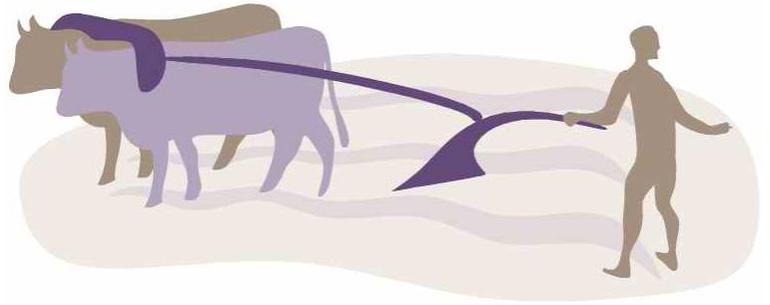


June 26, 2016

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 9:51-62



51 When the days for his being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, 52 and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, 53 but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” 55 Jesus rebuked them, 56 and they journeyed to another village.

57 As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 Jesus answered him, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nets, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”

59 And to another he said, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, let me go first and bury my father.” 60 But he answered him, “let the dead bury their dead. But you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

61 And another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.” 62 To him Jesus said, “No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Background

In the gospel text from last week, (Luke 9:18-24) Jesus asked the disciples who they thought he was. Peter’s reply was that he believed Jesus to be the “Christ of God.” In the 26 verses between the end of last week’s gospel and the beginning of this week’s text, Jesus begins to reveal to them the truth of what it means to be the Christ of God. He will be rejected by the leaders, he will be killed, and he will rise on the third day. As disciples, they are privileged with this information that they are not to reveal to others. Following that text in Luke, Jesus begins to indicate the kind of commitment his disciples must be willing to make. Next, Luke presents his description of the Transfiguration. After that, coming down the mountain, Jesus encounters a man whose son is possessed by a demon. Jesus heals the boy. While the disciples are still amazed by what has happened, Jesus predicts a second time that he will be handed over, and he talks again about the nature of what it will take to be his disciple. Throughout these verses, Jesus is letting the disciples come to a clearer understanding of his true mission, and of what he expects of them. This teaching continues through the text for this week, and through the next ten chapters of Luke’s gospel, until Jesus finally enters Jerusalem in Chapter 19. The first verse of the text for this week states emphatically that Jesus’ journey and life are headed to Jerusalem. This is as much a spiritual journey as geographical. The disciples, as Jesus’ inner circle, are being invited to join him.

Key to appreciating the gospel text is understanding the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time, an animosity with a 700-year history. About 721 BC the Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom, Israel. Many people were deported, and aliens resettled the Jewish land. Many of the Jews who remained eventually intermarried with these aliens. When the Jews returned from captivity 200 years later, they were angry that those who were able to remain in their homeland were not faithful to their Jewish traditions. They had intermarried, and therefore had become unclean. Because they were unclean, the Samaritans were forbidden to help in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, the Samaritans built their own temple to Yahweh on Mount Gerizim. Hostility and disagreement about proper worship of Yahweh interlaces the relationship between Judeans and Samaritans.

During Passover about the year 6 A.D., some Samaritans desecrated the temple in Jerusalem by throwing bones throughout the temple. About 45 years later, Samaritans from the village of Gema murdered a pilgrim on the way to Jerusalem for Passover. Some Judeans responded by burning the village to the ground and killing its inhabitants.

In Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples not to even enter the Samaritan towns. (Mt 10:5) Luke portrays Jesus' attitude toward the Samaritans in a much different light. Jesus rebukes the two disciples who would destroy the Samaritan town in today's text. Luke's gospel has Jesus telling the parable of the "Good Samaritan." The Samaritan leper who returns to thank Jesus for being cured is NOT told to make the customary offering in the Temple of Jerusalem. Luke has intentionally moved toward a more reconciling Jesus.

In the last six verses of today's gospel, it might seem as if Jesus is discouraging those who would become his disciples. A more fruitful perspective would be that Jesus wants those who would follow him to know that their first commitment is to be his follower, and no other commitment or allegiance can precede that of being his follower. By not naming the three would-be followers, Luke invites his readers to reflect on their own commitment to discipleship.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever found yourself to be part of some conflict because of things you have no control over, like your place of birth, nationality, or native language?
2. Are there groups of people or individuals that you find difficult to respect? Do you have reasons to justify your behavior? How is your circumstance different than that of the Judeans and the Samaritans?
3. Do you ever feel like you have a way of looking at the world, and others, and your own life, that others do not appreciate or even perceive?
4. When are you at your best as a disciple? When are you the worst?
5. Do you recall a time when you chose a course of action because you were a disciple of Christ?
6. Do you know people who are content to be admirers of Christ rather than disciples? What are they missing?

Reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel.

