

**Pentecost 6**  
**July 21 & 22, 2019**  
**Luke 9:51-62**

We were sitting in the plane returning home after we visited our son and his wife in San Jose, California. There we sat on the tarmac waiting for the flight crew to close the doors in San Jose, California. The plane was full, and it looked like everyone was on the plane. But there we sat wondering what they were waiting for. After about 15 – 20 minutes the captain came on the speakers and said what the problem was. The plane was overweight, so they were doing some more calculations. They hoped to have this straightened out in a couple of minutes. In my mind, the thought of a plane being overweight didn't sound like a good thing. Plane flying too heavy just didn't sound like it was something we would want to do. After a minute or two, the flight attendant called the names of two passengers to grab their stuff and come up to come off the plane. A few minutes later, the captain said that they had gotten it all figured out and now we were good to go. (First, I thought how could two people make a difference on a 737? Secondly, I felt bad for the two individual who were called off the plane.) If the captain was going to fly this plane, he wanted to be totally committed that everything was the way it was supposed to be. Shrugging his shoulders and thinking that it might be okay, just didn't seem like a good thing. I appreciate him being all in to fly the plane.

When we landed and made a connection in Phoenix, our connecting flight to Milwaukee was late. We ended up waiting for the connecting plane to arrive at the gate. When it got in, the airline got the arriving passengers off as fast as they could. They loaded us on as fast as they could. However, by now, we were close to an hour behind schedule. Once again, everyone was on the plane, and there we sat waiting. After a little while, the captain came on the speakers and said that someone on the ground crew had noticed a dent on the outside of our plane. So, they were waiting to have a maintenance crew to come and check it out. In a bit, the captain announced that the dent had already been noticed at another airport. It was inspected, and it was certified to be completely airworthy, just as they had done now again. Again, a dent on a plane flying at 40,000 feet didn't sound like a good idea. If this captain was going to fly this plane, he wanted to be fully committed that the plane was okay to fly. Shrugging his shoulders and thinking that it might be okay, just didn't seem like a good thing. I appreciated him being all in to fly the plane.

This morning, in our text, we are reminded that following Jesus calls for total commitment. Following Christ leaves no room for vengeance, self-preservation or wrong priorities. Let's see that as we take a look at the three different groups of people that Jesus encounters while on the way to Jerusalem to give his life for the sins of the world. As you may know, Jews and Samaritans did not get along with each other. In fact, they hated each other. If most Jews were traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem, they would take a 50 mile walk to go around Samaria. But not Jesus. He goes right down the middle. Why? He wanted the people of Samaria to also know about his work of salvation. He didn't come to just save the Jews. He came to save the world. Luke tells us that as he approached a Samaritan village **“he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem.”** They didn't want Jesus. If he is going to Jerusalem, then why would they even bother to listen to him. Jesus had faced rejection before, but this seemed unthinkable to the Sons of Thunder, James and John. They were furious. Luke writes: **“When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?”** They were convinced that if Jesus was who he said he was, then they could call down fire from heaven as Elijah had done at Mount Carmel. They wanted revenge. But following Jesus does not leave room for vengeance. He simply went on to another village.

As they continue on, Luke tells us. **“As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”** The reaction of Jesus is puzzling, isn't? Isn't this the reason that Jesus came? He wanted people to follow him. Why would Jesus seem to blow this man off? Why would he say: **“Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”** It was common for people to follow whoever was popular at the time. If their popularity faded, then they would simply stop following and go on to the next big thing. In some ways, you could say that following Jesus was really about self-preservation. As long as following Jesus benefited him, then he would follow. If Jesus was no longer a benefit for him, he would fade away. Jesus could see this man's heart. He wanted this man to know what it meant to follow him. *Do you understand what it means to follow me? This is not a red carpet, lap of luxury kind of situation. When it comes to living arrangements, you realize that the woodland creatures have far nicer*

*amenities than I do, right? Do you still want to follow me, even if it means dropping all your worldly comfort and earthly sense of security?* Following Jesus calls for total commitment and has no room for self-preservation.

The last two people that Jesus encounters, he wanted them to know that total commitment has no room for wrong priorities. **“But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”** Sounds kind of tough, doesn’t it? Let’s take a closer look at what they are asking of Jesus. When a person would die, usually he would be buried as quickly as possible for obvious reasons. The body would be placed in a cave and allowed to decay. After the body decayed far enough, the bones would be removed and put into a much smaller box to be buried. The whole process could take a year or two. We are not told if this man’s father had even died yet. Jesus is not asking him to disrespect his family. Jesus is simply saying to him: *Friend, let someone else take of the customs. The demands of the Kingdom are urgent now.*

The second person: **“Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”** I have never plowed a field. But I have cut plenty of grass. If you want to take care of the task in front of you, you can’t keep looking back. If you are looking back always, you can’t see where you are going. You may hit the tree, the fence, the rocks, everything in front of you. Following Jesus calls for total commitment and it has no room for wrong priorities.

If you look at this text, you can’t help but draw the conclusion that this following Jesus is pretty impossible. There is not a person alive, who hasn’t ever had a thought of revenge in their heart when someone has hurt them. When we follow someone, we want something to benefit us. We struggle with priorities every day. So, how can we follow Jesus with total commitment?

We follow the one who was totally committed to us. He will judge, and we don’t have to worry about it because what he did in Jerusalem at the cross. Jesus preserves us because we are precious to him. He kept the priority of carrying assigned to him by his Father. Jesus comes and he gives you...what? Not part, not some, but all, his whole self, body and blood for your forgiveness. Jesus is committed to you, and he proves it with the cross!

I’m glad that the captains of the two planes that we flew on last week, were committed to making sure the aircraft was safe to fly. I’m glad that Jesus has been fully committed to save me – to save you. When I fail to follow him with that same total commitment, I trust his forgiveness. With his help and with his power, let’s follow Jesus with total commitment to him. Amen.