

Sunday, June 29, 2025 - Meditation

Verses 57-62 of Luke's Gospel contain some of Jesus' most challenging words. They bear repeating: *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

These words remind me of other hard teachings of Jesus—words that bring us up short: It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom. OR

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. OR

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

They are hard, because they ask something of us that takes us outside our comfort zone. The first person claimed he would follow Jesus wherever he went. Jesus replied, are you ready to go where I go, to places where you will have no home, no place to rest? To the next, who wanted to bury his father, Jesus said that even the most sacred traditions—in this case, the Jewish rite of burying a family member—must be set aside for the sake of the kingdom of God. To the third who wanted to say goodbye to his loved ones, Jesus said hesitation has no place in my Kingdom. "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks

back is fit for the kingdom of God.” If you want to be my disciple, nothing must come before following me.

This is not a comfortable, gentle Jesus. He sounds more like a drill sergeant training soldiers. Perhaps this is exactly what he is saying. To be a disciple is to be ready for battle. In battle there can be no cowardice, no hesitation. Jesus certainly knew that those who followed him would be in a battle: persecuted, tempted to deny him. When the moment of truth comes, he says, one cannot hesitate.

That is why these words may not only be hard for us but foreign. Are we a bit too comfortable to relate to them? To hear his call to follow him unconditionally? There are circumstances where we might be tempted to lose faith, to turn our backs on God. Some of us have had such an experience, and we know how our faith stood the test. Sometimes I wonder, if I lost the person I love in some

horrific way, how would my faith hold up? How many battles involving your faith have you fought?

The collect for today provides what we need to follow Jesus without wavering: “Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you.” We, you and I, are built upon the foundation of our faith through the teachings of Scripture and the church. They are what bind us together and bind us to Christ. As we immerse ourselves in these teachings, we are made ready to follow Jesus wherever he asks us. You could say it is our basic training. So when the test of faith does come, we can respond, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done.”