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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
5th Sunday after Pentecost/Year C
June 27, 2010
Text: Luke 9:51-62

“Done Made My Vow to the Lord”

*Done made my vow to the Lord
And I never will turn back.
I will go, I shall go to see what the end will be!*

If there ever was a passage about vigilance, commitment, and purpose-this is the one! It is so easy to say that we will do something, to commit ourselves and yet it is another thing to really follow through.

After having taught, healed, preached and worked miracles for some time, Luke tells us in today’s gospel that Jesus now had his eyes fixed on Jerusalem. It was time to journey on toward Jerusalem knowing what the end would be. Jesus knew that to go to Jerusalem meant that he would be betrayed, suffer and die on the cross. Jesus also knew that his disciples would need to be ready, shored up, for what lie ahead of them in their mission to continue to proclaim God’s kingdom and the Good News following Pentecost. Their commitment, like his, could not be a half-hearted effort or a part-time commitment.

We heard that as they made their way toward the Holy City Jesus decided to send messengers ahead to prepare for his arrival in a Samaritan town. Upon arriving they found themselves unwelcome. The disciples had forgotten that they had just been instructed in situations like this to shake the dust from their feet and James and John were ready to call down fire from heaven. The rejection by the Samaritans did not arouse Jesus’ anger nor would it deter him. Rejection was to be expected at times. Retaliation was not an option for them nor it an option for us. Though sometimes there are times when others might try our nerves and we might want to “zap” them as the prophet Elijah had to the messengers of the king in the Second Book of Kings, we serve a Savior who taught an ethic of love and gentleness, patience and forbearance.

As Jesus and his disciples continued along the road, they encountered three would-be disciples. They had heard about his teachings and all his works and they wanted to accompany him.

The first would-be disciple came before Jesus and volunteered his service saying, “Lord, I will follow you wherever you go.” Judging from Jesus’ response this man may not have been thinking about a lifelong commitment and Jesus offered him no easy alternative. “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nest; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” In other words: ‘Do you know what you are saying? There is going to be more to following me than meets the eye.’ The message for us this day is that whoever commits to being a disciple of Christ must know that the road will not always be easy. We too are asked count the cost knowing that there will be times that as followers of Christ we may have to be countercultural; walking a different path than that of society and the world. Sometimes that means taking a different path from friends and sometimes even family. Being a follower of Christ takes a different kind of commitment.

Someone said there is a big difference between being involved and being committed. If one is involved that means that you can do what you want when you want, as you want and when you feel like it-which might mean NEVER. Commitment to God is giving of oneself with all that you are: mind, soul, and body not just on Sunday mornings but 24/7. Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Are we willing to go the extra mile to see what the end will be?

The second would-be disciple was invited to join the disciples but he asked for an extension so that he could go and bury his father. This seems like a reasonable request. In those days in the Jewish tradition, loyalty to family took precedence over religious duties. But Jesus initiated a new order of undertakers. “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ comment seems cold and insensitive but Jesus knew that the loyalty of any disciple will be tested to the highest degree. The man was given a difficult choice-loyalty to family or loyalty to God. We may ask ourselves-was this really a fair question to ask someone to make this kind of choice? Before answering this question, it is worth considering that Jesus was calling the man to the highest vocation possible-a total transformation of life. This causes us to ask the questions: Where might *our* priorities lie? Have we chosen to put God first in all that we do?

The third man agreed to follow Jesus as long as he could go back home and bid his family good-bye. 'Lord, I will be your follower but first, just let me take leave of my people back home. Let me go back and say good-bye.' Again, this too seems like a reasonable request. That is what Elisha did after being called by Elijah in our first lesson today. But Jesus said to the man, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. Following Jesus means giving no more excuses! We are asked to take the 'but' out of life! 'You know God, I'll do what you ask 'but'. Lord, I know I promised that I would do this thing if you saw me through my difficulty 'but.' Father, your will be done 'but'.' Sisters and brothers, the call to follow him demands that one hold on to the plow without looking back. It means pressing forward to see what the end will be!

These would-be followers had one thing in common: interest but no commitment. They were each interested in following but on their own terms, at their own pace, and at their own convenience.

Sometimes the same is true of us. If we are honest we want things to be convenient for ourselves. Who wouldn't? But Jesus does not call us to a convenient discipleship but rather to a *committed* discipleship. He calls us to a fundamental transformation of life—one that is fully committed to the Kingdom of God and making Christ known to the world.

At our Celebration of New Ministry this past Thursday evening Bishop Smith challenged us to look at the life of Saint John the Baptist whose feast it was. He reminded us that John was a "different" sort of prophet. He wasn't just known for his cuisine which consisted primarily of bugs and honey and his wardrobe of camel's hair but for the *truly radical* way in which he proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God and the coming of the Messiah. Bishop Smith urged us to look at how we here at St. Barnabas might bring the Good News of Christ to the people of North County in a new and radical way. We have been charged to set our faces toward Jerusalem, toward making God's presence known here as we walk with Christ and invite others to walk with us.

On Thursday evening, you and I promised that with God's help we will "work together as partners in the mission of the Church". If we have listened to today's gospel it's going to take a radical commitment on all of

our parts-not just some but ALL of us-all that we are and all that we hope to be. It's going to take an attitude of collective purpose. It is going to take conviction and love for ALL God's children. It's going to take faith and trust in God when the going gets rough. It's going to mean keeping our hands on the plow and not looking back! We are not to look *behind* but FORWARD! YOU AND I-WE CAN DO THIS! WE MUST DO THIS! WE WILL GO *TOGETHER* TO SEE WHAT THE END WILL BE! JUST HOLD ON!

*Done made my vow to the Lord
And I never will turn back.
I will go, I shall go to see what the end will be!*

*Done opened my mouth to the Lord
And I never will turn back.
I will go, I shall go
We will go, we must go
to see what the end will be!**

Amen!

**Negro Spiritual*