

Today's Gospel begins with a telling phrase: "*When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem.*" Jesus has finished His teaching to the people in Galilee and now He begins His journey to Jerusalem. During His final trip to the Holy City, Jesus gathers more and more disciples around Him, the beginning of His new Church.

It's the road that will be referred to in the next ten chapters of Saint Luke's Gospel. Luke portrays Jesus as one who knows His destiny and accepts it from God. Luke tells us about incidents that happened along the way. Each Sunday we will stop along the roadside to listen to Jesus teaching the people and His message of commitment about what it means to be one of His disciples.

At the beginning of Jesus' journey, there are three people who want to be Jesus' disciples. Our Gospel reading tells us the failure of the three would-be followers is their lack of making a commitment to follow Jesus. We do not know their names, but that's not important because Jesus' words are not only addressed to them but to us as well.

Each of the followers Jesus meets has faith in Him and wants to carry on His mission. However, each of these followers has a reason not to join Jesus, that is, *not just yet*. They are not ready to make a commitment to leave everything and follow Jesus.

The first follower says, "*I will follow you wherever you go.*" This follower is filled with emotional excitement to follow Jesus, but he is not aware of the cost to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus says to the man: "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His Head.*" Jesus knows the cost. He has left His home in heaven and is now on an earthly journey that will lead to His suffering and death on the Cross.

To follow Jesus means not just having enthusiasm but having a *concrete commitment*. There can be no security in worldly possessions that only lasts for a limited time on earth before it decays. Jesus calls us to live and use the things of this world to build up the Kingdom of God. The person who follows Jesus must choose Christ *first* and worldly possessions *second*. What is the sacrifice are we willing to make

for the Kingdom of God? What worldly possessions we will let go to give first priority to Jesus. That is the question of Jesus to the first man and to us..

The second man would like to follow Jesus but he says, “*Lord, first let me go and bury my father.*” In reality, the man is making an excuse not to follow Jesus. The man’s father has not died, for if he *had* died, the man would have been at the funeral and not along the roadside talking to Jesus. Jesus says to man “*Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.*”

To follow Jesus sometime *in the future* is not to follow Him at all because the world will never be perfect, or the timing or the setting will never be exactly right. Jesus calls us to follow Him *now*. That is Jesus’ answer to the second person and to us.

With excitement in his heart, the third would-be follower says, “*I will follow You, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.*” This man is not really sure whether he wants to make a commitment to be Jesus’ disciple *not quite yet*. So, he is looking for an excuse; he is looking for a way out.

Perhaps the man is hoping that when he returns home, his family and friends will talk him out of following Jesus. Jesus says to the man, “*No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*” Jesus is highlighting the need for a strong faith and commitment to follow Him *now*.

To look back suggests having second thoughts, and perhaps doubts and regrets. Jesus is challenging the man, and in challenging him, He is also challenging us, that once we make a commitment to follow Our Lord, we must not look back. If our heart isn’t in something wholeheartedly, then it will not work out. Our Lord calls us to follow Him *as we are*. That is Jesus’ answer to the third man and to us, *not to look back*.

Every day we ourselves are faced with situations similar to these three would-be followers. Many people desire to follow Jesus, but oftentimes grumble about the cost to their personal freedom, much like the three followers who desired to follow Jesus, *but not yet*. What are the sacrifices that we are willing to make for the Kingdom of God? Each of us must face this question straight on and ask Jesus what following Him looks like for our own life.

What message might we take from today’s Scriptures? We all want to follow Jesus because we know that He will lead us to His Kingdom. Jesus welcomes all who

choose to follow Him, but He warns us that for some, this way of life may prove to be difficult. Family ties, the comfort and security of living well, even family obligations may be obstacles in the path of discipleship. Can we give up the rewards offered by our passing world for the sake of those offered by the everlasting Kingdom of God.

In the midst of our day as we are hurrying about whatever it is we're doing, we can often encounter Jesus beckoning us in our hearts to come and follow Him and serve in His mission to a person or a cause. We have a mission to save the souls that God has entrusted to our care. We cannot enter heaven alone. We must take souls we have saved with us to heaven. This call means to accept sacrifice and suffering, like Jesus, but the rewards are great.

Our Lord's call requires an *immediate* response of faith to follow Him but it's not just something to be fitted in after we have attended to all the important business we have, like maintaining all the personal goals we have set for ourselves. As well, we must give up all sins that imprison us. Whenever and in whatever way God's invitation comes our way, our reply should always be, "*Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will.*"

In today's Gospel, the three would-be followers failure is the lack of faith to make a commitment they were needing to follow Jesus *now*. Jesus is calling each one of us *now*, without any excuses, to follow Him. Tomorrow is too late to make a commitment to follow Jesus; it has to be *now*. Jesus has set Himself as an example for us, and He promises to be with us and always help us in our commitment to Him.

The commitment to follow Jesus in our everyday lives *now* will bring us joy and allow God to use us to make a difference in the lives of others and to save their souls. The more we live our faith and make a commitment to its fullest, the more we will experience the happiness and fulfillment in life that God desires for us. There is a special call from Jesus to each of us. Will we make a commitment to follow Jesus and fulfill His mission? This is why we must give first priority of commitment to Jesus in our life and contemplate life from the perspective of eternity.