

Sermon Notes on Lk. 9:51-62, Trinity II

1. Lk. 9:51-19:27 is a section found only in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus slowly makes His way for the last time from Galilee to Judea. Only about six months remain before His death. In this section He teaches His disciples.
2. Vss. 51-56 are found only in Luke. Vss. 57-62 are found also at Mt. 8:19-22 in a different locale. Perhaps the same incident happened twice. Or perhaps Mt. preserves the chronological order but not Lk. Or perhaps Lk. preserves the chronological order but not Mt. Or (assuming this happened twice) perhaps neither preserves the chronological order. No one can decide this with certainty. The important thing is to study what the words say.
3. Vs. 51 shows the determination of Jesus to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die for all people. He did not waver in His resolution.
4. Read Ezra 4:1-3. In 536 B.C., when the Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity and began to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans wanted to help the Jews. But the Samaritans were a mixture of pagans and Jews. And so the Jews refused the Samaritans' help. Then the Samaritans separated themselves and built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim. Henceforth the Jews and the Samaritans had no dealings with each other. See Jn. 4:9. That is the reason for the refusal of the Samaritans at Lk. 9:52. But they received the Gospel after Pentecost. Acts 1:8; 8:14.
5. At the end of vs. 54 modern translations delete the words: "as also Elijah did." And between vss. 55-56 they delete the words: "and said: 'You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'" Compare the Russian translation printed by Druckhaus Gummersbach and the one published by the Slavic Gospel Press, Wheaton IL. The former is like the older translations. The latter is like that of modern translations.
6. But even if the words are not original and textual, the thoughts which they contain are implied in the text. Cf. II Kings 1:10-12. Elijah called down fire from heaven to show that only Jehovah is the true God. But James and John were not of the same spirit as was Elijah. They were vengeful. They wanted to punish the Samaritans. But Jesus did not come to destroy. He came only to save. Cf. 19:10. On the last day He will come as Judge, to destroy those who refused to believe in Him. But when He was on earth He appeared not as Judge but only as Savior. James and John were wrong in their attitude.
7. In vss. 57-62 Jesus addresses three men who want to be missionaries for Jesus but who have each a serious flaw in their thinking. The first one says: "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." (Note the difference between the old and new translations. The old adds the word "Lord.") Jesus' answer in vs. 58 implies that the life of the missionary is like that of Jesus' life. He owned no permanent home. Cf. Hebr. 11:37-38 where it is plain that these believers had less comfort than wild animals. Followers of Christ will suffer deprivation of food, clothing and shelter. Evidently this man who promised to follow Jesus was not yet strong enough to keep his promise. We know not what happened to him.
8. In vss. 59-60 Jesus engages a second man. Jesus commands him to follow him. But he makes an excuse. Jesus' answer does not forbid a man to honor his father. It does not even forbid burying one's father. Jesus is criticizing this man's attitude. Burial of the dead is not by divine command. It is not a religious rite. When people are dead you cannot teach them. You can't even love them. Burial often becomes a big show. What IS important is to spread the Gospel of the kingdom. When Christians bury Christians, the Gospel should be the most important thing.
9. In vss. 61-62 Jesus deals with a third man. He was like the Children of Israel who longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Ex. 16:3. Or like Lot's wife who looked back and became a pillar of salt. Lk. 17:32; Gen. 19:26. Christians must look straight ahead. See Php. 1:13. Jesus said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all things will be added to you." Mt. 6:33. The Gospel causes us to look straight ahead and not backwards.

DEALS

Theme: HOW JESUS HANDLES WITH HIS ERRING DISCIPLES

Introduction: Our text shows us how Jesus dealt with five of His disciples. In vss. 51-56 we see how He dealt with James and John, two of the twelve. In vss. 57-62 we see how He dealt with three other disciples. These were very likely not of the twelve. But all five of them had faulty notions about the kingdom of God. How did Jesus deal with them?

I-JESUS DEALS WITH JAMES AND JOHN

A-The situation. It was only about six months before Jesus' suffering and death. He and His disciples were on their way from Galilee to Jerusalem. Samaria lies between Galilee and Jerusalem. Jesus wanted to cross through Samaria. He sent messengers to a Samaritan village to make arrangements to stay over night. But the Samaritans refused Jesus. When James and John heard about this they were angry. They wanted to take vengeance on the Samaritans. They wanted to destroy them. They wanted to do as did Elijah in II Kings 1:10-12. They wanted to cause fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans.

B-How Jesus deals with James and John. We are told that Jesus rebuked James and John. They were sinning. First of all, vengeance belongs to the Lord, not man. Read Lev. 19:18 and Rom. 12:19. People try to play God when they take vengeance on other people. Secondly, James and John misapplied the example of Elijah. Elijah called down fire from heaven to show people that Jehovah is Lord, not for vengeance. Why did Jesus show James and John their sin? So that they might confess their sin and believe in Him as their Savior. He did not come to destroy but to save mankind. Cf. Jn. 3:17. The devils said that Jesus came to destroy. Read Lk. 4:34. Jesus muzzled them because He came to save, not to destroy. Never forget Lk. 19:10. Jesus is Savior, not Destroyer.

II-JESUS DEALS WITH THREE OTHER DISCIPLES

A-The situation. We do not know who these disciples in vss. 57-62 were. But we know enough to learn a lesson. The first made a rash promise: "I will follow you wherever You go." The second one did not want to follow Jesus until he had buried his father. The third one promised to follow Jesus but first wanted to go and bid farewell to family. Jesus told him that his attitude was not fit for the kingdom of God.

B-How Jesus deals with these three disciples.

1-Jesus does not reject these three disciples. He does not chase them away. At Mt. 12:20 we read that Jesus was the fulfillment of Is. 42:1-9. One sentence says: "A bruised reed He will not break and the smoking flax He will not extinguish." Weak Christians are like a broken reed or like smoking flax which is barely burning. Jesus does not break the reed or extinguish the flax. He repairs the reed and causes the flax to burn brightly. The first man (vs. 57) made a rash promise which he could not keep. Jesus reminds this man that to be a Christian means to give up all your filthy righteousness and trust only in His righteousness. To be a Christian might mean to give up all earthly goods but Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the kingdom of God." John the Baptist is our model. He taught us that a person can be a Christian although he has very little.

2-Jesus rebukes the second disciple. This one is described in vss. 59-60. Jesus invites him to follow Jesus, to be His disciple. Jesus says: "Let the dead bury the dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God". Burial is a necessity. Jesus does not forbid it. He does *not* even forbid Christians to bury their parents. He is talking about a faulty attitude. Burial is not a required, religious ceremony. It's only a physical necessity. But the Gospel is all-important. What is the most important thing at a Christian funeral? The Gospel.

3-The third man, vss. 61-62, was half-hearted in his faith and faithfulness. You can't plow with one hand. It takes both hands. You can't look back. You must look forward. Repentance and faith are not halfway.

1. Jesus spoke this parable during His Perea ministry several months before His suffering, death and resurrection. He spoke it again, in a slightly different form, at Mt. 22:1-10 just a few days before He died. The Romans said: "Repetition is the mother of studies."
2. In vs. 16-17 we have the invitation; in vs. 18-20, the excuses; and in vs. 21-24, the result. It is a wonderful parable of someone inviting people to a great dinner. Vss. 16-22 cover the OT period and vs. 23-24 the NT mission to both Jews and Gentiles. The final judgment is pictured in vs. 24.
3. Vs. 16 reads literally: "A certain man was preparing a large dinner." This pictures the Gospel in the OT. Vs. 17 reads: "And he sent his servant at the time of the dinner to say to those who had been invited 'Come'." The servant could be either the Baptist or Jesus, both of whom said: "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is here." Mt. 3:2; 4:17. The dinner is the Gospel of Jesus. The Jews had already been invited many times in the OT. Jesus' message was: "All is ready."
4. Vss. 18-20 record shallow and ridiculous excuses. Who would so foolishly buy a field without first examining it? A pair of oxen in our day would cost about \$10,000. Who would be so foolish as to buy a pair of oxen without first knowing what they were like? The excuse of the third man in vs. 20 brings out clearly that this speaks of the OT. Deut. 24:5 (which is clearly referred to here) allowed a man, just married, to be free of business for one year. That was political, not moral, law. It was no excuse for not hearing the Gospel.
5. To this day people make shallow and ridiculous excuses such as these found in vs. 18-20. What child would be so foolish as to refuse to attend a good dinner? But sinful people are often just that foolish when it comes to the invitation of the Gospel.
6. The servant in vs. 21 represents either the Baptist or Christ reporting to the heavenly Father. His reaction is rightly anger. Cf. Jesus' poignant words at Lk. 19:41-44; Mt. 23:37; Lk. 13:34 and the warning at Lk. 21:20-24. The poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind in vs. 21 denote the publicans, harlots and sinners whom Jesus sought out when the Jews and their religious authorities rejected Him. Christ is the Help of the helpless, the Hope of the hopeless, the Riches of the poor, the Righteousness of the unrighteous, and the Life of the dead. He sought them out everywhere. Vs. 21 ends with "bring them here." No man comes to the Father unless Christ draws him. Read Jn. 12:32 and 14:6.
7. Vs. 22 pictures the endless vastness of the eternal Kingdom of God. There is always room for more people.
8. In application vs. 23 clearly denotes the mission of the church to the Gentiles. The word "compel" suggests that the invited are helpless, that they consider themselves unworthy and the urgency for evangelizing the Gentiles. St. Paul says at II Tim. 4:2: "Preach the Word, be ready whether it is convenient or not convenient, correct, rebuke, encourage, be very patient and thorough in your teaching." And at Rom. 1:16-17 Paul says: "I have an obligation both to Greeks and non-Greeks, to the wise and the foolish. . . . For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is God's power to save everyone who believes it."
9. A few minor manuscripts add these words to vs. 24: "For many are called but few are chosen." The Russian Bible published by Druckhaus Gummersbach in 1991 includes these words. However the Slavic Gospel Association of 1990 does not include these words. Very likely these words were imported from Mt. 22:14 by a scribe.
10. This parable does not say that the Jews are no longer invited to partake of the banquet of the Gospel. Where there is life there is hope. Never close the door of the Gospel to anyone. If a person rejects the invitation of the Gospel it is his own fault. But if he accepts, all glory and credit must be given to God alone.

Theme: JESUS TEACHES A HEARER A LESSON

Introduction: Vs. 16 tells us that Jesus' parable is directed to one person. It is clear from vs. 15 that this hearer had mis-understood Jesus. Jesus had spoken the parable in vss. 12-14 about showing love to destitute people. True Christians are blessed both in faith and works. But one hearer (vs. 15) limited this blessedness to the life to come. Jesus then shows him the blessedness already in this life.

I-THE THINKING OF THIS HEARER Vs. 15

- A-Jesus does not deny what he said in vs. 15. This word "blessed" (makarios in Greek) in the NT always denotes the relationship of the redeemed believer to the Lord. Cf. Mt. 5:3-11. It is true that Christians will be blessed in everlasting life. Cf. Rev. 14:3. Jesus does not say that this hearer was incorrect in what he said.
- B-But Jesus had meant more than that in vs. 14. Evidently Jesus' host customarily invited only his relatives, neighbors and wealthy friends to dinner. They were the people who would return the invitation with another invitation. True children of God do more than that. Jesus told His host that he should also invite the poor, the maimed and the blind. They would not be able to repay the host. Jesus then says in vs. 14: "You will be blessed because they cannot repay you. And what's more you will be repaid when they just rise from the dead." God rewards the deeds of His children. The deeds do not save them but God does reward them. Evidently this hearer thought that Jesus was limiting the word "blessed" to the life to come. Jesus now corrects him.

II-JESUS CORRECTS THE THINKING OF THIS HEARER

- A-The parable is addressed only to the hearer. Vs. 16 reads: "But Jesus said to him." The parable in vs. 7 was addressed to all the guests at this dinner to which Jesus had been invited. See vs. 1. They lacked humility. The parable in vs. 12 was addressed to the host because he had limited his list of guests to those who could return the favor. And Jesus addresses the parable of vss. 16-24 to the guest who spoke vs. 15. What he said was true. But evidently he did not realize that true blessedness begins already in this life.
- B-All things are already prepared. Nothing needs to be added for our salvation because all things are already prepared, vs. 17. Just as in the original Greek, the Russian word уже in vs. 17 can mean either "already" or "now". In either case, nothing needs to be added. Jesus is telling the man of vs. 15 that the blessedness of being God's child is already prepared in this life. For example at Lk. 11:28 Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." And Rev. 14:13: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." The whole life and eternal life of believers in Christ is blessed, God-pleasing.
- C-This is for all people. God sends out His messengers again and again in all places seeking all kinds of people, no matter how poor or useless they may appear.
- D-Jesus warns us in this text. We are told that God is very angry with people who give Him empty excuses. Sinful man very foolishly often rejects God's invitations to the dinner of the Gospel. Even then God urgently keeps on inviting them.
- E-The result of rejection. If people continue to reject they will not taste the dinner either in this life nor in the life to come.

Conclusion: Read vs. 1 of this chapter. Jesus had been invited to the house of a Pharisee to eat. He criticized all the guests in vss. 7-11 because they lacked humility. He criticized His host in vss. 12-14 because he invited only those who could return the favor. Then, in answer to one hearer in vs. 15 Jesus tells all of them that unless they would attend the dinner of the Gospel, they would be lost.