

Our Commitment

June 26, 2022

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Some decisions demand complete commitment. Today, it seems like more and more, we're being confronted by decisions that surround our convictions. Do we really believe them or not? For instance, a recovering alcoholic needs to be able to say no to each and every urge for even one small drink of alcohol. An athlete is confronted with their decision and commitment to train and practice so that they might successfully compete. Even if it takes many years to do so...

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus had ***"set His face to go to Jerusalem."*** It was, as we heard, close to the time when He would be taken up. He was committed to the ministry of saving sinners even though He would be rejected and put to death before His resurrection. And yet, in doing so, today Jesus also showed His concern for people who would reject, delay, and half-heartedly respond to His call to be committed disciples. Why? Because Jesus is looking forward in time when all people might receive salvation. He's committed to the will of God the Father, knowing that He would suffer because of the sins of all mankind. In order that all who believe in Him might receive new life through His death and resurrection. So, He sends messengers ahead of Him to prepare people to receive Him and His Kingdom. But then again, not

everyone responds the way that you might expect. Because not everyone is looking forward in the same way.

You might recall some in Scripture that didn't look back. People like Abraham, Ruth, Mary, and Paul. Still, there were some who did look back and weren't so fortunate like Lot's wife, Ananias, and Sapphira. And yet others, who looked back and God continued to call them again, like David, Elijah, Elisha, and Peter.

Maybe the Samaritans too. They lived primarily between Galilee and Judea, they worshipped at Mt. Gerizim in Galilee instead of at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. They were descendants of the Northern Tribes of Israel, they believed that they were the only true descendants of Israel. Because their ancestors had kept the land, while many were deported to Babylon. And so, most likely they were already biased against Jesus' messengers when they came to prepare for Him as He made His way to Jerusalem. It shouldn't have been surprising that they were rejected.

And yet, the disciples, James and John, having already committed themselves to Jesus, became angry with the Samaritans and wanted revenge. They wanted the Samaritans to know who it was that they had rejected. They wanted the Samaritans to receive punishment for not receiving God's anointed One. So they asked Jesus, ***“Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”*** But it wasn't the time for judgment and Jesus rebuked them.

Even though they were committed to Jesus, if they wanted to move forward with Him in His mission, they still had a lot to learn. They needed to let go of their anger and resentment in order to move forward. And even though

they had professed their commitment to Jesus, some may have done so too quickly or with a self-serving intent. Still, Jesus forgives them, and us, for our shallow discipleship. And He calls us forward in mission with Him so that we might follow Him, even though doing so, brings with it a certain amount of restlessness. Jesus says in v.58, ***“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”***

There’s a cost that comes with commitment, especially when it comes to being a disciple. The commitment you make tests you. And there will be a time when you leave the comforts of home and move forward in faith. When that happens our lives can become interesting, fun, and also full of frustration in ways that can distract us from our discipleship in Jesus. Because even our polite concern for others can get in the way of following Jesus to a full life.

For instance, we might even want to attend a funeral of a parent. While this might be a high priority in anyone’s life, we need to remember that following Jesus is even more important. Because it’s also a matter of life and death itself. And, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, when we repent, He is gracious to forgive our often distracted, conditional discipleship. And yet, He replaces our dead-end goals with His life-sharing ministry so that we might move forward once again with a sense of urgency and focus in fulfilling the mission that He has given to us.

There was once a young man who was eager to fulfill his mission as a Christian. He took out a piece of paper and made a list of all the things that he would do. The things he would give up, the places he would go to share the Gospel, as well as the different areas of ministry that He might

enter. He was so excited that he took his list to the church and laid it on the altar. Surely, God would be pleased and he would feel overjoyed. But instead, he felt empty.

He went and took the list off the altar and went home. He added to his list. Later, he returned to the altar with a list that had even more things that he would and wouldn't do for God. Again, he didn't feel anything. So he went to see the pastor and asked for help. It was then that the pastor had him sign his name at the bottom of a blank piece of paper and put it on the altar. And when he did, it was then that his heart was overcome with a peace that surpasses all understanding.

You see, in order to accomplish our mission, we need to be open to what God decides is best for us to accomplish in our lives. So He sends us His Spirit, that we might follow Him and focus on our commitment to Him. That through a coordinated effort of plowing the fields of this world, the seeds of His Gospel would take root to bring about a rich harvest.

Some decisions demand complete commitment. Today, it seems like more and more that we're being confronted by decisions that surround our convictions. Do we really believe them or not? We can be tempted to make excuses, ask for delays, or simply look away from our Lord's call to be His disciples. And yet, as He looks forward to giving Himself totally to the ministry of our salvation, He reminds us to focus on our mission and look to the glory of His Kingdom to come. That one day, we might celebrate His victory and walk with those saints who have gone before us, as well as those who are yet to come.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.