



6/30/19 Luke 9: 51-62 & 1 Kgs. 19: 16b. 19-21

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

The call to community as we hear it from our Lord is the call to move away from the ordinary and proper places. Leave your father and mother. Let the dead bury the dead. Keep your hand on the plow and do not look back. Sell what you own, give the money to the poor and come follow me. The Gospels confront us with this persistent voice inviting us to move from where it is comfortable, from where we want to stay, from where we feel at home. Why is this so central? It is central because in voluntary displacement, we cast off the illusion of "having it together" and thus begin to experience our true condition, which is that we, like everyone else, are pilgrims on the way, sinners in need of grace. Through voluntary displacement, we counteract the tendency to become settled in a false comfort and to forget the fundamentally unsettled position that we share with all people. Voluntary displacement leads us to the existential recognition of our inner brokenness and thus brings us to a deeper solidarity with the brokenness of our fellow human beings. Community, as the place of compassion,

therefore always requires displacement. Pgs. 63-4.

Nouwen, Henri, et al. Compassion. NY. Image Books. 1983.

#### Lk. 9: 51-62

Lk. 9: <sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be **taken up**, he set his face to go to **Jerusalem**. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the **Samaritans** to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but they **did not receive him**, because his face was set toward **Jerusalem**. <sup>54</sup> When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to **command fire to come down from heaven** and consume them?" c <sup>55</sup> But he turned and **rebuked** them. <sup>56</sup> Then they **went on to another village**. <sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "**I will follow you** wherever you go." <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, "**Foxes** have holes, and **birds** of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has **nowhere** to lay his head." <sup>59</sup> To another he said, "**Follow me**." But he said, "Lord, **first let me go and bury my father**." <sup>60</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Let the **dead bury their own dead**; but as for you, **go and proclaim the kingdom of God**." <sup>61</sup> Another said, "I will **follow you**, Lord; but let me **first say farewell** to those at my home." <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a **hand to the plow and looks back** is fit for the **kingdom of God**."

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus once again invites those around him and us to follow him. Is there anything you want to do first before truly following Jesus?

**PRAYER:** Leader Jesus, you call me to follow you, and I really do want to do that. But!!!! I need to \_\_\_\_\_, I want to \_\_\_\_\_, and just let me take care of \_\_\_\_\_ first. So I find myself not very different from those you walked this earth with so many years ago. And another thing, how about all those people who are not doing your will? What do you want me to do about them? Ouch! I caught your look of "when will you ever get it" as I stumble along trying to get beyond my own limitations to love. Help me! Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN / KINGDOM OF GOD:** We now set off with material that is unique to Luke. A sense of urgency prevails. Jesus has set his face toward his destiny. He now glimpses the goal: God's kingdom.

*When was the last time you had the experience of clarity about a mission and had that sense of urgency about getting it started? How can this memory help you get into this scripture?*

**JERUSALEM:** Jerusalem was that place that claimed to know God and God's will. It had become a stumbling block for those who were looking for a larger understanding of God.

*Is there a 'Jerusalem' in your faith life?*

**DID NOT RECEIVE HIM:** The Samaritans were hostile towards the Jews for many historical reasons. Jesus, in his haste to get to Jerusalem, had to go through Samaria in order to shorten the trip. If Jesus had been heading to Samaria for his mission, the Samaritans would have welcomed him, but since he was going to the hated Jerusalem, they did not.

*Have you ever had such an experience where someone would have welcomed you on his or her own terms only? What did you do?*

**COMMAND FIRE FROM HEAVEN:** How dare they, you can hear the disciples roar. Nothing less than the Elijah like rebuke seemed appropriate.

*Have you ever found yourself wanting to destroy those who were impeding your progress toward your goal?*

**REBUKED:** Jesus in return rebukes the self-righteous anger of those whose egos had just taken a hit.

*What is it about a wounded ego that makes a person so violent? How do you respond when someone calls you on your self-righteous anger?*

**I WILL FOLLOW YOU / FOLLOW ME:** As the pace picks up, the issue of following takes on a new urgency. Luke wants us to appreciate the seriousness of what following him means.

*How does scripture study help you to make the choice to follow Jesus?*

**FOXES:** Could we have a veiled reference to Herod here (Lk. 13:32)? Fox are clever and resourceful animals.

*What does this tell us about Jesus' understanding of what it means to follow him?*

**BIRDS:** Birds are frequently mentioned in the scriptures. Some of the most relevant to our study are Mt. 6:26; 8:20; Lk. 12:24. Birds were associated with the freedom to come and go, and were examples of how God loves the simplest of creatures.

*What would free you to follow Jesus today? Does simplicity help in freeing you to go?*

**FIRST LET ME GO / BACK:** The concerns of family, culture and religious obligation all competed with the ability of those wanting to follow Jesus.

*What family, cultural or religious issues keep you from following Jesus?*

**BURY MY FATHER:** The cultural and religious obligation to bury one's fathers was of the highest order. Verse 60 suggests that he wants to wait till the father dies and then he would be free to follow Jesus.

*Have you ever had to leave others to take care of someone because of your sense of mission? How did those people respond to your decision?*

**DEAD BURY THEIR OWN DEAD:** Jesus wants to reveal the significance of his mission. Those who still believed that this world was all that there is, could be left to take care of this earthly task.

*How does your belief in eternal life influence the choices you make? Have you had something happen that totally changed your priorities? Did those around you support this change?*

**GO AND PROCLAIM:** Nothing was to deter the followers of Jesus from this singular effort. Time was short; much was yet to be done.

*Remember the last time you knew that time was running out for something? How did that consciousness affect your choices? If you see clearly something, do you have the sense that you must proclaim it?*

**PUTS HIS HAND TO THE PLOW:** The plows of Jesus' day required single-minded attention to the task. Any distraction and the row would be a mess.

*What tasks do you have that demand this kind of focus? Is your faith development one of them?*

**LOOKS BACK:** Now that Jesus has set his face toward Jerusalem, there was no turning back. Anyone who wanted to join him also had to be able to resist looking back.

*Bible study often confronts us with choices that prevent us from looking back to the way things were. Is there anything in this text that does that for you?*

**FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD:** This is the central issue of this passage. We can only be fit by preparing and training.

*What does it mean to be fit for service for God's kingdom? How are you in training for God's service?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Lk. 9: 51 // Lk. 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28; 24:51; Is. 50: 7; Lk. 9:52 // Mal. 3:1 Lk. 9: 54 // 2 Kgs. 1:10,12; Lk. 9: 57-60 // Mt. 8: 19-22; Lk. 9: 61 // 1 Kings 18; 19: 19ff;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** 1 Kings 19: 16, 19-21; [Ps. 16: 1-2, 5, 7-11](#); Gal. 5:1, 13-18; Lk. 9: 51-62; Revised Common Lectionary: 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14; [Ps. 77:1-2, 11-20](#); Gal. 5:1, 13-25; Lk. 51-62;

### SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

“The problem of personal mastery versus self-surrender exists in every moment of choice. It appears in the most mundane of daily decisions, and it glows fiercely in the way we view the very meaning of existence. It presents us with a dilemma; a dilemma that can confuse us and may—if taken far enough—even destroy us. Fundamentally, this dilemma has to do with whether we engage the deepest levels of our lives in willing or in willful ways.”— Gerald G. May, *Will & Spirit*

I choose love. No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness, I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves.  
- Max Lucado, *Upwords*

*I do not consider myself to have fully grasped it even now. But I do concentrate on this: I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal – my reward the honor of my high calling by God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:13-14,)*

The past is over and done. What good is it to look back? It does not pay to look back unless you can profit from the experience of the past. Recently I took time to look at myself. These are some of the questions I asked: Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing for myself and the good of humankind? Where do I hope to go? Only you can answer these questions for you. Only I can answer these questions for me. The now is today. We must live it to its fullest. We must do what we really want and need to do. The possibilities of today are ours. The future will break forth anew – the New Age. Will we be ready to face a new day? We must shape ourselves in the present to live in the future. We are the guides of the possibilities and potentialities of the future Stop, take an inventory of your life. Are you heading in the direction you want to go? Are you who you want to be? Take time to look at yourself. Ethelou Talbert

Grana, Janice, Ed. *Images*. Winona, MN. St. Mary's College Press. 1976. **TAKE TIME:** Pg. 16.

But it is at the center, a call and free response to move away from ourselves to something, and someone, beyond us. And in that way, discover as if for the first time who we really are. Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012*. Pgs.130.

“A biblical scholar friend makes the point concerning the above text from Luke that we are dealing with Hebraic exaggeration-for-effect. The picture of Jesus living wild under the skies certainly seems too much, especially when we know He had many ports of call during His ministry. And taking off after only leaving the dead body of one's father tops Jesus without so much as a fare-thee-well to one's family propped up on the spot where he succumbed. The intended effect is to show that this business of discipleship is serious. It is not just one option among others, but it digs into us and grips us with its compelling demand for our attention. When we make serious points like this, it is inevitable that we stretch language as far as it will go. Brawny nouns, swaggering verbs, loud adjectives and outlandish adverbs are to be expected. Large examples replace more modest ones. Action is broad and gesture pleading. Why swear on a Bible when you can swear on a stack of them?” McCauley, George, S.J. [Too Much](#). *The Word*.

9.52–56: Samaritans' rejection. 52–53: See Mt 10.5. Samaritans, inhabitants of Samaria, the capital of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel conquered by Assyria in 722 bce. Samaritans became a distinct ethnic group, in tension with Jews (Jn 4.9; Ant. 20.118). 54: Command fire, like Elijah in 2 Kings 1.9–16; contrast Lk 9.3–5. See “Parable of the Good Samaritan,” p. 123. 9.57–62: Demands of discipleship (Mt 8.18–22). 58: Son of Man, see 5.14n. 59: Bury my father, necessary filial piety (see Tob 4.3; 6.15; b. Ber. 18a); v. 60 suggests the father was not yet dead. 61: Let me first say farewell, see 1 Kings 19.20. Separation from the natal family is a hallmark of Jesus' teaching (see 4.11; 9.61; 14.26). Pgs 121-122. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

To be a virtue, fortitude or courage must point beyond itself to its source, guide, and goal: LOVE. For courage to point beyond itself we must love that good more than self; we must value the good more than we value freedom from suffering. [Fr. Jonah Wharff](#) 5/9/16

The gifts of risk taking are overall greater than the potential damages, and by risking one's life one does not take anything away from others; the risk taker explores new territories rather than exploiting the domains of the neighbor. Pg. 368.

Niels Henrik Gregersen. *Zygon* 6/2003

. . . we come to the lived realization that we can commit ourselves to God and experiences God's security in our lives even while some of the conscious problems we have about God remain unresolved. In the lived assurance that God loves and accepts us beneath the level of our conscious problems, we find that God's presence in our lives gives us, at once, the strength to address our problems and the strength to live with a security beyond them. Arthur A. Vogel, *Radical Christianity and the Flesh of Jesus*

Jesus was truly free. His freedom was rooted in his spiritual awareness that he was the Beloved Child of God. He knew in the depth of his being that he belonged to God before he was born, that he was sent into the world to proclaim God's love, and that he would return to God after his mission was fulfilled. This knowledge gave him the freedom to speak and act without having to please the world and the power to respond to people's pains with the healing love of God. Henri Nouwen

If something is completely foreign to you, you're normally bored by it or do not even notice it. There has to be a little bit of something in you to recognize, or to be attracted to, or to be drawn to another thing. We certainly cannot deeply experience, much less desire union with something that is totally foreign or alien to us. So God planted a little bit of God inside of us—and all things. It seduces us into even more universal love and life. Some might call it the Holy Spirit, some might call it the soul, and some might simply speak of inner resonance. Richard Rohr

God has the right, and my permission, to rearrange my life to achieve His purposes. — Anonymous

Commitment brings with it a great deal of freedom because, by its nature, it closes down options. Pg. 205

Commitment settles us down and makes room inside for another to enter. Pg. 206

Homan, Daniel, OSB & Pratt, Lonni Collins. *Radical Hospitality*, Brewster, MA. Paraclete Press. 2002.

After the 'individual's fundamental choice' will come the common option of the mass of mankind. A day must come, he believes, when men 'will have finally become conscious of their common unity and their intimate links with all the rest of the universe, and will hold in their hands the plenitude of their soul, to cast it freely into the divine centre'. It is then that the final option will be made, in the form of a world's choice between revolt and worship. de Lubac, Henri. *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, NY. Desclee Co. 1962. Pg. 113.

Another aspect of these calls concerns Jesus' journey, just begun, as an image of Christian discipleship. He is on the road, facing the future, with no permanent home. Nor does this king have a palace. If the foxes in 9:59 serve as a veiled reference to Herod (see 13:32), Luke may have a further message in the saying about the dead left to bury their dead. The old kingdoms are now rendered defunct by the new kingdom proclaimed. God's kingdom requires a pledged allegiance, an unswerving commitment at least the equal of the secular states. Beck, Fr. Robert. Sunday's Word. Witness: 6/19/1983

To follow the vocation does not mean happiness; but once it has been heard, there is no happiness for those who do not follow. C. S. Lewis

You can't raise live chicks under dead hens. Clarence Jordan (Mk. 8:22; Lk. 9: 60)

Two short episodes in Luke (9: 49-50; 9:51-56) further specify the use of power. John tells Jesus that the disciples met a man who was casting out devils in his name and they told him to stop. The reason that they urged the man to stop was that "he was not one of us." John expects to be commended by Jesus. Instead he is rebuked. "You must not stop him. Anyone who is not against you is for you." Power often wants to stop goodness if it cannot get anything out of it. It wants to control the good. If it cannot be attributed to our group, then it must be stopped. The bolstering of the group takes precedence over salvific action. The fact that now there lives a person free of demons is insignificant. The matter of importance is that we have not worked this wonder. This tendency to usurp the good and to deny it where it cannot be usurped is a distortion of the overflowing power of divine love. The disciples went on ahead to make preparations in a Samaritan village. The Samaritans would not receive them. James and John suggested to Jesus that he call down fire from heaven and burn them up. Jesus suggested that they find another village. The tendency of power is to use it for revenge. If we have been rejected, reject back—only harder. Lack of hospitality is met by cremation. The way of power is retribution. The disciples know this but Jesus knows something different. Power is invitation to new life; and when it is rejected, it seeks other opportunities. The preoccupation of power is not violence but creative invitation.

Shea, John. *An Experience Named Spirit*. , Chicago. Thomas More Press 1983. Page 255.

There is a point at which everything becomes simple and there is no longer any question of choice, because all you have staked will be lost if you look back. Life's point of no return. Hammarskjöld

God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has his foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

There is little doubt, then, that the disciple will spend the greater part of his time and effort, not "doing God's work", but simply in yielding to the work God wants to do in him. Pg. 36 *The Way of the Disciple*: Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis

### The Obstacle in Our Path

In ancient times, a king had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the big stone out of the way. Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. On approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. As the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for

the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. The peasant learned what many others never understand. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve one's condition.

If you want to know and teach Christ, you will arrive much sooner by following him than by reading about him. Pg. 128. Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies. Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

It is not we who choose to awaken ourselves, but God Who chooses to awaken us.  
Thomas Merton. New Seeds of Contemplation. (New York: New Directions Books 1961) p. 10

"You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope." --Thomas Merton

The choice is ours. We can use strangers to demarcate lines of separation, or we can seek the growing edges toward which difference prods us. Pg. 144. Holmes, Barbara A. Race and the Cosmos

"When we claim and constantly reclaim the truth of being the chosen ones, we soon discover within ourselves a deep desire to reveal to others their own chosenness. Instead of making us feel that we are better, more precious or valuable than others, our awareness of being chosen opens our eyes to the chosenness of others. That is the great joy of being chosen: the discovery that others are chosen as well. In the house of God there are many mansions. There is a place for everyone – a unique, special place. Once we deeply trust that we ourselves are precious in God's eyes, we are able to recognize the preciousness of others and their unique places in God's heart." - Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World

173. Naturally, this attitude of listening entails obedience to the Gospel as the ultimate standard, but also to the Magisterium that guards it, as we seek to find in the treasury of the Church whatever is most fruitful for the "today" of salvation. It is not a matter of applying rules or repeating what was done in the past, since the same solutions are not valid in all circumstances and what was useful in one context may not prove so in another. The discernment of spirits liberates us from rigidity, which has no place before the perennial "today" of the risen Lord. The Spirit alone can penetrate what is obscure and hidden in every situation, and grasp its every nuance, so that the newness of the Gospel can emerge in another light. [Pope Francis](#)

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2012. Pgs.126-130.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs. 119-122.

Grana, Janice, Ed. Images. Winona, MN. St. Mary's College Press. 1976.

**SELF-REALIZATION:** Page 12. **COLORS:** Page 14. **TAKE TIME:** Pg. 16.

Mitchell, Stephen. The Enlightened Heart. NY. Harper & Row. 1989. **Truth:** Page 37.

Jordan, Clarence & Doulos, Bill. Cotton Patch Parables of Liberation. Scottsdale, PA. Herald Press. Pages 111ff.

Greeley, Andrew. When Life Hurts. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988. **YEARNING FOR A HOME:** Page 139ff.

Following Jesus might take you to this place.

*Come Get Lost With Me*  
I strive to leave the door open  
to the unknown,  
the door into the dark.  
That's where the most important things come from,  
where I came from,  
and where I will go.

How else will I go about finding  
that thing the nature of which is totally unknown to me?  
That question is the most basic tactical question of life.

The things I seek  
are transformative,  
and I don't know  
or only think I know  
what is on the other side of that transformation.

Love, wisdom, grace, inspiration,

how do I go about finding these things  
that are in some ways about extending the boundaries of myself  
into unknown territory?

The unknown,  
the idea or the form or the story that has not yet arrived,  
is what I seek.  
I strive to open doors  
and invite in prophecies,  
the unknown,  
the unfamiliar.

These days I find myself living at the edge of mystery,  
the boundary of the unknown.

I seek to transform the unknown  
into the known,  
haul it in like a fisherman  
out in the dark sea.

I seek  
to lose myself  
in voluptuous surrender,  
lost to the world,  
utterly immersed in what is present.

To be lost  
is to be fully present,  
and to be fully present  
is to be capable of being comfortable in uncertainty  
and mystery,  
true faith.

The thing  
the nature of which is totally unknown to me  
is usually what I need to find,  
but finding it is a matter of getting lost  
in the Unknown.

Never to get lost  
is not to live,  
not to know how to get lost  
is disaster,  
for somewhere in the Unknown  
lies a life of Discovery,  
Wisdom,  
and Transformation.

*Love,  
John*

[John Chuchman](#)