

Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 3rd Sunday After Pentecost - June 29, 2025

The Gospel

Our Gospel today is taken from Luke chapter 9.

Glory to you, O Lord.

When days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

And he sent messengers ahead of him.

On their way, they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for his arrival.

But they did not receive him because his face was set towards Jerusalem.

When his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

But Jesus turned and rebuked them.

Then they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

And Jesus said, "Foxes have holes when birds of the air have nest, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay in his head."

To another, he said, "Follow me."

But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

And Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own here, but as for you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God."

Another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to those at home."

And Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the Father and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

He was the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

[Pastor]

[inaudible]

Is that better?

No?

Is that about right?

Okay, thank you, Bob.

Pastor is not able to be with us this morning because they are with Sharon's mother as her stepfather was buried.

The Sermon

A Bishop's message this morning has been written by our Eastern Synod Bishop, Carla Blakely,

and it's a privilege to be able to share her words with you this morning.

She writes, "At a recent dinner party, and we host them often, someone leaned over their plate and asked,

'So Carla, what's the sermon about this week?'"

It's a common question.

My neighbors are proud of their unofficial role as sermon consultants.

I come home more than once with scribbled notes on napkins or scraps of paper or even the back of a wine bottle label.

Holy brainstorming over dessert.

This time, I told them that I was working on a passage for later in June from Luke chapter 9.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem.

He sends messengers ahead to a suburban village, but the villagers refuse to welcome him.

His disciples are furious.

"Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy them?"

And around that table that night, something happened.

Every single person started telling stories of rejection.

Stories of not being welcomed.

Stories of being shut out of a relationship.

Of losing a job.

Of being excluded at school or work.

Or being judged for the color of your skin or who they love.

Or simply showing up somewhere where someone thought they should not be.

And I bet you have a story too.

What we all do.

These are hard stories.

They don't leave us.

They leave us raw.

And if we're honest, we sometimes want the same thing that the disciples wanted.

God's wrath.

Cosmic payback.

I remember, she writes, when I was in grade 12,

I made an appointment with my Lutheran pastor, not an ELCIC one,

and proudly told him that I wanted to be a pastor.

He laughed.

Not a chuckle, but a great big belly laugh.

His wife, who was also the church secretary, stopped against that machine and stared.

"We don't are dating girls," she said.

"What were you thinking, Carla?"

That hurt.

Deeply, in that moment, if I could have called down fire, I might have.

Back at the dinner party, I wasn't the only one.

My friends wanted a superhero to swoop in and set things right.

I didn't want to punish the people who told them, "You don't belong. You're not welcome here."

But Jesus' response is striking.

He rebukes his disciples, not just because they're being violent,

but because they're still thinking like the world thinks.

Their framework is vengeance and power.

Jesus is peace and grace.

It's hard to make that shift.

I've been reading a book by Adam Grant called "Sink Again."

It's one of those rare books that makes you pause.

I'd read a paragraph, put it down, and sit in silence.

That's the point of the book.

To rethink.

To examine not just what we believe, but how we think.

He writes, "If knowledge is power, knowing what we don't know is wisdom."

That line lingers.

He challenges us, to our assumptions, to embrace being wrong

and to cultivate intellectual humility.

Not to defend our beliefs out of fear.

Not to attack others to prove we're right.

But to become learners again.

Curious, humble, willing to be wrong.

And it struck me that this isn't foreign to the gospel.

It's embedded in it.

Luke says Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem.

He knew where he was going.

He knew it would cost him.

Along the way, people came forward, wanting to follow him, but they hesitate.

"Let me bury my father. Let me see goodbye to my family."

Reasonable requests.

And Jesus replies with urgency.

"No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Now, Jesus isn't saying that family is bad, or that grieving is wrong.

He's saying there's something bigger happening.

Something that requires us to hold our beliefs loosely.

Our identity lightly, and our future openly.

Because faith, real faith, is not about clinging to what we've always known.

It's about being ready to rethink again and again in the light of love, justice, and truth.

Jesus rebukes the disciples because they want to fit him into their old assumptions.

But discipleship is not about having everything all figured out.

It's about confusion, discomfort, and unlearning.

And this, my friends, is holy.

Doubt is not the enemy of faith. Rigidity is.

Jesus doesn't offer us certainty.

He offers us a path.

A path that asks us to grow, to shift, be wrong, and still be loved.

What Jesus is challenging is not just our personal comfort.

He's challenging the social norms that decide who's in and who's out.

Who is worthy of love? Who gets to belong?

We live in a time when many are rethinking the church.

And that's not a crisis. That's an opportunity.

How to go outside the church doors and be community, to open the church to all and neighbors.

LGBT, TYA plus siblings ask, "Can I be fully seen here?"

Survivors of spiritual trauma ask, "Can I ever trust religion again?"

Young adults ask, "Does this institution reflect Jesus or something else entirely?"

To follow Jesus today is to stand with those questions, not against them.

Rethinking is not betrayal. Rethinking is devotion.

Rethinking who God is in light of science, history, and experience.

Holy.

Rethinking what Scripture says about women, queer people, race, and power. Holy.

Thinking of our past complicity in systems of exclusion.

Painful, but holy.

So maybe this week, instead of praying for fire, we pray for clarity.

Not the clarity of certainty, but the clarity that comes from love.

And maybe we hear Jesus again saying, "Not be right, but follow me."

You may be rethinking everything right now. Good.

Jesus walks with the people of the road. Not the ones who have it all figured out,

but the ones who are willing to walk and to wonder. Amen.