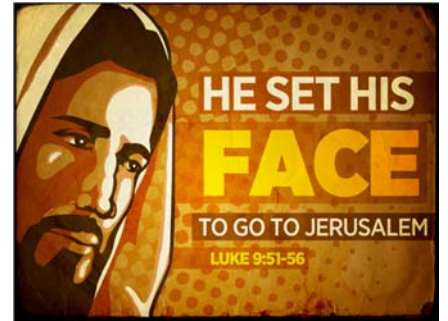


Luke 9:51-62

June 26, 2016

“He set his face to go to Jerusalem”



-I love the way Greek word order translates into English ... it has that Star Wars feel to it
-just listen:

“It came to pass, when was come the time to be received up, that He, his face steadfastly set he did, to go to Jerusalem”

-most of the time we don't talk that way ... we wouldn't even say things like: *“Jesus set his face to Jerusalem”*

-but there is a reason for it and the reason is at the heart of the message
-it is designed to be understood in the strongest possible terms
-Jesus is absolutely resolute; he is determined; he is unwavering
-unyielding ... steadfast ... tenacious

-when you think about it, that level of resolve and tenacity and determination is a good thing

-it tells us just how much God wants us to be saved

-it is a reflection of Jesus' words in John 10, *“I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”*

-this Jesus is no hireling

-he is not going to cut and run when the devil turns up the heat

-Jesus came into this world knowing full well what his mission would be ... and how it would end

-every time the OT tells a story of rescue and salvation, there was always a sacrifice to be made ...

- Isaac lived because the ram caught in the thicket died
- Israel was set free from slavery and saved from the angel of death because the blood of the Passover Lamb covered them
- on the Day of Atonement, the people would be covered in forgiveness because the Lamb of God would carry away sin
- this one truth is repeated again and again, *“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”*
- when Mary and Joseph brought the new-born Jesus to the temple they were met by a man named Simeon
- he’s the one who said, “Lord now let your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation ...
- do you remember what else he said?
 - “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too”*
- it comes as no surprise that Jesus knew from the very beginning that the cross of Calvary lay ahead, and he was willing to do whatever was necessary
 - he would pay whatever it cost to redeem his beloved
 - he knew what needed to be done, and he would do it
 - and he steadfastly set his face to Jerusalem
- as our text begins, Luke wants to give us an insight into God’s great master plan and timetable
- we are in mid-countdown here

-the time is approaching for Jesus to be taken up into heaven
and Jesus resolutely sets out for Jerusalem

-there is a great Gospel message here

-when did the Father in heaven lay out this plan?

-when did he start putting things in motion?

-was it at Jesus' baptism?

-was it when he was born in Bethlehem?

-was it when he was conceived by the Holy Spirit?

-or does it go back farther than that?

-St. Paul wrote, *"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons"*

-St. John in the book of Revelation gives this title to the Saviour

-he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world

-the countdown began in the Garden of Eden when God promised Adam and Eve that the day would come when the seed of the woman would crush the serpent

-from then on the whole OT points to God's unfolding work of salvation

-there will be a temple and a most holy place

-there will be a Saviour

-there will be a sacrifice

-there will be the death of the innocent to cover the guilty

-there will be resurrection

-there will be glory

-there will be witnesses to that resurrection and that glory

-and the message will be spread out through the whole world

- so God called Abraham and began to craft for himself a people and a nation set apart
 - there was Isaac, then Jacob and his sons
- God led his first family to Egypt where they grew into a great nation
 - he led them out and brought them to the Promised Land where they would grow and settle and prepare for the coming Messiah King
- all along the way there were roadblocks and troubles to contend with
 - God was not just preparing a people from who the Messiah would come, he was preparing a world for the coming of the Messiah
 - and then, when the right time came, God sent forth his Son
- so today we find ourselves in the middle of Luke 9 and the countdown continues
 - Jesus sets out for Jerusalem
 - he will not turn to the left or to the right
 - he will not be swayed or dissuaded
 - everything is set
 - the timetable set by the Father will be followed
 - there will be no turning back now
- Jesus will do what he came to do
 - he will seek out sinners and call them to repentance
 - he will confront unconfessed sin
 - he will expose self-righteousness for what it is
 - he will take up the sins of the world and carry them to the cross
- Calvary and the cross and the empty tomb are all on the timetable
 - Jesus will call people to follow him as his disciples
 - he will call them to witness his death and resurrection
 - he will send them out with the message of the cross
 - he will send them out with a twofold message
 - forgiveness for those who repent and turn from their sin
 - condemnation for those who do not repent

- the next step follows this way
 - Jesus next sends disciples ahead of him to a village in Samaria to prepare for his coming
 - call them to repentance and bless them with forgiveness, because the time is short
 - but the people of the village rejected him
 - James and John have a suggestion ...
 - should we call down fire from heaven and destroy them?
 - no, not yet ... that's not on the schedule
 - that would be getting ahead of ourselves
 - this is not the day of judgment yet ...it is still the day of grace
 - there is still time for them to repent and be saved
 - in the meantime, we will go on to another town
- James and John don't understand the timetable
 - they needed to follow the plan
 - don't get ahead, but don't fall behind either
 - that's important for us to know too ... especially the don't fall behind
 - don't put off to tomorrow the opportunities you have to share your faith today
- what does the Scripture say?
 - Jesus says, today is the day of salvation
 - pray for workers in the harvest field
 - the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few
 - we need to understand the urgency that comes with the kingdom of God
 - what work could be more important than the work that Jesus is doing?
 - what work could be more important than the work that Jesus is calling his disciples to do?
 - that day in Galilee, Jesus had his eye on the ball, the goal was in sight

- and all around him was an audience of half-hearted followers
 - still wondering what they had gotten into
 - still asking if they had made the right choice
 - half-hearted followers and uncommitted disciples who still wanted to keep their options open

-imagine reading this ad in the help wanted section

- full time followers wanted
 - on the job training provided
 - all daily need will be provided
 - opportunity to meet people and travel
- but there's more
 - must be willing to travel on short notice
 - work involves long days and short nights
 - job may take you away from home and family of extended periods
 - in all, three men applied for the job

#1 ... we will call him *Mr. Too Quick*

- he enthusiastically promised to follow the Lord anywhere
 - don't you love a volunteer
 - I will follow you wherever you go
 - no cost will be too great
 - no cross would be too heavy
 - no path would be too rough

-but Mr. Too Quick had been too quick

- he had not considered the cost of following Jesus
 - was he ready to sacrifice the security of a nice home?
 - was he ready to sacrifice the comforts of life?

-he was not

- he had not counted the whole cost
 - confronted with that, he was not willing to go
 - we hear no more of him in Scripture
 - his love for earthly things was greater than his dedication to Christ
- he claimed to be willing to follow Jesus everywhere, but he was not ready to pay the price
 - he would do one weekend a month and a week in the summer ... sort of like the army reserve
 - you get to wear the uniform, but it's all pretty laid back

#2 ... we will call the second one *Mr. Too Slow*

- unlike the first man who volunteered, Jesus approached him and asked him to come and follow him
 - don't you love to be asked?
- he did not refuse immediately
 - he was not totally disinterested in the Lord, but there was something he wanted to do first ...that was his problem
 - he didn't understand the urgency of the mission
- but he put his own desires above the call of Christ
 - his request seems honest enough on the surface, but you need to remember that Jesus can see into his heart
- the words that Mr. Too Slow spoke were mere camouflage to hide his underlying desire to put himself first
 - they were nothing more than an excuse to say no
- Jesus had steadfastly set his face to Jerusalem
 - there would be no higher priority than his mission to save sinners
 - but Mr. Too Slow couldn't see that even the most serious and most important family need must take second place to God's call
- 36 years ago as Marjorie and I were planning the date for our

wedding, and the date for my ordination, we didn't think it mattered very much which one we did first

-my pastor quickly corrected that idea

... you get ordained first, then you get married

-how heartbreaking it must be for Jesus when we don't understand the implications of the first commandment

#3 ... we can call the third one *Mr. Too Easy*

-he is another eager volunteer

-how he must have cheered Jesus' heart

-yet, he is of two minds and suffers from divided loyalties

-he too is not fit for the kingdom of God

-Jesus has steadfastly set his face for Jerusalem

-like the Romans when they landed their armies in Britain

-they burned their boats

-they knew there would be no retreat

-there would be no going back

-they knew that they would conquer ... or die

-Jesus has steadfastly set his face for Jerusalem

-nothing less than the salvation of the world was at stake

-from here on there is only one destination ... Jerusalem and the cross of Calvary

-some people think that the goal of religion is to teach us how to be steadfast and resolute

-to be uncompromising and get the job done

-to be earnest and single-minded

-how do we reconcile Jesus' call to deny ourselves, take up our

crosses and follow him with the sad reality that we are very often too much like Mr. Too Quick or Mr. Too Slow or Mr. Too Easy?

-if we are supposed to exhibit the same firm resolve as Jesus had, then why is the Bible filled with stories of so many failures?

-just look at Elijah in the OT lesson today

-he tried ... he really did

-he wanted to be faithful, but it was too much for him

-he stood up to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel

-he stood up to the combined power of the prophets of Baal

-he stuck it out against the wilful rejection of God by a whole generation

-he held on through thick and thin, but in the end he wasn't strong enough ... he caved in

-he had been unyielding, steadfast, and tenacious but it wasn't enough

-look at the disciples who had taken up the challenge and were following Jesus

-they still struggled to understand his mission

-Peter even tried to dissuade him from the cross

-when Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem, they ran and hid

-Peter denied him

-so how do we reconcile this?

-Jesus calls people to follow him, he urges them to be steadfast, but the pool he has to draw from is pretty shallow

-the answer is the power of the Holy Spirit

-our hearts are filled with second thoughts, fears, weakness, sin

- the only way past it, the only way to push aside those fears is for the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with something else
- do you want to walk by the Spirit?
 - do you want to suppress the desires of your sinful nature?
 - do you want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in your life?
- you need to stop trying to do it on your own strength
 - you need to rely on the strength of God and the power of God
 - you need to be led by the Spirit
 - you need to live under the power of the grace of God
- how did God answer Elijah's desperate rant?
 - not an earthquake or mighty storm, but a quiet voice
 - not judgment, but mercy
- in the same way God uses the word of forgiveness, the word of grace to call us back
 - to forgive us
 - to fill us with his Spirit
 - to renew us day by day
- sometimes we think we can succeed in our Christian life if we just try harder
 - you know ... work longer ... pray more fervently
 - when you see others grow weak and weary, and start to cave in, you look down on them
- if you're trying to fight the world by yourself, you won't make it
 - we struggle, we are weak and weary

- you need the grace of God and the Spirit of God in order to do the will of God
- you need to start each day at the cross
 - it is there that you are restored, forgiven and renewed