

SERMON FOR JUNE 30, 2019

TEXT: LUKE 9:57-62

THEME: GO, PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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."

In the name of Jesus:

Do you remember playing "Hide & Seek" when you were a child? You would close your eyes and count to a hundred if you were "it" while all the other kids would run and hide. And then when you reached a hundred, you would yell, "Ready or not, here I come!"

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem whether they were ready or not. For thousands of years, the Jewish people had been counting the passing days thinking they were ready for his coming, and then when he came they ran to hide and never really came out to welcome him.

Many rejected Jesus. Today, we read and hear about Jesus entering the region of Samaria, a territory and people hostile to the Jews. This hostility didn't bother Jesus, for His face, as we see, was set towards Jerusalem. He was intent on reaching Jerusalem, a place where He would be despised, rejected, scorned, whipped, and crucified. Jesus did this so that you would be His child.

But, why, is the question! For what purpose has God done all of this for you? In fact, why would God do anything for you? Why does He bless you with life and breath? Why does He give you all that you have, your family, your job, the house you live in, and all of your possessions? God has done this, as the Catechism states, purely out of Fatherly grace and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. God didn't have to create the world; He did so, though, out of love. God doesn't have to bless you, He desires; He wants to bless you, for He loves you with an everlasting love. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 136: "for his steadfast love endures forever." The continual theme in Psalm 136, in fact, the continuing theme throughout all of Scripture, is that God is a God of love. He loves His creation and He loves you with an everlasting love. His love never ends.

The Lord who created you also purchased you with a price. The Lord says: "He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel, says "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine." You and I are in need of redemption because we have not lived nor loved God in the manner that He desires. Like the Samaritans in our text, we too, have rejected God, by failing to trust in Him above all things, during those times when we half- heartedly participate in

worship, and in those times we selfishly live for ourselves without a regard for those around us. Each of us have acted and lived in ways where we have not shown our faith or love for God. But God is not deterred. In love He sent His Son Jesus, so that in Jesus we might become the prized possession of God.

The whole purpose of Jesus' life and ministry is summed up in the words of Jesus in our Gospel lesson where we read that as the days grew closer to Jesus' death, He, Jesus, set his face to go to Jerusalem. Jesus was bound and determined in His mission to seek and save the lost. Jesus' determination to go to the cross was not well received by the people, and in response, James and John wanted to bring down the fire of judgment and condemnation upon those who didn't give Jesus the welcome that they thought that He deserved. But Jesus rebuked them, because He came not to damn sinners but to save them.

Jesus came to save sinners! That is the Good News that God has for you and me and the entire world. But this message is not well received by the world; in fact, it is a message that is considered scandalous. Some don't think that they are sinful, and others think that if they are sinful, at least they are not as bad when compared with another person. The vast majority of the world, though, thinks that it is

downright silly to believe in Jesus. After all, they think, how can the death of someone 2000 years ago benefit me to today? Who can believe in a religion where The Father sends His Son to die on a cross?

And yet the Bible tells us that this is exactly the way God saves sinners, For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For this is the glorious Good News that God has for you and the world, that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

God has saved you in a powerful way, by the death and resurrection of Jesus. And God today comes to you in simple yet powerful ways to save you! He comes by means of His Word, for as Jesus says, He who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has eternal life, for He has not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.

God gives you new life in the waters of your Baptism for in Baptism we were buried with Him into death, so that we might rise to live new lives to the glory of God. Baptism is not just plain simple water alone, but it is a saving life giving water, which washes away sin and gives salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. God has not only

washed away your sins, but He comes to you offering to you the Supper to assure you that you are forgiven and to strengthen you for the life that God now gives you to live.

The life God gives you to live is now to be lived under the cross. Following Jesus means carrying a cross, indeed, carrying many crosses in your life. Jesus says: "If anyone would come after Me, let Him deny Himself and take up His cross and follow Me."

Jesus doesn't want fans. He wants followers. Jesus wants people who will do more than simply sit in a pew and clap and cheer. He wants people who will take up a cross daily, the cross of service and love.

Rich Stearns was one who wanted to follow Jesus, at all costs. He had to learn how to do that, though. When he was a young man and new Christian, he got engaged. His fiancée like many young brides wanted to register for china at the local department store. But he said to her, "As long as there are children starving in the world, we will not own china, crystal, or silver."

However, as Rich entered the corporate world and started climbing the ladder, he found he had a really good head for business. He was president of the game company, Parker Brothers, the makers of

Monopoly, and then became the CEO of Lennox--ironically, the top producer of luxury tableware--fine china--in the country.

One day Rich received a phone call from an organization called World Vision, asking if he would consider getting involved with them. So Rich went to Uganda, an area considered ground zero for the AIDS pandemic. In that village he sat in a thatched hut with a thirteen-year-old boy with the same first name as his--Richard. A pile of stones outside the door of the hut marked where they had buried Richard's father, who had died of AIDS. Another pile of stones marked where they buried his mother, who also died of AIDS. That kind of thing happens every day in Africa.

Rich was cut to the heart at the suffering he saw but he was most moved when he asked young Richard--now the head of the household trying to raise his two younger brothers—if he had a Bible. The boy said yes and went back to the other room and brought the Bible to Stearns. Stearns asked the boy if he could read the Bible, and the boy's face lit up as he replied, "I love to read the gospel of John because it says Jesus loves children. "

After that conversation, Rich Stearns became serious about his walk with Jesus, wanting to not be fan of Jesus but a follower. He

understood life was more than fine china or leading a large company. He earnestly desired to follow Christ by actively living out his faith, doing whatever he could to help others who were afflicted by poverty and injustice. He resigned from Lennox and became involved in World Vision, that same organization that asked him on that trip to Africa, eventually becoming its president. And even though he retired last year, Stearns is still determined to change the world for Christ.

That is what followers of Jesus do. That is why Jesus sent His disciples, and you and me, with the imperative to: “Go, and proclaim the Kingdom of God.” God may not be sending you to Africa, but He has placed you here, in this time and this place, and He says to you: “Go, proclaim the Kingdom of God.” How might you do that, what might that look like in your life, today, this week, and throughout your life? God doesn’t want you to be a fan, He invites you to follow Him, at whatever the cost, because, you see, Jesus has made you His own, that you might live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in love forever.

Amen.