

WELCOME 30th March 2025 – 4th SUNDAY IN LENT '25 C

Luke 9:18-27 & Psalm 115:1-8 & 11-15

Welcome! What a blessing to be together again today! With your worship order you have in your hands *Bible Study Qs/Growing Praise* handouts... Those are provided to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

As we move into this week... In 563AD, **Columba**, an **Irish** missionary set sail for **Scotland** w/ 12 other followers of Jesus across the **north** channel of the Irish Sea in wicker boats wrapped in animal hides. Their aim was to bring the gospel of Jesus to the pagan Scottish tribes...the Picts.

Once they arrived in Scotland they quickly built a base from which to launch their mission, scouted the local terrain & determined how their journeys would progress. Columba knew their work would be difficult, dangerous & perhaps fruitless ending in their deaths...so he did the one thing he knew to do to make sure he & the other 12 stayed the course: He **burned** their boats. There was only forward...no going home, no come back another time...only the mission of God they had prayerfully accepted. They took Jesus seriously: **"Anyone who puts a hand to the plough & then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."** There would be no looking back...Scotland would come to Jesus in their lifetimes...or they would die in the effort. Jesus won!

WE are **THEIR** descendants, whether we have any Irish blood in us or not, because like them in baptism & in our daily affirmations of faith in Jesus, we too have only the mission of God to guide us, only the power of the risen Christ to protect us, & only the wisdom of the Spirit to help us live in faithful obedience to our call. Like Paul told the church in Rome: **So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, & walking-around life, & place it before God as an offering.** – Rom 12:1-2 MSG Jesus calls us to submit our entire lives to his will & way in this world...to trust him not only for the eternal but also the immediate...especially the mission at hand.

Christ calls us to join him in Christ-shaped living
that leads to Christlike submission to the Father's will in all things.

Let's pray...then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Jesus, you called us, to follow you & so love others that you would be unmistakable in our lives. We want to do that well, but too often look back & around at how others live & what we give up to be faithful to you. Speak to us again today. Reassure us of your provision & care in all things. Give us the confidence that your way is better at all times & nothing we lose here is greater than what you give. Through you Lord Jesus we pray...Amen!

LET'S SING & THEN HEAR GOD'S WORD...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What's harder for you to "give up" comfort or convenience? Why?
2. What would be the hardest "call" you could receive from God?
How do you think you'd respond?

4th SUNDAY IN LENT '25 C – WHOLE-HEARTED SUBMISSION

Sometimes you see something...& you just know...& I want you to see it too so please grab either your Bibles or the worship folders so you can look at the actual text of Lk 9 ...*This is why you need your Bible w/ you in worship EVERY SUNDAY...so you can read along & make notes & stuff...*Last week we heard Jesus say to his disciples & the crowds who flocked to him: **If** any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way (deny yourself), take up your cross daily, & follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." - Lk 9:23-24 Jesus makes clear life is not a multiple choice exam...a spiritual buffet line where you can have some of this or that or not... Abundant Life Hope Joy Fulfillment Salvation Triumph over sin, death, evil are in him alone...crucified, risen & ruling. Jesus invites us to bet our lives on him...for him to be our line-in-the-sand stake-in-the-ground firmly held non-negotiable belief that sets the pattern & purpose for our lives. God then makes that same point abundantly clear & on the mountain declares of Jesus: *"This is My beloved Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (obey – yield)*

A few verses later Jesus casts out a demon, frees a young boy from oppression & danger & demonstrates yet again his authority over all things & we read: **Awe** gripped the people as they saw this majestic display of God's power. While everyone was marvelling at everything Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, "Listen to me & remember what I say. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies." But they didn't know what he meant. - Lk 9:43-45 Today we began w/ **As** the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for (set his face toward) Jerusalem. set his face like flint...got his game face on

While the disciples/crowds don't quite understand, Jesus is locked onto his journey to Jerusalem. There is nothing else in his sights except his on-going mission from the Father to suffer, die, rise, & reign so that the stranglehold sin/death/evil one have on us is broken once for all & forever **AND** our relationship w/ the Father is healed & restored. **AND...AND...**His dying & rising draw all who believe into that same life of sacrificial love, costly forgiveness, unlimited generosity, unimaginable hospitality, & radical oneness among his people: | | Immediately Lk records what scholars call a "lived parable" of the great divide b/t the way of the world & the way of Jesus...**Jesus** sent messengers ahead to a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival. But the people of the village did not welcome Jesus because he was on his way to Jerusalem.

They reject him. One way the world deals w/ Jesus is to reject him...reject his claim to be God, reject his offer of healing/restoration, reject his unique/universal sacrifice on our behalf...& the excuses are endless. You've heard 'em. Maybe used 'em yourself...too busy...too much \$\$...don't trust pastors...judgmental...irrelevant...

On his way to Jerusalem... just means this village is still nursing the old Jew/Samaritan grudge that's hundreds of years old & that Jesus has already proven is irrelevant. But you've seen that...someone who hasn't been part of a disciples' community in generations can always tell a "bad church" story. How some pastor or some church person hurt their feelings, wouldn't do an underwater wedding, asked for a special offering & they vowed to never set foot in a church again...*so there!* One way the world deals w/ Jesus is to reject him...say "no" to his offer of rescue & restoration healing & forgiveness abundant life hope peace & joy...any excuse will do. They reject him.

Part of me is sympathetic w/ James & John wanting to go all *"Sodom & Gomorrah"* on the village...How does the world respond to insults? injury? *"fire from heaven."* Fmr US Pres Obama used the expression, "Punch back twice as hard." That's where James/John stand...*But Jesus turned & rebuked them. So they went on to another village.* When you read the NT remember Jesus rebukes 2 things: demons & people who act like demons. The demonic forces we see in the NT always know who Jesus is & always try to shift him off his mission to save **AND** when the disciples or anyone else act like that (shift him off his mission) they receive the same rebuke. The way of Jesus is not revenge but loving self-denial...sacrifice...mercy to sinners...

As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, & birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head." Someone looks at Jesus w/ rose-coloured glasses – a starry-eyed optimist pledges undying loyalty to Jesus. Like tent-revival conversions, youth camp sinners prayers, & TV evangelist promises of health & prosperity... The world sees Jesus through unreasonable expectations. It's going to be great! I'm going to do all things through Christ who strengthens me...following Jesus is awesome! ...Until it isn't...Impulsiveness isn't discipleship: | |

Oddly enough Peter, James & John all make similar promises...Peter on the night of Jesus' death pledges his life alongside only to deny & depart in the final hours. James & John, angling for seats of honour @ the kingdom table assure Jesus they can endure the suffering he will...but they have no idea. Here again, Jesus' answer gives the true picture...Following Jesus is no ticket to the good life. Foxes' dens & birds' nests are where they run from danger, hide from predators & heal from any woundedness. Jesus offers no such defense from the hatred of an unbelieving world. The family of Jesus is not a place of starry-eyed optimism...but genuine hope that grows only from Jesus' suffering death & resurrection. *Try to save your life...but give it up for my sake...*

Jesus said to another person, "Come, follow me." The man agreed, but he said, "Lord, first let me return home & bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead! As for you; go & preach about the Kingdom of God." Scholars suggest that this

ambivalent potential disciple has not got dad in a coffin just yet but is really waiting until a convenient time to cast his lot w/ Jesus...maybe w/ a pocketful of inheritance. We don't know *HIS* reasons but we know Jesus will not be anyone's fallback option or Plan B if other things don't turn out pleasantly. There is an urgency to Jesus' call. If we trust Jesus for our eternity then trust him for today: | | illness gift op for witness

Another said, "Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family." But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plough & then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God." In Deuteronomy 20...Moses tells God's people how to fight the battles they'll encounter after they're living in the land God will give them. Once they're settled, other nations will be jealous of how God has made them flourish & will try to take from them what God has given. His instructions are simple. Assemble the armies of God's people & have the Priest come forward & say, 'Listen to me, all you men of Israel! Do not be afraid as you go out to fight your enemies today! Do not lose heart or panic or tremble before them. For the LORD your God is going w/ you! He will fight for you against your enemies, & he will give you victory!' Do not be afraid...God is in control.

Then Moses says, Get the generals out here to say **IF**...engaged but not married, crop but not harvested, house but not dedicated it or scared...go home. Why excuse part of your army from combat? If they're too busy looking over their shoulders at what they've left behind they're a hindrance not a help. The battlefield is no place for 2nd-guessing...The mission Christ has entrusted to his church, to make disciples who make more disciples...to saturate the culture w/ Christ-shaped living is too important too life-transforming & too great an eternal gift to be wasted in maybe/maybe not living. We don't have a Spirit of timidity but power love & self-control

A few years back I introduced you to Wilbur Rees' \$3 worth of God. "I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please." That is **EVERYTHING** we just read in Lk 9. That's how the world sees Jesus...if it doesn't reject him outright.

Contrast that w/ CS Lewis: "Christ says, "Give me **ALL**. I don't want so much of your time & so much of your money & so much of your work: I want **YOU**. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good...Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked--the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you **MYSELF**: my own will shall become yours." In other words...burn your boats & get on w/ what Christ has called his people to be & do.

In our baptism & in our daily affirmations of faith in Jesus, we too have only the mission of God to guide us, only the power of the risen Christ to protect us, & only the wisdom of the Spirit to help us live in faithful obedience to our call. Like Paul told the church in Rome: **So** here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, & walking-around life, & place it before God as an offering. – Rom 12:1-2 MSG Jesus calls us to submit our entire lives to his will & way in this world...to trust him not only for the eternal but also for today, the immediate...especially the mission at hand. *Anyone who puts a hand to the plow & looks back...*

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As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

TAKE IT HOME

What in you still needs to be whole-heartedly submitted to Jesus?

How will that begin to take shape this week?

(Be specific...How will this take shape in you?)

Let's pray together...

Prayer after the sermon...

Father prepare me for whatever you require today and lead me in faith wherever you call me to go.

In Jesus' Name...Amen.