

NO TIME TO WASTE

Luke 9:51-62
Yeshua §§97-98

A few months ago, my sweet wife woke me up with the news that water was falling from the garage ceiling. I jumped out of bed and hustled out to the garage to find water dripping from the ceiling and a growing wet spot in the ceiling drywall. Immediately I went to work trying to find the leak. I climbed into the attic but couldn't get a good view. I cut a hole in the ceiling and finally found the leak: a pin hole in the water filtration tubing. I turned

the supply off and stopped the leak but by this time there was water all over the floor. It was under the wall and under the floor cabinets so I sucked up the water with the shop vac. Mind you, I was doing all this with bedhead hair, dragon breath, in shorts that do not adequately protect the world from this middle-aged body. I hadn't showered. I hadn't had my morning mug of tea or my quiet time. All really good things. But the need at hand trumped all those good things. It was urgent I stop the leak and minimize the damage. Urgent needs force us to prioritize and focus on what really needs doing.

As we follow the story of our Lord there is definitely a sense of urgency in the passage before us. It is fall, 29AD, three years into Jesus' public ministry. Jesus must leave the safety of Galilee for the dangers of Jerusalem in order to observe the Feast of Booths. Jewish leadership want to kill Him (Jn. 7:30). After His brothers leave, Jesus follows, but privately. This may explain why He takes the road less traveled through Samaria.

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JESUS REFUSED HOSPITALITY BY A SAMARITAN VILLAGE

LUKE 9:51-56

51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations

for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village.

Verse 51 gives us an important temporal marker – the time of Jesus’ death is fast approaching. The Feast of Booths is celebrated in August-September. Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection fulfill the prophetic significance of the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits celebrated in April. Jesus will be crucified on Passover, 30AD. Jesus has six months left. That’s it. This is the reason for the urgent tone that expresses itself in the next paragraph.

Rather than take the more common road east of the Jordan River, Jesus decides to take the central road through the territory of the Samaritans. Jews and Samaritans did not like each other. Samaritans descended from the intermarriage of Jews and of gentiles who were imported into the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The Jews considered Samaritans half-breeds. The Samaritans developed their own version of Judaism. They only accepted the first five books of Moses as inspired Scripture. On Mt. Gerizim they built a rival temple to the Jerusalem Temple. The Samaritans were every bit as anti-Semitic as Jews were anti-Samaritan.

Because Jesus and His group were traveling towards Jerusalem, they were refused hospitality by a Samaritan village. They may also have been denied passage through Samaria. The Jewish historian Josephus tells us the Samaritans generally allowed Jews to pass through their territory if traveling south to north, *away from Jerusalem and the Temple*. Passage was often denied Jews traveling north to south *towards Jerusalem and the Temple*.

Jesus is denied hospitality, not because of His messianic claims, but because He’s headed to Jerusalem.

The more significant issue is the reaction of James and John. They want to use the spiritual power entrusted them by Jesus to “nuke” the offending village. Perhaps they drew inspiration from the great prophet Elijah who “called down” fire from heaven on Mt. Carmel.¹ It is a very important training moment for the disciples. As I picture the scene, Jesus stops walking, turns and faces James and John and rebukes them sternly. The spiritual power given them is for signs and

¹ 1 Kings 18

wonders to validate their witness that Jesus is the Messiah. To use it for any other purpose is unacceptable. Particularly here in an instance where they are motivated by anti-Samaritanism, not the rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

The proper response is to forgive² and claim God's promise to avenge all wrongdoing.

ROMANS 12:19 (ESV)

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Forgiving and claiming God's promise releases us to love and do good to our enemies.

Bottom line, vengeful violence has no place in a disciple's life.

Whether they went to another Samaritan village or were forced east across the Jordan River, we don't know. What we do know is that as they walked to Jerusalem, several men approached Jesus expressing the desire to be His disciple. We must keep in mind that in addition to the twelve apostles, there were other disciples attached to Jesus.

By definition, a disciple is a "learner". Another term is "apprentice". In Jewish rabbi-disciple relationships a rabbi invited select men to be his disciple. The disciple then attached himself to the rabbi 24/7/365 to learn from and serve his master until he became a rabbi himself.

Jesus is a rabbi. He has many disciples in addition to the twelve Apostles. The Apostles and other disciples live with Jesus 24/7/365. A disciple traveled with Jesus wherever He went. To be Jesus' disciple in this manner is no longer available to us.

Over the course of three days walking to Jerusalem, Jesus talked with at least three different men who expressed a desire to be His disciple. When Jesus invited these men to be His disciples, He was inviting them to join Him on the road right then and there. If they were pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the Feast, then they already had their bedrolls, change of clothes and necessities. As verse 51 indicates, Jesus' time is short. His call is urgent and radical. If a man wants to become Jesus' disciple at this point on Jesus' timeline, that man needs to join Jesus lock, stock and barrel. They need to be all in right then and there. Jesus has only six months with them so He doesn't have time to waste.

² Release to God the desire or actions taken to avenge ourselves upon the offender, trusting God's promise to avenge all wrong doing.

We pick up the story in Luke 9:57.

LUKE 9:57-62 (ESV)

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “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.”

This first man had not realistically counted the cost. If he followed Jesus, he would not be guaranteed even the most basic of comforts like sleeping indoors. Case in point: Jesus had just been denied hospitality in Samaria.

59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Jesus saw something in this man and invited him to be his disciple. The man wants to delay his start date. It reads like the man’s father had just died, but most likely his father was alive. According to rabbinic teaching, the firstborn son is required to stay with his father until his father’s death. After his father’s death, the son is to stay close to his father’s grave and recite *Kaddish* for eleven months and a day.³ Then, he is free to go his own way.

Jesus has six months. The time is now. Proclaiming the kingdom of God with Jesus is a higher priority than burying one’s father. Unbelievers, the spiritually dead, can fulfill the duty to bury the physically dead, but unbelievers cannot do the more important work of proclaiming the kingdom of God. This man does not share Jesus’ urgency nor does he yet have the right priorities.

Jesus interacted with a third man.

61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” 62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

³ Remarkably, the Mourner’s Kaddish does not mention death, nor make any reference to the deceased. It is directed, instead, at the living.

The Kaddish affirms G-d’s justice and speaks of the value of life. It states that G-d is the Creator of the world and that He rules it. Kaddish also states that there will be an Era of Mashiach, when all illness and suffering will cease, and requests that this time be ushered in during our lifetime.

Further, it praises G-d’s name and describes His glory, and petitions G-d to give His people “abundant peace, grace, kindness, compassion, long life, ample sustenance and deliverance, to those who occupy themselves with the Torah, and to all of Israel.”
https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/371079/jewish/What-Is-Kaddish.htm

What the man wanted to do was not a bad thing, but it was out of sync with what Jesus needed.⁴ Again, Jesus has six months to train new disciples. He needs them to be fully focused and fully committed right now. A man with a divided heart won't do as a disciple under these circumstances.

These three men did not become Jesus' disciples. They were believers in Jesus. The things they wanted were not wrong. But the imminence of Jesus' death required new disciples to be especially focused and completely committed in order to glean all they can from Jesus in the next six months. These men were not able to be that focused and committed.

How does this passage relate to us today?

We've shown that being Jesus' disciples in the manner of the text is not possible for us today. We cannot "go on the road" with Jesus 24/7/365 today.

Hopefully we better understand Jesus' responses to each of these men given the circumstances. Hopefully this clears up erroneous ideas like, if you love your family and want to be with them, you can't be a committed disciple of Jesus. Or, if you take care of your ailing mother or father, you can't be a committed disciple of Jesus.

It seems to me, the take away for us today has to do with "counting the cost". "Counting the cost" means we realistically identify what Jesus requires of us and whether or not we are willing to do it. We're not talking about moral issues such as lying, stealing, or sexual conduct. With regard to moral issues, we are always to obey the Law of Messiah. "Counting the cost" refers to the life conditions, skills and activities required of us to fully follow Jesus in our particular life circumstances.

Let's say you're interested in serving Jesus as a missionary. Counting the cost requires you to identify what is required of you to make disciples cross-culturally. Will you need to attend Bible college? Will you need to learn a language? You will need to learn how to disciple others in Christ. Do you have the faith to trust God to meet your financial needs? Will you be able to leave family and friends and live in a foreign culture? Will you be able to adapt to the food, housing, culture? It may be that in counting the cost you conclude that you are not able or willing to accomplish certain of the requirements. If so, then the process has accomplished its purpose. You can now put your energies into serving Jesus in a life situation

⁴ Elisha was allowed to go home and kiss his father and mother goodbye before following Elijah as his disciple (1 Kings 19:19-21).

and ministry the requirements of which you are able to fulfill. But let's say you work through a realistic understanding of what is required and you are willing to put in the effort and make the sacrifices necessary. Think about how much better prepared you will be for the ministry and for the difficult challenges you will experience.

The example I gave can be applied to any number of life pursuits including vocational ministry in our own culture and the more typical, normal life of marriage, family, career and service in our local church. In all these life pursuits we can be fully committed followers of Jesus if we are doing those things necessary not only for continued spiritual growth, but we are also doing those things necessary to increase our skills in our service for Jesus in our homes, our churches and our communities.