Pentecost 6 Luke 9:51-62
July 17, 2022 232-465-460/453-327

Understand What It Means to Follow Jesus
I. Patience is needed in the face of opposition.
II. Total dedication to the Lord's work is also needed.

Dear Christian friends,

Are there some things in life you DON'T UNDERSTAND? Dumb question, right? There are a lot of things we don't understand! I **don't understand** MATH. I can handle **adding** and subtracting, **multiplying** and dividing. But get into **algebra**, geometry, etc., - FORGET it! **Then** there's my computer AND **cell phone**! Oh, let's not forget to PUT PEOPLE on that list too. There are some people you JUST CAN'T FIGURE out.

There IS A LOT in life we don't understand. **For many things** that's OK. I can use my **computer** and phone even if **I don't understand** them. We can't understand **everything** and we DON'T NEED TO either.

Jesus here clears up SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS about **being a Christian**. These verses help us to UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW Jesus. Understand that **in following Jesus** 1)patience is needed in the **face of opposition** and 2)total dedication to the **Lord's work** is also needed.

I. Patience is needed in the face of opposition.

TO UNDERSTAND what it **means to follow** Jesus we must first understand Jesus. Luke writes, ***"When the days were approaching for Him to be taken up, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem."*** FOLLOWING Jesus we are following Him who CAME DOWN from heaven. We are FOLLOWING the eternal Son of God who **came down** from heaven and was born one of us – a **true human** being. NOW the time had come for Jesus to head out for Jerusalem and ***"be taken up"*** to heaven.

So Jesus went. He had already told His disciples what would happen there. ***"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law. He must be killed and be raised on the third day."*** Jesus knew what was IN STORE for Him and He still went! SUCH is the love Jesus has for us. The **Son of God** had come to be **the Savior** of all people. IN OUR PLACE Jesus had been busy living the **sinless life** we owed God. NOW Jesus was going to Jerusalem to offer up that life on the cross to ***"take away the sin of the world."*** But that wasn't all. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die for our sins ***"And BE RAISED on the third day"*** – to win for us the VICTORY over death and the grave. Jesus was going there to ***"be taken up"*** to heaven – to ascend to His ***"Father's house and prepare a place for us."*** FOLLOWING Jesus we are following Him who is the forgiveness of all our sins – our peace with God – our victory over death – our sure hope of eternal life in heaven. We follow Jesus BECAUSE ONLY IN Jesus to we have those blessings.

Jesus ***"was determined to go"*** to Jerusalem. NOTHING was going to stop Him **from completing** His mission. Jesus and the disciples were UP NORTH in **in Galilee**. Jerusalem was DOWN SOUTH in **Judea**. IN BETWEEN was **Samaria**. There was no love lost between the Jews and the Samaritans. They couldn't stand each other. **As** Jesus headed south to Jerusalem He planned to SPEND THE NIGHT in Samaria. ***"He sent messengers ahead of Him. They went and entered a Samaritan village to make preparations for Him. But the people did not welcome Him, because He was determined to go to Jerusalem."***

The simple fact is **these Samaritans** SNUBBED Jesus. Learn well that FOLLOWING Jesus we will run into **opposition**. Jesus tells us, ***"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first."***

FAITHFULLY **following** Jesus we will meet opposition **1)**from the world and **2)**from our **sinful natures**. Jesus calls us to BE FAITHFUL to **all** of His Word. Nobody has the right to IGNORE or CHANGE **anything** in God's Word. The 10 Commandments remain DIRECT ORDERS from God on **how we are to live** every minute and every part of our lives. We must condemn all sins against the commandments – EVEN IF **society accepts** them as OK or they're **my own** PET SINS. We must condemn all false doctrines – ANYTHING that is not in or that goes against God's Word. We must condemn the false doctrine NO MATTER WHO **teaches** or **believes** it. We dare not compromise God's Word TO AVOID **opposition** or to be more popular.

HOW are we to handle opposition? **James** and John asked, ***"Lord, do You want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?"*** We must commend these two brothers for **some** things. **1)**BEFORE **they acted** they asked for Jesus' permission. **2)**They were concerned about **Jesus' honor**. These **Samaritans** had no right to TREAT Jesus like that. They could well have served as an OBJECT LESSON for all people **about treating Jesus** like that.

"But Jesus rebuked them." FOLLOWING Jesus – will you accept **Jesus** REBUKING YOU? Our world isn't PERFECT and neither are **we**! We dare never forget that. For **example**, do you sometimes sit in church thinking, "I WISH SO-AND-SO was **here to hear** this" – but you don't need to hear it yourself? Or, "I hope YOU-KNOW-WHO is **paying attention**" – but you're not listening yourself?

Jesus rebuked James and John. NOW is the time of God's **grace**. God is ***"being patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*** Jesus had been very patient and forgiving with James and John. They were to show that same patience and **forgiveness** to others. God's final judgment will COME SOON ENOUGH.

Patience and **forgiveness** do not mean being STUPID. ***"Then they went to another village."*** One of the hard facts of **following Jesus** is that MANY WON'T FOLLOW Jesus. **Many** walk away from Jesus. They refuse to listen to Him. They won't accept His **rebukes**. They have ALL KINDS of **excuses** but the result is the same. They're NOT FOLLOWING Jesus.

To help us understand what it MEANS TO FOLLOW Jesus Luke provides **three** CASE HISTORIES. Each one has its **own lesson**. All three emphasize that…

II. Total commitment to the Lord's work is also needed.

CASE HISTORY #1. ***"As they went on the way, a man said to (Jesus), 'I will follow You wherever You go.'"*** This man volunteers to follow Jesus. Notice there were NO STRINGS attached. He didn't say, "**I will follow** You IF – or BUT FIRST…" ***"I will follow You WHEREVER You go."*** After seeing those **Samaritans reject** Jesus this man is a BREATH of fresh air! IF ONLY MORE were so willing to **follow Jesus**!

Jesus didn't accept – OR REJECT! – this man's offer. Instead Jesus replied, ***"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*** This man was ENTHUSIASTIC and IDEALISTIC. Jesus wanted him to be REALISTIC. Did he understand ALL that was **involved in following** Jesus? **Many say** they love Jesus – they believe in Jesus – they will follow Jesus but their ACTIONS – their LIVES SHOW – that their words are JUST THAT – words and **nothing more**. Jesus once said, ***"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven."***

Jesus reminded this man that He didn't even have a PLACE TO CALL HOME. Was **this man** THAT COMMITTED to **following Jesus** that he would do the same **if necessary**?

Understand that we don't follow Him for EARTHLY COMFORTS or **human praise**. That's TRUE for whatever our work for the Lord is – **whether** we serve on a board – help out with a funeral dinner – teach our children – usher, etc. But let's apply this to a **church** and its **called workers** in particular.

God FORBIDS a congregation to treat its workers like SLAVE LABOR. **At the same time** God warns the workers about being greedy. The **ministry** is not about MAKING BIG BUCKS or **being appreciated**. The ministry is not about KEEPING UP with the Jones but with FOLLOWING Jesus. That calls for TOTAL COMMITMENT to **following Jesus** trusting that ***"the Lord will provide."***

CASE HISTORY #2. Jesus ***"said to another man, 'Follow Me!' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' Jesus told him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'"*** Jesus' words seem SO COLD and **cruel**. God calls on us to LOVE, **honor**, respect our parents. HOW can **Jesus refuse** to let this man go to his father's funeral? Jesus is really pushing this TO THE EXTREME!

Jesus, **we know**, can read a person's heart. Jesus saw in this **man's request** an EXCUSE – an ATTEMPT TO AVOID **following** Him. We are to love our **families** – but NOT MORE than we **love Jesus**. We have GOD-GIVEN RESPONSIBILITIES to our **families**. But family dare never COME BETWEEN God and us. That's IDOLATRY!

CASE HISTORY #3. Another man volunteers to **follow** Jesus but WITH A CONDITION. ***"First let me say good-bye to those at my home."*** His request sounds reasonable enough. **Again**, Jesus emphasizes TOTAL COMMITMENT. ***"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*** Jesus' point is EASY ENOUGH to understand. You can't plow decently if you **keep looking back**. If you're constantly looking back you're NOT CONCENTRATING on **where you're heading**.

That can be a REAL DANGER and HINDRANCE for a **congregation** or **worker**. We can learn from **our past** but we can't live in the past. We must focus on **where** WE ARE NOW and **where** we WANT TO GO. ***"Looking back"*** can also express regret over what you've **left behind** – an UNWILLINGNESS to really give up what you've left behind. TAKE A WORKER as an example. It can be really hard for a **pastor/teacher** to leave a congregation he has **grown to love** – to go to people he really doesn't know. **At the same time** it can be hard for a **congregation** to SAY GOOD-BYE to their **beloved** pastor/teacher and WELCOME a total stranger into their **hearts** and **lives**. But JESUS CALLS US to do **just that**! And rather than ***"looking back"*** to **what we've left** Jesus calls us to MOVE FORWARD in following and serving Him in His kingdom.

Jesus has some strong words for us here. **Perhaps** He's SHOCKED us some. That's good! That **means** Jesus got our attention – He HAS US THINKING. Jesus wants us to CLEARLY UNDERSTAND what it means to follow Him. Amen.

NICENE CREED