesus was saying?

Did they sit and ask just what Jesus meant by receiving the child in His name?

NOPE! John plunges right into another sin: Hypocrisy

They had observed someone casting out demons in the name of Jesus and they forbade him because “he does not follow with US” [that sin of pride is still front and center] BUT here we have a clear picture of what Jesus, and James mean when they tell us not to judge others with those verses that are ALWAYS taken out of context...

The disciples rebuked this man because he was not taking His instruction from Jesus... BUT did they ask Jesus if he should be rebuked BEFORE they gave the rebuke?

The response from Jesus brings us to the next application that shouts to us from this passage: “Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.” After the Reformation the Body of Christ has divided into hundreds of groups or denominations... Which of them is “for Jesus?”

⇒ **Discuss relationship of American groups**

⇒ **Discuss Spirit’s work in the southern hemisphere**

As the Disciples argue and get distracted, Luke reminds us that Jesus has NOT lost the proper focus: We will fully consider this next week

➤ **BUT Luke continues to teach some important lessons to those who desire to be for Jesus:**

As the new direction takes them into Samaria, the Samaritans do not receive Jesus because He is headed for Jerusalem: NOW the disciples are sure they are on solid ground: Surely these folks are not for Jesus appropriate action must be taken!

Here we may see why Jesus called John and James the sons of thunder... They think BIG! They are in the area that was the northern Kingdom of Israel so naturally they think of what the Prophet Elijah did to the prophets of Baal or to the King’s groups of fifty men sent to bring the Prophet down!

➤ **“Do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” asks John**

This outburst brings a rebuke from Jesus, just as He did with Peter...

➤ **Jesus has come to save His people from their sins, not to judge them!**

➤ **Judgment will come, BUT we are not commissioned to declare judgment upon a wicked world...**

➤ **We are commissioned to disciple the nations baptizing them and teaching them all things that Jesus taught!**

BOTH the Samaritans and the Disciples were wrong here today, but I think an argument can be made that they were both FOR Jesus

- **We know what happens with the Disciples at Pentecost, but what about these Samaritans?**

Consider this from Acts chapter eight right after the persecution of Saul scattered the Disciples: Acts 8:5 “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did... 8 And there was great joy in that city. ... 14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.”

-- John gets to send “fire from Heaven” after all!

- **On the morning the Samaritans refused Jesus, John was ready to judge them, but not Jesus!**

Luke chapter nine concludes with Jesus interacting with three would be disciples, but before we look at the lessons here, it is time to address directly the question asked by our sermon title: “Who is for Jesus?”

Ultimately the question of who is for Jesus was settled before time began when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit made the covenant of salvation.

Paul describes this great covenant in Ephesians chapter one:

“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.”

- **Words that those Samaritan Saints would later read with great comfort!**
- **To the dismay of many of our Christian brothers & sisters today, THE election is not held down here: It was settled among the persons of the Godhead before the creation!**
- **What we see here on earth is the response of those who have been regenerated and given the gift of faith!**

Luke is teaching us, in these passages that surround the resolve of Jesus to save His people from their sins, that WE, from a human standpoint, will often struggle to see God's plan.

- **Even when we KNOW the disciples have been chosen, they baffle us with their actions...**
- **We would likely have been just as quick to write off the Samaritans until we considered God's entire plan and what happens later in Acts...**

We now come to three individuals who we might be tempted to write off as failures like those Samaritans...

- **BUT I believe they are included as an encouragement to those of us who struggle with our faith!**

You see, we want an answer to the question, "are WE for Jesus" or more specifically, "am I for Jesus?"

- **As we have pointed out many times, we can and should know God's work in our lives!**

Jesus says His sheep hear His voice:

- **Have you responded to the voice of Jesus?**
- **Have you been baptized?**
- **Will you feast with Jesus at His Table today?**
- **You might say, well yes, but I am not sure that I am worthy or sincere...**

This is why we gather each Lord's Day for Covenant Renewal Worship

- **Did you respond to His call?**
- **Did you honestly confess your sins?**
- **Did you believe the declaration that your sins have been forgiven in Christ?**

IF you did then you are FOR Jesus!

After we understand this, we are ready to consider the instructive warnings that Jesus now gives to those who desire to follow Him...

- **We have three men and three warnings about things that affect all of us who desire to follow Jesus**
- **The warnings are given for our instruction – NOT to condemn these men OR to make us doubt!**
- **I believe that all three chose to follow Jesus and that we will meet them in heaven**

Jesus has three simple lessons for His Disciples which are for us as well:

- **Jesus wants us to count the cost**
- **Jesus wants us to have the right priorities**
- **Jesus wants us to NOT be distracted**

These are important lessons which we must learn if we are going to love & serve Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength

The first man comes wanting to serve Jesus and he is simply warned that “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.”

- **Being for Jesus is more than a decision card or a baptismal certificate...**

We must count the cost and be willing to serve Jesus in whatever way He commands, not just when it is convenient for us – Asking that important question: Would you give it up?

Jesus then turns to a second man and says, “follow me.” The man is willing, but first wants to go and bury his father

Jesus is not against funerals! He is simply reminding this man, and all of us that we must have the proper perspective when he tells him: “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the Kingdom of God.”

- **ALL of our priorities must be Kingdom priorities!**

And finally Jesus tells the man who wants to go home and say goodbye, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." ”

Obviously this should bring to mind a very graphic example from the Old Testament...

Someone who looked back?

Genesis 19:26 “ But [Lot’s] wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

- **Looking back also results in very poor plowing! Straight furrows come from looking FORWARD!**

As those who are for Jesus, we have our tasks set out before us and there should be no looking back:

We have been baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit... We belong to God and no other!

Those who are members here at Church of the King have taken vows one to another before God and must now strive to live out these vows in our lives and our community!

Those who are covenant children are commanded to honor mother and father!

Those who have taken marriage vows have left mother and father and must now cleave to their spouse, forsaking all others... Our marriages are shown to be the earthly example of Christ's great love for His bride the Church... We certainly want straight furrows here!

WE are all called to faithfully serve in our vocations before a watching world!

As we strive to be "for Jesus" in all of these areas, we must remember the warnings that Jesus gives:

➤ **Jesus wants us to count the cost**

⇒ **Giving time and attention to the church, our families and others in need means we may NOT be as rich or get that promotion!**

➤ **Jesus wants us to have the right priorities**

⇒ **Begins with tithing our FIRST fruits and setting aside one day in seven as the Lord's Day! Get those wrong & all else is as well.**

➤ **Jesus wants us to avoid distractions**

⇒ **Our modern world cannot imagine NOT being distracted from being a homemaker Or how sexual fidelity is SO boring!**

And finally, I must warn you that we should focus on applying these instructions in OUR lives and be very slow in judging how others are doing in theirs!

Over the next two weeks, we will see Jesus put His hand to the plow, setting His face toward Jerusalem to save His people from their sins...

-- Jesus did NOT look back,

-- Jesus had the right priority

-- And Jesus certainly counted the cost!

As we do the same, we will truly show the world that we are for Jesus!

Communion Meditation:

II Samuel 7:24 "26 So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, 'Jehovah of hosts is the God over Israel.' And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. 27 For You, O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You. 28 And now, O Jehovah God, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. 29 Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You; for You, O Jehovah God, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.'"